

John 12:27-36

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[0 : 0 0] a day. What a day. Thank you, Bing. Good morning, everyone. What a day. We are now going to read God's Word together. Please turn in your Bibles or on your screen, if you have it, to John chapter 12. I'll be reading from verse 27 through 36. Again, that's the Gospel of John chapter 12, verse 27 through verse 36. Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour.

But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name. Then a voice came from heaven. I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again. The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, an angel has spoken to him. Jesus answered, this voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world, and now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. So the crowd answered him, we have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man? Jesus said to them, the light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light that you may become sons of light. When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. It was 22 years ago on this precise day, May 3rd, 1998, that the Dennis and Helm families, along with 33 other adults, and some of them with children, stood on a platform and took vows to become Holy Trinity Church. We never in that moment could have envisioned this day, not in our wildest dreams. It is true that John and I felt led of the Lord with our wives, Lisa and Amy, to move to the city with others in hopes, one aspirational goal, to plant at least 100 churches in our lifetime. But this day, this beginning, this doubling, united in effort to speed the gospel along is something that we couldn't have foreseen. And yet we have watched over the last couple of years, God's leading on our leadership, that this decision is what will accelerate gospel mission and what will increase gospel maturity in the work that we began those many years ago. And so John and Amy, we want to say to you, especially today, we love you, we thank God for you, and we eagerly look forward to the many ways that we will continue to collaborate in that vision that God gave to us when we set out those many years ago. Today is in a historic day. Christ Church Chicago, now founded. Remember it well, for should the Lord tarry, some of you who took vows just a few moments ago, or perhaps your children will stand in the very place that I am preaching from this morning, and you will be asked to recall what you remember from this day, perhaps on this church's 50th year anniversary. They will want you to know what you think and what you remember. My charge today takes us in a different direction.

The Lord would have me ask you to look ahead, not behind, to speak not of what you will remember, but of who we will become. What lasting convictions are truly worthy of our founding?

From the text that was read to us just a few moments ago, I want to declare three things in response. Three convictions that generations which follow us will possess, hopefully in themselves, like strands of DNA due to emerging from our collective person. First, like Jesus Christ, our chief concern will be the glory of God. The glory of God over our continuance of comfort.

The glory of God over even the preservation of our own lives. Let me reread again verses 27 to 29, and I hope you have a Bible with you this morning where you can follow along.

[6 : 01] My Bible reads this way, Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.

Father, glorify your name. Then a voice came from heaven, I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again. The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered, and others said an angel had spoken to him.

Grab hold of those words in verse 28. Father, glorify your name. That was the prayer of Jesus as he walked his way to Calvary.

God's glory was his chief concern, not only in his living, but now most especially in his dying.

What exactly is meant by glory? Glory could be conceived in this way. It is the light which emanates from an object or an individual.

[7 : 18] It can also be the strength of that object or person. Glory, then, is how something or someone shines forth, and also how it sits down.

Glory is the brilliance of something or someone and the weightiness of that same thing. Put it differently, the light that emanates from the stars in the heavens is the glory.

Just as the gravity of a mountain fixed and immovable is its glory. God has a glory.

God has an outshining of brilliance in character that is beautiful, good, pleasant, kind, lovely.

But he also has an undergirding stature that is strong, just, holy, fixed in righteousness.

[8 : 37] This is the glory of God. This is what Christ manifested in his ministry. You'll remember the opening miracle in John where he turned water into wine.

It was said of him then, this was the first time he manifested his glory. Even before that, you'll remember from John 1, it said that he was the glory of God now in flesh, the very light come into the world.

And so Jesus was concerned in his living with displaying the beauty and the steadfast love of the Lord and his fixed righteousness in everything that he did.

But now in this text, the winds are no longer at his back. The storm is hitting him in the face.

And what will he give himself to in this season? Notice in verse 27, his soul is troubled, almost to the point of being terrorized with immense sorrow.

[9 : 56] He is quite aware that he is now walking the hour of his own death. Indeed, he wonders if he should pray at that hour, what shall I say?

Father, save me from this hour? Almost as you have it in other gospel accounts in Gethsemane, when he prays, if there is any other way to manifest your glory and to restore your created order under your rule, oh Lord, may it come.

But notice how he closes. This is not his prayer. That is his perspective prayer, should I wish to be saved. But he says, for this purpose, I've come into this hour.

