

## **Honor the Son, Tim Keller**

**[00:00:00.950] - Speaker 1**

**John 5, verses 16 through 23:**

<sup>16</sup>Because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, <sup>17</sup>Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working." <sup>18</sup>For this reason, the Jews tried all the harder to kill him. Not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God himself. <sup>19</sup>Jesus gave him this answer, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He can only do what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does, the Son also does. <sup>20</sup>For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement, he will show you even greater things than these. <sup>21</sup>For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. <sup>22</sup>Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, <sup>23</sup>that they may all honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father.

My dear friends, there's a synopsis of the career of Jesus Christ in these verses.

**[00:01:12.570] - Speaker 1**

The synopsis of the career is Jesus was high up. He was equal with God. He says that in verses 16, 17 and 18. But then in verses 19 and 20, he talks about Him coming down. He becomes subject to the Father. He becomes submissive to the Father. He gets to the place where He only does what the Father tells him to do. He only does what the Father shows him to do. Then oddly enough, at a certain point, He is then brought back up so that now he gets all the honor that the Father has and he has all judgment entrusted to him. So, he was high, he goes low, and he gets back up high. And in here you've got one of the most practical and yet unpopular of all the Christian principles of Christian life. It's practical and it's popular, and some of you know, we love to talk about it around here, and it goes like this. The way up is down. The way to reign is to submit. The way to power is to serve. The way to happiness is not to seek your own happiness, but the happiness of others.

**[00:02:21.310] - Speaker 1**

The way to exaltation is by humbling. The way to find your life is to lose your life. That is the principle. It goes right in the face of not only all the self-help books, but also most of what people call today common sense. Recently in a Time magazine, there was a fascinating review article. Recently, all 200 Johann Sebastian Bach cantatas written for the Church worship have been recorded on one set of CDs. It was a review article in the New York Times that was just fascinating. The reviewer was appalled by Bach's works. The reviewer pointed out that for a couple of hundred years, most of these church works were usually done without the text because musicians were so embarrassed by the words. The words are very poignant. They continually and repeatedly say that human beings are sinful, that they're wicked, that they're condemned, they're under the wrath of God. Bach himself obviously feels that he personally is full of sin and corruption and condemnation and wickedness. The reviewer is fascinating. The reviewer says

now we see what the real Bach was like. He can't be the joyous Bach that we knew of his more public works.

**[00:03:43.650] - Speaker 1**

Essentially what the reviewer says, although I'm paraphrasing, is he said, "We thought he was a great guy. Now we found out he's just another evangelical Christian." But the crux of what he's trying to say is this, how could the Bach who believes this thing about human wickedness and sinfulness be the Bach whose music is rapturous joy, unsurpassed, unbounded, soaring, liberation, freedom? How could it be the same? How could this be the same man? Now, you see, it's a simple fact of history that it is the same man. And this reviewer's world view cannot account for it. But I hope yours can, or can it? The Bach, full of God, conviction of sin, the humbled Bach is the exalted Bach. Is the exalted Bach. The Bach convicted of sin is the Bach that soars in liberation. The way to lose yourself, the way to find yourself is to lose yourself. The way up is down. Now, here's why the principle works, and here's how it works. Number one, why? It works because of the career of Jesus Christ. It's with this principle that Jesus Christ plowed through the muck of the human condition and has brought order back.

**[00:05:03.300] - Speaker 1**

You see, the Bible, first of all, tells us, number one, verse 16, 17 and 18, that he claimed that he was equal with God, that the same work that the Lord God did in the beginning at creation that Jesus says he is doing, too, or has been doing. There's a lot of places where George Burns in, Oh God, is asked, Is Jesus Christ your son? And George says, "Of course he's my son, but so is Muhammad and Buddha and everybody". So that's wonderful. And of course, there's a certain sense in which that may be true. That's not what Jesus is saying here. I mean, if George Burns was right, I want to know why the religious leaders were ready to stone Jesus for what he says. Jesus doesn't just say, I'm a son of God. There's a sense in which anyone with a loving relationship with God is a son of God. But Jesus says, I am the Son all through this passage. I'm the Son. Now, the Jewish leaders knew what he was talking about because in Semitic terms, the eldest son and the only son always received all of the father's wealth, all of the father's status, all of the father's position, all of it.

