

John 5:25-29

Theme: Free from fear to live in Jesus

What's it look like to live free of fear of judgment? The saying, "Dance like no one's watching," comes to mind. I don't like it when people watch me dance. I get bashful, which is strange because to get a laugh, I'll make a silly face or do a silly voice complete with a bizarre series of over the top gestures. Dancing, though? Oof. I feel like I'm being judged so I can't be myself, can't loosen up and enjoy the moment. I feel self-conscious. Another term for "self-conscious" is "fear," fear of what others may think even though I tell myself so often, "Who cares? What's it matter what they think? If they make fun of me when I'm sincerely having a good time it says far more about them than it does me." Totally true, but still self-conscious, afraid of judgment. Fear is a powerful motivator. The unknown of what may happen creates fear about aftermath, consequence, and fall out. This can be crippling because you know judgment is very real. Talk to anyone about anything and you'll hear some opinions, some judgments.

Judgment is real, not just from people, but from God. Scripture doesn't shy away from talking about it at all. Final judgment is, actually, one of the most talked about things in the Bible! Why? Not to render us puddles of mush trembling constantly in terror of it, but because knowledge is power and God wants you to have the knowledge of his Son so you can stand firm in the power of love he pours into you non-stop and live. The love of Jesus saves you, it's your life. That was Jesus' purpose in coming here. Jesus came to give us life and in doing so frees us from fear of sin and its wage, death, and what comes after.

Jesus says, "*Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.*" (**John 5:25**). People who are dead will hear Jesus' voice and live! What incredible power Jesus, the Son of God, has! When is that time? Judgment for sure, but think also of the Hebrews lesson. People are destined to die once and then face judgment. The time is now really. When you believe in Jesus, you are saved right now just like Jesus said a verse before in **John 5:24**, "*Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.*" You believe Jesus words, yes? You've already crossed over from death to life! At your death or the Last Day, you're judged, but won't come into judgment because you'll be found then as you are now: guiltless by believing that Jesus has taken away all your sins. You, person who believes in Jesus, will live even if you die.

Jesus has the power in himself to give life and the authority to have this declaration stand because the Father has given it to him. Why? Because the Father loves the Son and is perfectly pleased with him and, even more specifically, because Jesus is the Son of Man. "*And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.*" (**John 5:27**) Think about that! What a thought! Jesus, the Son of Man, our brother, came to find sinners, us, and save us! Jesus was born under the law to redeem us, people under the law who've broken it every which way, and to give us every astounding right and privilege that comes with being a child of God. Jesus was perfect and loved perfectly. Jesus was nailed to a cross in our place and died there shamefully displayed, but triumphant over the devil, sin, and death. Jesus burst out of the grave victoriously alive. Jesus remains both the Son of God and the Son of Man forever as the mediator of the new and better covenant between God and people where he does everything and we receive all the benefit of what he did!

That's why we don't have to fear judgment. Our friend, Jesus, is the judge! The same one who died, more than that, the same one who rose, is at the right hand of God interceding and ruling for us. That gives us loads of confidence in judgment, it gives us eagerness for it, actually. We look forward to it because we know Jesus will do right by us, not that we deserve it, but because he's promised that all who believe in him will never be put to shame, but have everlasting life. On the Last Day when all the

horrifying things Scripture says will happen like the moon turning to blood, sun going dark, stars falling out of the sky, elements melting in the heat will not affect us because we'll already be caught up to meet our Lord Jesus in the air and rescued. Jesus, who is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, the Son of Man, our friend, our brother, will return to deliver us, to sit us on thrones right next to him in his kingdom in righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

Jesus circles back to the resurrection, telling us not to be surprised at this amazing imagination inspiring stuff almost as though it's old hat because to Jesus it kinda is. Reinforcing **Daniel 12**, Jesus says, *"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice²⁹ and come out – those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned."* (**John 5:28-29**) This gives us confidence. How so when the good things God has shown us we should do of loving mercy, acting justly, and walking humbly with our God we have not done? Because Jesus has done them for us and in immense love for us, in the most intense desire to spend eternity with us, has given the righteousness he earned to us and removed our sins. In Jesus we live, are raised, and glorified. The opposite is true, too. Those who don't believe, who don't have Jesus' righteousness given to them but have all their sins still attached to them are raised to a guilty verdict with an eternal sentence of death and suffering where there's no happiness, no comradery, but fire, agony, and then the very bitter knowledge that Jesus is Lord.

We're free from the fear of that judgment because Jesus presents us glorious free from fault and sin in God's presence. We're saints and sinners simultaneously, right? Yes. So too, we're people who trust and fear simultaneously, there's a tension, a continuum. Telling someone to just "not fear" is overly simplistic, it's like saying "don't sin" to someone. Right, but I'm not gonna not be a sinner this side of eternity, which doesn't mean don't struggle against it, but I will sin. I'm a person of faith, but I'm a person beset by doubt, too. I'm not going to tell you, "Well, just don't be afraid." I'm going to tell you what to do when you are and it sounds remarkably similar to what you do when guilt robs you of peace. You fly to Jesus, your Rock and Redeemer, your Savior and Judge, who does not condemn you but sees the faith planted in you by God the Almighty Holy Spirit and grants eternal life!

Have you ever met someone who wasn't afraid, like at all, of what others thought of them? Super refreshing, isn't it? They are confidently themselves. What would your life look like if you lived without fear of being judged by others? You'd be your authentic self, dancing happily like no one was watching even if there were a million sets of eyes on you! What does your life look like because, for Jesus' sake, you don't fear judgment and eternal death? It looks like you living in peace, in joy, able to be a truly humble servant to anyone doing anything for them since nothing's beneath your dignity as one who's made in Jesus image, Jesus the prince of heaven, who lived among us as one who serves. You defy the conventions, the norms, throwing the expectations out the window by showing radical love to those who don't deserve it, everyone, befriending those so often mislabeled by us as enemies without a care of judgment by fellow fallible sinful, but blood-bought, humans. You do that because you walk in Jesus' footsteps. You do all this set free from fear because you now and forever live in Jesus. Amen.

"To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forever! Amen." (**Jude 24-25**)