**John 5:19-24 19Jesus answered them directly, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: The Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing. Indeed, the Son does exactly what the Father does. 20For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. And he will show him even greater works than these so that you will be amazed. 21For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to those he wishes. 22“In fact, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, 23so that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. 24Amen, Amen, I tell you: Anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He is not going to come into judgment but has crossed over from death to life.**

Stand Before the Judge. You Ready?

Many years ago, in a dusty looking frontier town, a horse bolted and ran away with a wagon carrying a little boy. Seeing the child in peril, a young man placed himself in harms way and jumped on top of the horse to slow down the wagon by calming the terrified animal. The little boy was saved.

That boy grew up and became a lawless man. One day he stood before a judge because of a crime he had committed. The prisoner recognized the judge. It was the same man who years before had saved his life. Sure that he would be willing to do it again, he pleaded for mercy based on that experience. But the judge silenced the man by saying to him, “Young man, many years ago I was your savior. Today, I am your judge and in the name of justice, I sentence you to be hanged.”

Many years ago, Christ died on the cross as your Savior. He no only risked but gave his life to save yours. Soon, you will stand before him on Judgment Day. He will be the judge. What will Jesus say to you? Are you ready for Christ to look deep into your soul, to look at the details of your life, and to decide your sentence? You Ready?

One of the topics we focus on as we come to the end of the church year is the end of the world and judgment day. We want to prepare for that. Judgment is scheduled. God has spoken about what things will happen before that day. All of those things have happened, not just once but several times over. In fact, all of them can be seen now. Judgment Day could come at any moment. We want to be ready. It will be a day when we will see amazing things.**For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. And he will show him even greater works than these so that you will be amazed.**

Jesus said this to people who brushed off who he was. They argued with him. The leaders of the Jews were mad at Jesus because he had healed a man on the Sabbath. They disliked him. They hated him. They didn’t approve of what he did. They didn’t like the attention he got especially when Jesus pointed out their sins and wickedness. They accused him of being a false teacher. They said he disobeyed God the Father in heaven.

The Honorable Jesus spoke directly to them. He told them he wasn’t disobeying the Father because he and the Father are united. Everything Jesus was doing was in complete agreement with the Father. **The Son does exactly what the Father does.** Jesus said it would get even more clear especially on Judgment Day. Jesus and the Father would someday raise people from the dead. As if his words weren’t clear enough, Jesus stated beyond a shadow of a doubt what he would be doing on that day. **In fact, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son.** The Jews had thought that on Judgment Day, God the Father would be the one judging people. But Jesus here tells them that’s not how it’s going to be. Jesus will be the judge. The one they were brushing off and arguing with, the one they accused of being a fall teacher, he is the judge. On Judgment Day, Jesus Christ will be the judge.

You ready? Honoring Jesus means honoring God the Father. Just claiming there is a god isn’t enough. Just thinking of God as loving, forgiving, and caring isn’t enough. We need to not only honor the Father but the Son. **So that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.**If someone does not honor the Son, Jesus, they are not ready for Judgment Day. Jesus is needed.

Our world is completely unprepared for Judgment Day. In fact, we need to take a deep look to see if we are prepared. People commonly believe that there is a higher power (even if few do than in the past). People can understand the thought that some day they will have to give an account for how they have lived their life. But most people don’t believe that Jesus Christ is God, and that he will judge the world. Most people want nothing to do with Jesus. He’s too black and white about things. He’s the one only extreme Christians talk about. He’s the one who only old people follow. They can be fine with a God that is loving, forgiving, and caring but when he starts to make things in life black and white, you should do this and not do that, they want nothing to do with Jesus. God can give advice but he can’t tell speak law to you.

That’s a god most people will think about following today. He has to be left as some vague being or thought who helps you be more open-minded, a nicer person, tells you not to discriminate, be more loving. But as soon as he brings up sin that’s extreme. People prefer God to be a guide or advise giver. Not a judge checking into all you have done and pronouncing a sentence. That’s why we see more godlessness. Honoring Christ doesn’t happen because his teachings aren’t followed. Do you think such people are honoring God?

What about you? Has the world rubbed off on you? Are you ready? Have you been honoring a version of God or do you honor God? Maybe think of it this way. Jesus in the Bible says that I am not to\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(find in the blank) [possibilities: gossip. steal. Neglect my God given responsibilities]. Think about what you filled into that blank. Which excuse think of as soon are you filled in the blank? Jesus says he is to be obeyed and followed without even the thought of an excuse. If Jesus Christ as important to you as your life, your activities, or your health? Or is Christ for you a once-in-a-while hobby that you maybe have time for, but only if you don’t have other things to do?

Or maybe think of it this way: Jesus gave his life to save yours. He tells you to place God before all things. Now you are standing in front of him and he see you have been lawless in your thoughts, words, and deeds. Would you welcome Jesus, the judge, to join you in your home? Would you allow Jesus to look through your phone? How about into your mind? We cannot help but feel uncomfortable when we think about these things. We hesitate because we know Jesus would find something sin; in fact, many sins. Picture standing before Jesus right now. You ready? If you have any part of your life that you question, you aren’t ready. (Pause) If you don’t have any part of your life, you aren’t ready either because you are denying you are sinful.

If you want to be ready. Believe. Believe what? Believe this Jesus is your God. Believe that as God and man, Jesus died on you as your substitute and paid for every single sin you have committed in your life. Believe that when the Bible says you are forgiven, you are forgiven. Believe that when Jesus says he saved you, he did. Look at the resurrection. Jesus rose to prove he really is your God and your Savior. You are a forgiven child of God. Believe these words of grace.

When God returns, he promises to destroy the world by fire. He is not going to come as the loving, caring, forgiving god that people like to picture. He is coming as the God of justice to speaks condemning sentences. He is going to burn everything sinful with the fire he brings. You ready?

Fire is incredible. It burns up anything that can burn. But there is something that even fire can’t burn—what has already been burnt. Jesus Christ has already been burned by the fire of God’s judgment when he died on the cross for you. You believe in Jesus, which means God has already punished your sins. Because you are standing because of the cross of Jesus, you stand in a place already burnt.

You ready? I sure hope so. Jesus will look deep into your heart on Judgment and he will see what he sees. In those who believe in him, he will see faith. We will see that you believe in him. Then he will point you out as one of his, one whose sins have already been punished and paid for. Stand before the Judge. You ready? Amen.

Points to consider as an individual or with a small group:

* Who is the judge on Judgment Day?
* Support this statement: “We are right to be fearful to stand before him.”
* The opening story for this sermon spoke about a young lawlessness who stood before the judge who saved him earlier in life. Explain the similarities between that lawless young man and those Jesus has saved.
* Come up with three ways “fire” serves as a good image given by God for what will happen on Judgment Day.