

(6) Judgement and life

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[0 : 00] This morning's reading is John 12, verses 20 to 36, and that can be found on page 1084. John 12, starting at verse 20.

Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, Sir, we wish to see Jesus.

Philip went and told Andrew. Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it.

And whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me. And where I am, there will my servant be also.

[1 : 05] If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him. 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 had spoken to him.

Jesus answered, This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world. Now will a 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 Lord that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up?

[2 : 06] Who is this 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 darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light. We're continuing our series of talks in John chapter 11 and 12.

Why don't I pray for us? Heavenly Father, we want to remember that we live between the death and resurrection of Jesus and his return in glory at the end of time.

And we pray therefore, Heavenly Father, that you would help us to listen to you this morning as we look at John chapter 12 together. We pray that you would please change the way in which we think about you and the way in which we think about our world, that we would be better equipped to live in the light of Jesus' return.

And we ask it for his name's sake. Amen. Well, if you had to choose the greatest event in world history, I wonder what it would be.

[3 : 23] I guess if you lived in the States, you might say the American Declaration of Independence. If you lived in France, you might say the French Revolution. If you lived in Eastern Europe, you might say the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The list is endless, isn't it? If you're a scientist, you might say the invention of the internal combustion engine or the first man's space flight or whatever it is. Because, of course, the difficulty is finding one event that is important for everyone.

Well, today we are doing just that. We are looking at the one event in history that stands over and above everything else, and it is the death of Jesus.

And we see in John chapter 12, Jesus himself explaining for us precisely why his death is so important. Now, we began to see something of that last week, didn't we?

So look again at chapter 12, verse 23, where knowing that it's just a few days before he'll be killed, Jesus says that the moment of his greatest achievements will be his death.

[4 : 29] The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. And we see the importance of Jesus' death, again, underlined for us in today's passage, verses 27 to 36, where if you look at verse 28, Jesus prays, Father, glorify your name.

And the Father replies, I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again. It's rather extraordinary, isn't it? In the first century, crucifixion was reserved for the very worst criminals.

It was a wretched death. Yet this is the only time here, in verse 28, it's the only time in John's Gospel that God himself directly speaks.

And what is it that he wants us to grasp? It is that Jesus' death was not a mistake, but the moment of his greatest glory, the most important event in the history of the world.

And today, as I said, we're going to hear from the lips of Jesus that's why his death, why his crucifixion is so important. And you'll see three things on the outline. So let's look at them together.

[5 : 39] First of all, God's saying to us this morning that in the death of Jesus, the world is judged. In the death of Jesus, the world is judged.

Have a look at verse 31. Now is the judgment of this world. Now will the ruler of this world be cast out. Now, of course, the irony is that when the authorities sent Jesus to be crucified, they quite assume that they were the ones who were passing judgment on Jesus.

But in reality, verse 31, it's the opposite that's true. The death of Jesus was the time of judgment on this world. Now let me explain that because it means, of course, that as we look at the death of Jesus, we are seeing the full extent of human rebellion against God displayed.

It's in that sense that the death of Jesus demonstrates God's judgment. So have a look on to chapter 12, verse 44. And Jesus cried out and said, Whoever believes in me believes not in me, but in him who sent me.

And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. In other words, to believe in Jesus, to believe in God, to reject Jesus is to reject God. And that must be the case because of what Jesus goes on to say in verse 49.

[7 : 01] For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has given me a commandment, what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life.

What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me. Now we get this throughout John's Gospel. What Jesus says is what God says.

What Jesus does is what God does. If you want to know what God is like, you look at Jesus. And therefore, of course, it stands to reason, doesn't it, that if we reject Jesus, while we are rejecting God himself.

Now clearly, final judgment is reserved for the end of time. But judgment is revealed at the cross in this sense, that it highlights the reality and the depth and awfulness of mankind's rebellion against God.

It's extraordinary. All the Gospel writers depict the most extraordinary coalition coming together, lined up against Jesus to crucify him.

[8 : 07] The Jewish religious establishment, the Roman secular authorities, not to mention the crowds in Jerusalem, all of them clamouring for him to be crucified. In the death of Jesus, human nature is exposed.

We would rather kill Jesus than have him as our God. That is what all of us are by nature like. Which, of course, can come as a great shock, can't it?

Because we, again, by nature, think and assume that we are well disposed towards God. But we've already seen in John's Gospel that Jesus says that we naturally hate him.

I've put John 7, 7 on the outline. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me. Because I testify that what it does is evil. And there's no more powerful evidence than that, is there?