**[00:06:06.740] - Speaker 1**

It wasn't divided up. The law of primogeniture. It wasn't divided up, which meant that the only son or the eldest son was completely and totally equal with the father. They knew what he was claiming when he called himself the unique son of God. And all through this passage, Jesus claims things that only a creator, an uncreated, beginningless creator God could claim. He says in verse 21, that he alone gives life. And we're told back in the Old Testament in Deuteronomy 32, that only the creator God could possibly give life because only he's got that power. We're told in verse 22 that Jesus Christ says, I alone judge. I'm a judge. Again, we're told back in the Old Testament that only the creator could stand or sit in judgment on its creation. But most of all, and the weirdest of all, and the most amazing thing of all is that in verse 23, Jesus Christ claims, not just claims, he demands worship. He says in Verse 23, "You must

honor the Son, just as," now, you got to realize how these words were falling on the ears of the listeners. "You've got to honor me just as, as much as I deserve equal worship, equal honor with the Father."

#### **[00:07:25.270] - Speaker 1**

The Bible is absolutely clear that nothing with a beginning can ever be worshiped. Nothing with a beginning point, nothing created can be worshiped. When John tried to worship an angel, when Daniel tried to worship an angel, they started to worship the angel. What did the angel say? The angel, in both cases, the angel said, "Get up. I'm a creature like you." Admittedly, a much nicer looking creature than you, but I'm still a creature. You can't worship something that has a beginning. And yet Jesus Christ doesn't just accept. He doesn't just accept worship. He demands it. And he doesn't just demand some worship. He demands worship just as the Father. Listen, dear friends, he is saying, "That's where I was. I was up there. I was equal with God." Just as a very quick tangent, this is where a lot of people get uncomfortable and I can sympathize. One of the great questions and problems of our modern thinking is how do you fit Christianity in with the rest of the world's religions? The answer is it doesn't fit. You see, I have heard, and I guess you've heard many times, people like to say all religions are basically alike in this way.

#### **[00:08:38.470] - Speaker 1**

Every religion is founded by a great Prophet who said, "Here is moral behavior that will bring you to God." The problem with that is that Jesus Christ and Christianity actually says, unlike the other religions, no moral behavior will bring you to God. Any pattern of moral behavior is insufficient to bring you to God. Your only hope is that the founder of our religion is actually God himself, come in human form. And that if you know him and serve him, he will bring you to the Father through him. Your only hope is not moral behavior. You don't need a prophet, you need a Savior. You need a Savior. And you can take Buddha out of Buddhism and you can take Mohammed out of Islam, and anybody in those religions will say, you'd still have the religion intact. You cannot take Christ out of Christianity. He will not go. He doesn't fit in any scheme. He doesn't fit in any pie. And His claims are such that you cannot consider Him a great man. He's either far more than a great man or far less than a great man, but he can't be a great man because a great man doesn't say, "You must honor me like the Father."

#### **[00:09:42.870] - Speaker 1**

A great man doesn't say, "I alone can give you life." A great man doesn't say that. Somebody greater than that can say that, or somebody considerably lower and worse than that, a wicked person. A charlatan can say that, but you see, you can't fit him in. He doesn't go. He won't go. That's where he was up there. But now we're told some interesting things in Verse 19. We're told a couple of fascinating things. For example, suddenly Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He can only do what he sees his Father doing. Because whatever the Father does, the Son also does." People say now, how in the world does that go along with this statement that Jesus is saying he's equal with the Father? Now suddenly he says that he only does what the Father tells him to do. He only does what the Father

shows him. He doesn't do anything without the Father's help. What's going on? See, Paul in Philippians 2 expounds this and explains it. He says, though he had equality with the Father, he didn't hold on to that equality, but he came down. Why?

**[00:10:48.830] - Speaker 1**

My dear friends, it's all a question of honor. You see, human beings refuse to honor their true Lord and captain. We have decided to live for our own honor. We've decided to become the kings of our own lives, not to give honor to whom it's due. The just penalty for that heartless and cruel rebellion was paid when our great King left his honor behind and came down and died for us upon the tree and took the dishonor that we deserved. When he did that, all human notions of what is up and what is down were forever turned on their head. Because the great disaster is the greatest triumph. Because when Jesus Christ came and was tortured and killed in weakness, he accomplished a triumph of the greatest strength. He was run through and therefore won the field. And as a result, we're told he's back up on top. He's gone back up to the place of the highest honor. He's back up there. He is the judge of all things. And Philippians 2 says,

Because he emptied himself and became a servant, was obedient even unto death. Therefore, God has highly exalted him, and given him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

**[00:12:15.310] - Speaker 1**

If you can say this and theologically you can't really, but I'm going to say it anyway, in this sense, he's gone back higher than he was. Now, I don't know how you can get higher than he was, except this, now not only do you feel duty bound and obliged to honor your creator, but now you have grateful joy in your heart, welling up like a geyser that wants to make you honor him as a redeemer as well. In other words, you owe him your life twice. He's your creator and he's your redeemer. Now you see, therefore, he has the name which is above every name that we all bow to. That's the career of Jesus Christ, and that's why the principle works. What's the principle? Do you see it? The way to bless is to take the curse. The way to riches is to give everything away. The way to get honor is not to seek your own honor, but to honor your Father and your brethren. The way to greatness is to give up your greatness. The way to heal brokenness is not to avoid brokenness, but plunge in. See? The way up is down.