Father, glorify your name. The glory of God is the chief concern of our Lord. And the response that thunders from heaven is imminently clear.

I have glorified it. In all of your living, oh Christ, I glorified my name. From the very outset of Jesus' ministry, the voice of the Father is now being articulated to those below that God has been glorifying himself in the person and work of Jesus.

[11 : 24] Indeed, to have seen Jesus is to have seen the glory of God. In all of his steadfast love and mercy.

In all of his fixed righteousness. And the voice says from heaven, I will glorify it again. And this ambiguous phrase, which could then reach from the glory he shared with the Father in eternity past, to the glory he will be reunited with the Father in eternity future, to the understanding of the glory that was manifest in his ministry, and now the glory that he will do again in Christ's death.

Let me ask you, let me ask us, what are we becoming today? What are our convictions? What are we doing?

And to what end or purpose are we covenanting to live together? Like Jesus Christ, our chief concern will be the glory of God.

To manifest his brilliance and his stature in our living and especially in our dying. I think of how often we pray, Lord, be glorified in all I do today.

[12 : 55] And when we are young, we project that right through the windshield of our life and dedicate our future lives to him.

But Jesus here is also saying, glorify yourself even in my dying. Paul will pick up on this as he sees his own end draw near, where he asks that it would be like a fragrant aroma rising to the presence of God.

This is what the future generations must remember us for. That in our living and in our dying, we were a family that displayed the brilliance and the beauty of the gospel and the weightiness and the holiness of a God whom we love.

This conviction of Christ should be the character of our congregation.

Second, not only is his glory our chief concern, but bearing witness to the cross will be our constant vocation.

[14 : 26] Let me read again verses 30 to 33. Jesus answered, This voice has come for your sake, not mine.

Now is the judgment of this world. Now will the ruler of the world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. Grab hold of those words in verse 32.

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. That was his statement. His calling as the son of man was to commence judgment, to, in one sense, restore rightness to a world in ruin.

It was not only to commence judgment, but to dispense the world of this evil ruler who had manipulated all of the created order in root defiance toward God.

[15 : 41] But not only to commence judgment and to dispense the evil one, but notice, when lifted up, to draw all people to himself.

This is what Jesus did. In Christ Church Chicago, we are to bear witness to the cross of Christ as our constant vocation.

When I was first behind a lectern to preach, some 35 or 36 years ago, at College Church in Wheaton, I took for my text then, the moment in John 3, where Jesus says, likening himself to the serpent in the wilderness before Nicodemus, that he will be lifted up.

And when he is lifted up, that salvation would come to his people. This idea of Jesus' death, bearing witness to the cross of Christ, is not just now entering the gospel.

It was in the gospel, from its very inception, that he would be lifted up like a serpent in the wilderness, and therefore mitigate the wrath of God, that people would have life in him as they turn to him.

[17 : 16] Let me just put it to you as simply as I can. I have not deviated from this message for the better part of 36 years.

And Christ Church Chicago, when she celebrates her 50th year anniversary, our prayer is that it will continue to be bearing witness to the cross of Christ.

For there is the forgiveness of sins. There, by faith, people become children of God. There, at the foot of the cross, you can come to know Jesus and to be restored in right relationship with him.

To be Christ Church is to proclaim the cross of Christ in all of its substitutionary fulfillment implication.

Proclamation of the gospel is our calling. We were birthed today to bear witness to him being lifted up.

[18 : 24] Let me put it as clearly as I can. There can be no making of disciples for Christ if Christ Church will not bear witness to the cross of Christ.

We have to train for this. We have to speak this. If I could put just a phrase on it, say something.

Christ Church should be known for saying something of substance about our Lord and his death on our behalf.

We'll give ourselves to the glory of God as our chief concern. will bear witness to the cross of Christ as our constant vocation.

And then in 34 to 37, we will walk in the light of Christ as our decided pathway of choice. Look again for me at 34 to 37.

[19 : 32] So the crowd answered him, We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up?

Who is the Son of Man? So Jesus said to them, The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going.

While you have the light, believe in the light that you may become sons of light. When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.

Grab hold of what he says in verse 35. Put your eyes on it again. The light is among you for a little while longer.

Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you. In context, those words were meted out against the cynicism of the crowds.