That when God himself comes to earth, a wide coalition of people, everyone in Jerusalem comes together to have him crucified.

[9 : 11] Now, just in case we're in any doubt, why not go and talk to a friend or neighbour this afternoon, who is not a Christian, and say, are you willing to treat Jesus Christ as King of your life?

Because, of course, although we're good at giving Jesus the occasional nod, just perhaps like we would the security guard at work as we walk into the offices, if there is a security guard, we are not willing to have him as King over us.

Indeed, that may describe one or two, perhaps here this morning. And that attitude, John tells us, is shown supremely in the cross as the reality of human nature is exposed.

In the death of Jesus, the world is judged. But secondly, in the death of Jesus, Satan is driven out. Have a look again at verse 31.

Now is the judgment of this world. Now will the ruler of this world be cast out. Now the ruler of this world, there is the devil or Satan.

[10:23] And the irony is that although the death of Jesus must have seemed like the greatest triumph for Satan, in reality, it is the moment of his defeat.

Now of course, as soon as our culture thinks about the devil, it thinks of a figure of fun, red, with horns, a trident, a wispy tail, not to be taken seriously. And I think even if we reject that kind of stereotype, we can often think to ourselves, well, evil is the kind of person who locks up his daughter in Austria and keeps her there for 25 years and abuses her terribly.

But of course, no, the reality of evil is in our own hearts. And John's Gospel gives us a picture of Satan as a jailer who holds us in captive to him under God's wrath.

All of us naturally belong to him in his kingdom. Have a look at John 8, 44 on the outline. As Jesus says, you belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires.

And then verse 47, he who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God. None of us naturally belong to God.

[11:49] All of us naturally belong to Satan. It sounds outrageous, doesn't it? But you see, Jesus is saying there are only two sides you can be on, either God's side or the devil's side.

Satan is the jailer who holds people captive under God's wrath. But in his death, Jesus has paid the punishment for our rebellion against God.

And so Satan is now powerless, as if those prison gates have been flung wide open. Those who trust in Jesus are free from his grip because of his death.

And of course, wonderfully, the evidence is there every time someone becomes a Christian and puts their trust in Jesus, as they move from the realm of Satan to the realm of Jesus.

Now, in some rare instances, you even hear, don't you, have evil spirits being driven out when that happens. For many of us it's not like that, but the reality is no different from that. Now, as I was looking at this over the last couple of weeks, I think I was very aware that we don't always find it easy to believe that Satan has been defeated, that the sufferings and tragedies that dominate our world did not cease, did they, when Jesus was crucified 2,000 years ago.

[13:09] So perhaps an illustration will help at this point. On Thursday, the people of London drove Ken Livingstone out of office. He has been defeated or cast out, to use the language of verse 31.

His fate has been sealed by the electorate. Yesterday, the papers declared his defeat to the nation, but this morning, nothing has changed.

The bendy buses will still be driving up and down Lordship Lane despite the fact that Boris has promised to scrap them. Because, of course, we need to wait. And no doubt it won't be the last we hear of dear Ken either as he continues to exercise what remaining influence he has over Londoners.

And the defeat of Satan is similar. His decisive defeat was achieved at the cross, but things haven't changed overnight. It's not until the final judgment day that we will see he is well and truly defeated. In the meantime, he strives and struggles. He refuses to accept the inevitable, seeking to cause as much havoc in God's world as he can, at which point, perhaps, the comparison with Ken Livingstone probably breaks down.

[14:27] You see, Satan would love people not to trust in Jesus. He will persist in his attempts to persuade believers that they are not fit for God and his people.

He will do everything he can to distract us from the certain confidence that we can have if we trust in Jesus. Nevertheless, Jesus assures us that by his death, Satan has been defeated.

So in the death of Jesus, the world is judged. In the death of Jesus, Satan is driven out. Thirdly, in the death of Jesus, people are drawn to Jesus. Have a look at verse 32.

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. Now, once again, there's an irony here because it was the assumption of the religious establishment that in the death of Jesus, they would be putting an end to the popular movement that he had begun.

His followers would go back to their fishing boats and the whole thing would simply disappear and fizzle out. But in reality, of course, quite the opposite.

[15 : 39] Remember verse 24, which we looked at last week, that illustration of the seed that falls to the ground? Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it bears much fruit. It is Jesus' death that is necessary for there to be eternal life with God. And that is clear, isn't it, in verse 32, it's precisely because he will be lifted up that he will draw all people to himself.