**[00:13:21.290] - Speaker 1**

That means at least this. There's a lot of applications we can make. I want to give you just one. The way to maturity, the way to peace, the way to joy, the way to contentment is to do what Jesus Christ did. It's to submit to God's will. If Jesus Christ, who was God, was willing to will the Father's will to want only what he wanted, to subdue his will completely to his Father's will. If he was willing to do that, then we have to do that too. What I'm trying to say is what looks to the average common sensical mind like suicide is actually liberation. The Bible calls every human being to submit to the will of the Father. Do you know what it means to submit to God's will? Do you know what it means to subdue your will to his will? Let me give

you a few remarks on the basis of what Jesus did. Number one, and this to me is the secret to growth. It's the secret to the unlocking of human potential Just like with Jesus Christ, because he humbled himself, because he gave up his will, he found power, he found honor.

#### **[00:14:40.420] - Speaker 1**

Now, number one, submission. First of all, means wrestling. Secondly, submission means a decision to trust. Thirdly, submission means struggling and wrestling to see your life from a high vantage point. But And lastly, submission means joy. I'm going to be brief, but here they are. Number one, submission to God's will. A lot of people love to hear all that the Bible has to say about the fact that God loves you and accepts you and forgives you. But whenever it gets near this idea that God's will is such that you need to willingly will it, that you need to submit yourself to it, that you need to give yourself and subdue your will to his will, people immediately say it sounds scary and it sounds pathological and it sounds unhealthy. First of all, it could be, if you don't understand it right, submission is wrestling. I knew a fellow once who lost his wife six months after they were married. She died in a car crash. Somebody told him that since it was God's will, he should not be sad. And so, for one year he went around saying, "Well, it's God's will. Praise the Lord, I'm not grieving."

#### **[00:15:56.350] - Speaker 1**

And after one year, as you might guess, he just crashed and burned. And he turned around and started to say, "God screwed me. And why should I even obey him at all?" And in neither of those circumstances was he submitting to God's will. Look at Jesus Christ. When he's in the garden of Gethsemane, what does he say? He says, I'm about to be tortured and killed. Praise the Lord. No need to be sad about this. Now, what does he say? The perfect man of God says to his disciples, I am sorrowful even unto death. I am just about ready to faint under the weight of what I'm about to suffer. He says to them, I am crumbling before the weight of this like a moth before a blowtorch. And yet I'm doing this for you and I'm doing this for him and not my will but his be done. There's no unreality about that. Submission is wrestling. But then, secondly, submission is a decision to trust. When the Bible talks about submitting to God's will, it's not talking about knuckling under. It's not talking about resignation. In Jesus Christ Superstar, there's this place in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus is singing and he says, God, thy will is hard, but you hold every card.

#### **[00:17:11.900] - Speaker 1**

Go on, kill me before I change my mind. Do you remember that? That is being pulled under. That is not a decision. That's being pulled under. That is not being a human being. That is not saying this. Jesus Christ says in Chapter 7, He says, "If any man willed to do my Father's will, he shall know." To will to do his will, that's a decision. It means to say, I will do this. There's two parts to God's will. There's his plan will and his command will. His command will is what he says in his word you must do. And that means you look at something and you say, if I am honest in this situation, it might mean professional suicide. Nevertheless, I will to do his will. See, it's a decision. Or his plan will is the way in which he organizes the circumstances

of your life. When you say to him, I see some disappointment in my life, it's not going to come through, how that just devastates me, how that demolishes me. Nevertheless, I will to do his will. That's a decision. Well, somebody says, I see that's a decision, and I see that I've only ever knuckled under to his will.