[20 : 38] Notice their questions. Don't you remain forever? In other words, how is it that you would actually die and be lifted up and yet be worthy of our attention?

Or when Jesus said, I will draw all people to myself, it is as though their questions are, oh, so now you are the center of all things? You can already hear the rejecting movement being propelled through their own questions.

It's as if they're saying, you are not the center of all things. You have no ultimate say in what I give myself to. I'm free to chart my own course.

I'm free to walk in my own way. And the words of Jesus here then about being the light and walking in the light are words of warning.

And I would say, especially for any one of us who took vows today to live as becometh a follower of Christ. Be careful.

[21 : 52] Christ Church Chicago, be warned. Your feet are already choosing to go where your mind directs.

and your mind selects what your heart truly wants. And your heart wants what your will is ultimately bent on believing.

And there are in the church and outside the church men, women, students, children, who like chaff among wheat sways in the same communion but in a self-willed way.

The warning here is that it's possible to not walk in the spirit. Many here need to know that not all are unreservedly even this morning bowing to Christ.

Some will not yet have learned from him or been tutored by his spirit. Some of us have not yet understood what it is to actually order the walking out of our lives under the very word of Christ.

[23 : 32] And if that is the case for you, then the result is, as Jesus says, you are walking in the darkness. Indeed, it says, and you do not know where you are going.

Unwilling to come into the light, some men and some women within the church are more like infants that are incapable of coming forth from a darkened womb.

But birth and rebirth is what brings you into life. I would say that the conviction that we should share as we walk forward together is that we are to be a congregation known for walking in the light, that the light of Christ is to be our pathway of choice.

And that is going to mean departing from roads well-traveled, collecting ourselves from the ruin of ruts long traverse, a turning, a repenting, an exiting from a cave of deception into the lightness of day that we would be, as the text says, sons of light.

This is what John's gospel opened on, that not everyone believed him, but for as many who did believe him, to them he gave the right to become children of God.

[25 : 12] Well, as we today take our first steps as Christ Church Chicago, and we consider who will we become and what convictions will be with us, may these three from this text be secure, like anchors, immovable.

Our chief concern must be the glory of God. Our constant vocation must be bearing witness to the cross of Christ.

Our lives must daily demonstrate a pathway of choice that keeps us in the light of Christ.

And if this holds, if this is who we become, then 50 years from now, this place from which I'm standing will still be preaching the gospel in ways that are meaningful to this city and the world.

may it be so. Amen. Our heavenly father, as we now covenant again, just to sing with one another before we leave today, I pray that everyone who is listening to this today or watching it would be arrested by the spirit of the living God in ways that we would orient our living and our dying to your glory, that we would give our speaking to your cross, that we would give our feet, our hands, our eyes, our heart, our will to the pathway of your word.

[27 : 19] for Christ's sake, Amen. Amen. Amen, O love divine and sing, this soul of my name, O glory shine around.

O Lamb of God, run near within, my heart up here comes in, the gospel's fearless sound.

Come down your comfort, earth, and catch your lust for Jesus' name.

O Lamb, your fire burn until our passion turns in change, just a few to pray.

Come down your heart, the stony parts of power, deceitful hearts and will, see them imparted by grace.

[29 : 03] Come down, O comforter, come down, and capture us for Jesus' renown.

Let love and charity be mine, for all to see which spring from mercy I have found.

Let love and charity be mine, for all to see which spring from mercy I have found.

Come down, O comforter, come down, and capture us for Jesus' renown.

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[30 : 35] Come down, O comforter, come down, and capture us for Jesus' renown.

Come down, O comforter, come down, and capture us for Jesus' renown. Wow, what a great day. I'm standing in the building, and I hope that you'll find your way over here this afternoon between noon and 3.

I'm not going home, and I'll be able to wave at you from the distance. got my mask ready and for those of you who are founding members we look forward to you being able to sign that document and for everybody come on over and we've got people in place with great distancing and you can pick up your shirt Christ Church and we'll celebrate and then come again tonight 7 30 our normal prayer meeting time we're going to have a founding dessert we're going to offer some prayers and we're going to be with one another catching up and celebrating all that God has done receive then today a benediction Christ Church Chicago watch yourselves so that you may not lose what we have worked for but may win a full reward everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God whoever abides in the teaching has both the father and the son amen we'll see you in a little bit today God bless you you