### **[00:18:25.950] - Speaker 1**

I see I've never actually submitted to his will the way Jesus Christ is here. I've never found the way up by going down. I've never found out how to reign by submitting, but I don't know how to do it either. I don't know. It's too hard. Well, here's the secret. If there is a secret to submit, submission means struggling for the right vantage point. Dear friends, if you had little boys, you'd have a million of these little boy illustrations, too, and they're so versatile. You take a seven year old boy and he's just broken his truck and he's crying inconsolably, and you suddenly run in and you've got a little letter and the letter says, Guess what? You just inherited \$20 million. What's he going to do? That makes me feel a lot better. He will not say that. He's going to continue to cry. And you know the real problem is not his truck, it's his vantage point. He's not seeing it from the proper vantage point. And my dear friends, your loneliness is not the problem and your financial problems, your pinches are not the problem, and that relationship is not the problem.

### **[00:19:33.390] - Speaker 1**

Your truck is not the problem, it's your vantage point. Jesus Christ looked at the most mind blowing, staggering pain in history and he said, because he got the right vantage point, I will suffer this for several hours in order to have a glorious, redeemed world that will last forever. That's a vantage point. You remember George Matheson? I've talked about him before. He was a hymn writer in the 19th century. Just before he was about to marry the girl of his dreams, he went blind. And she dropped him and walked out of his life. And later on, he wrote this hymn,

I lay in dust, life's glory dead, and in the ground there blossoms red, life that shall endless be. I

lay in dust, life's glory dead, and in the ground there blossoms red, life that shall endless be.

You see what he's doing? He says, "My hopes died, but," he said, he expected, like Jesus Christ, instead of being bitter, he expected on the far side of the death of his hopes, a resurrection. You know what the resurrection was? He said he had some hopes that died, but new hopes, he developed a heart, an approachable heart, a wise heart, a profound heart.

### **[00:20:57.550] - Speaker 1**

He developed the ability to touch people. And he developed the... He had a whole set of people that he never, ever originally could have possibly imagined that he would be helping and saving their lives. You see, I lay in dust life's glory dead. And there in the ground blossoms red life that shall endless be. On the far side of the death of my hopes, he says, "I know there's a resurrection. I submit, I will to do my Father's will." Do you see that? See, a lot of people say, I could do it if I just knew why. And what you mean is you won't do it. Because you see, if you knew why, you wouldn't be submitting because you'd still stay in control. If you knew why, then you could say, "Oh, now I see it's practical. Now I see the reason." You're

staying in control of your life, in other words, and you will not submit until you have control of your life, and therefore you're not submitting. You stay king of your little life. I can submit if I just knew why. In other words, you won't do it. Friends, when suffering and trouble come into your life, they will either turn you into something great or they will turn you into something subhuman, but they will not leave you the same.

#### **[00:22:08.650] - Speaker 1**

You have to submit or they'll turn you into something bitter. They'll turn you into something... Jesus Christ, the Bible says, was heard in the garden, his prayers were heard, it says in Hebrews 5, for his reverent submission. And you say, "How could they be heard? I thought he was turned down?" No, he said, "Lord, I want to do your will. I want what's best. I will do your will." You know what the Bible says about prayer. God will always give you what you would have asked for if you knew everything he knows. Now, when I say that and you go, "Oh," what you're doing, what we're all doing is, I'm pushing you to that vantage point. You wrestle, you struggle up there to that vantage point. Until you get there, your will to do his will is not going to bring you the joy and the incredible contentment and the amazing freedom. I lay in life. I lay in dust, life's glory dead, and there I know what will blossom red life that shall endless be. Do you know what it means to struggle that vantage point so you can see things from his perspective?

#### **[00:23:12.710] - Speaker 1**

Just listen, look at the people around the cross and they're all shaking their fist and saying, "What good could God possibly bring out of this?" Because nobody's coming up to them and saying, Oh, here's the Bible, here's the New Testament. Of course, it hasn't been written yet, but the New Testament explains all of this. They won't do it. They refuse to submit their minds to the truth. They're trying to submit the truth to their tidy little minds and their little agenda, and it doesn't work. They walk away having lost their faith, bitter, looking at the greatest act of God's wisdom and redemption in history. Now, you are not mad about God having Jesus die because you've got a book. It tells you all about it. But the problems you're looking at in your life, you don't have a book for. Are you going to walk away like they did just because you don't have a book? If you say, "Well, I could submit if I knew why." In other words, you won't do it. My dear friends, Isaac Dennison says you shouldn't be surprised. She says that rich people and poor people have always known that life is made up of trouble and suffering.

#### **[00:24:20.510] - Speaker 1**

She says it's the bourgeois. It's the middle class that believes that the world owes you an orderly, comfortable life. She says rich people and poor people have always known that life has scored in a minor key. But she says it's the middle class that don't know that. They get mad when the world gives them anything but an orderly and comfortable life. A Christian is somebody who's gotten rid of the bourgeois mentality. A Christian is somebody who says, "If my master has suffered, I'm not above my master. If he suffered, I will suffer. If I obey him, I will lose some friends. If I obey him, I will lose some money. If I obey him, I will have some lonely nights because I won't sleep with this or that person. If I obey him, my schedule and my emotions will be ripped up because I'll be involved with people that ordinarily I wouldn't

have been involved with. Because I'll be trying to help messed up people I ordinarily would have just avoided. But I have stopped being a cry... I've stopped being a bourgeois crybaby because I'm a Christian. Because I know that there's other friends out there, new friends.

**[00:25:20.260] - Speaker 1**

I know there's other rewards. I know there's other riches." I lay in dust, life's glory dead, and in the ground blossoms red, life that shall endless be. But see, friends, submission in the end is joy, and that's where we end it. Submission is joy. Some of you are saying it doesn't sound like joy to me. It sounds terrible. You're scaring me to death. I thought I could be a Christian, be a moral person, but this idea of having to submit totally and subdue my will completely to God, that sounds awful. Remember the whole thesis, the way up is down. You go down not to stay down. You die to your will not to stay dead. Jesus didn't die to stay dead. He died to be resurrected. He didn't humble himself to stay humble. He humbled himself so he could be exalted. And in the same way, if you submit yourself, I tell you, it will mean joy. Would you please listen to this here? Suppose somebody came to you, suppose God came to you and said, I got an idea. I'll let you write the agenda for the rest of your life. I'll let you be in complete charge of the circumstances of the rest of your life.

**[00:26:31.190] - Speaker 1**

What would you do? You jump right at it. Okay, but here's my question. Which self is going to do it? Your Tuesday self or your Sunday self? Your 15 year old self or your 30 year old self or your 40 year old self? Well, you say, "The one I've got right now." But wait a minute, why not your 15 year old self? Why don't you let your 15 year old self be in charge of your life? Well, you say, "Because when I was a 15 year old, I was a fool." Oh, now you have come into your own. Now you've arrived, right? But that's what you thought when you were 15. What makes you think you have now? What's your alternative to willing his will? What's your alternative? Friends, I don't know what he's doing in your life right now. I know that in my own life, when he's disappointed me the most, he was trying to get me out from under the grips of certain idols. I've pitied myself and I hated the world because I wasn't getting my way, and I needed to be freed from those idols. I don't know what he's doing in your case, but I know this.

**[00:27:32.740] - Speaker 1**

I know that he is bringing you to a resurrection beyond the death of your hopes. And you'll be brought into a resurrection of new hopes and new joys if you will submit to him. The Son only does what the Father shows him. He does nothing except that which the Father says. Friends, would you please go lay yourself down in the dust? You're crushed under the weight of being a sovereign self. Of course, he's not safe, but he's good. He's the King, I tell you. The hardness of God is kinder than his softness of men, and his compulsion is our liberation. There's some of you out there that probably realize, I hope for the first time, that Christianity is not a moral thing. It's not just a matter of being moral. Of course, if you're a Christian, you'll be a lot more moral probably than you are now, but that's not the issue. It says in verse 23 that you will only be judged on the basis of whether you honor the Son or not. Jesus Christ is calling for something



radical. You either have to reject him or you have to decide to live your life completely for his glory and a passion for his glory.

**[00:28:51.780] - Speaker 1**

He's demanding that of you. The Jewish leaders knew what he was demanding. They wanted to kill him. The disciples knew what he was demanding. They threw everything over and followed him. You've got to kill him, or you've got to serve him. It's silly to be moderate. You can't be moderate. He doesn't allow you to be moderate. You have to find yourself. You have to lose yourself to find yourself. You will never know who you are until you want something more than to know who you are. Christian friends, a lot of you know that there's areas of your life that you are not submitting to him. You're sitting back and waiting for him to show you why. In other words, you're not submitting to him. Fight against every thought that would propose to you that it would be more desirable if you could choose for yourself. The way up is down. The way to find yourself is to lose yourself.

Let's pray. Father, as we take the offering up before we close, in these couple of moments, would you please allow us now to consider where we should be submitting to your plan will and where we should be submitting to your command will.

**[00:29:59.580] - Speaker 1**

I pray, Father, that everybody here would walk out of here more submitted to you and therefore transformed in the image of your Son. In his name we pray, Amen.