In fact, it's almost as if in verse 32, Jesus is deliberately echoing the prophet Isaiah, which we looked at, didn't we, in Isaiah 52 and 53 in our study groups just a couple of weeks ago, and many people would say he's deliberately echoing that prophecy in Isaiah 52 and 53.

For those who weren't there, I put a couple of the references on the outline. Isaiah 52, verse 13, which explains what the death of Jesus will achieve. See, my servant will act wisely.

He will be raised and lifted up, exactly the same word that Jesus uses here in John chapter 12, lifted up and highly exalted. And what is it that he'll achieve by his death, by being lifted up?

[17 : 02] Why, Isaiah continues, he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned his own way, and the Lord has laid on him, the iniquity of us all. Jesus dying for our transgression and sin to pay the judgments that we each deserve.

I wonder if you remember reading about Gareth Griffith about five years ago. He made the headlines, the world was amazed that he fell 13,000 feet from an airplane after his parachute failed to open, ground, he hit the ground and survived.

But the only reason he managed to survive was because his instructor heroically just rolled underneath him just before he hit the ground, so he was the one who took the impact of the fall in his place.

His instructor died instantly, Michael Griffith, Gareth Griffith amazingly escaped with just a few fractures and recovered within a few weeks. What a story of amazing sacrifice.

[18 : 25] If the instructor hadn't died, Gareth Griffith would not have survived. Verse 32, the cross is the moment of Jesus' glory because if he hadn't died, we would have to bear God's judgment ourselves.

No one would be drawn to him. But because of his death, why he says, he will draw all people to himself.

Now in verse 32, Jesus isn't saying he will draw everyone, all people, rather the word translated there means all types of people, all sorts of people, which I think makes sense given what we saw last week in verse 20 as some Greeks came to Jesus' disciples and wanted to see him.

And the point is that anyone, Greeks, Jewish people here in John chapter 12, people from any nation who put their trust in Jesus, why wonderfully they'll be drawn to him.

And of course the evidence for that is all over the globe today, isn't it? In a way in which John, as he wrote this, could only begin to imagine as all sorts of people from all nations have put their trust in Jesus.

[19 : 39] Jesus. That is why the cross is so important. In the death of Jesus, the world is judged, Satan is driven out, and people are drawn to Jesus. I want to spend the rest of our time, if I may, applying this passage to us in two ways.

First of all, to consider the challenge of what Jesus goes on to say in verses 35 to 36 as he appeals to the crowd to put their trust in him.

Have a look, will you, at verse 35. 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. Now this imagery of darkness and light is very powerful, isn't it?

With a clear challenge to put our trust in Jesus Christ before it is too late. And there may just be one or two here today who need to hear that from the lips of Jesus himself.

[20 : 46] Perhaps we've never investigated the claims of Jesus, perhaps we have done, perhaps we've been coming along to church for some time. And actually the one thing we've never done is to make a clear decision to follow him.

Well, would you heed the warning and encouragement of Jesus to do that, to do it soon? Why not even today? But then the second application is the challenge I think for us to see the death of Jesus as the most important event in history.

And I want us to apply that to the way in which we think about other Christian groups. I think the issue can come at us in many guises. If we work, if there's a Christian group in our office, we may find ourselves thinking, well, should I join them?

Or as a local church, should we be joining other churches? If so, which ones? Which other churches should we be working together, perhaps having services together occasionally as we do with the Grove Chapel or perhaps organising a mission together, something like that?

Or even just asking the basic question, well, what sort of church should I be going to? And clearly as Christians, we often find ourselves asking those sorts of questions. Well, John chapter 12 shows a really important principle to grasp.

[22 : 05] It is to ask the question, do they see the death of Jesus as the most important event in history? Is the achievement of his death central at the very heart of their message?

Now, if you've read Oliver Barclay's book, *From Cambridge to the World*, which I think is on the bookstall, it was last time I looked, you'll know this is precisely the issue in 1919, when there was a discussion as to whether the Cambridge University Christian Union, known as the KICU, the Cambridge Intercollegiate Christian Union, should work with another Christian group, which historically they had had links with, the STM, the Student Christian Movement.

It's a great book to read because it shows that in every generation Christians need to stand firm for what is important in the Christian life. Now the secretary of the KICU, the Cambridge Intercollegiate Christian Union, met some of the leaders of the Student Christian Movement and this is how he describes the meeting.

After an hour's conversation which got us nowhere, one direct and vital question was put, does the SCM consider the death of Jesus as the central point of the message?

And the answer was given, no, not central, although it is given a place in our teaching. That settled the matter. For we explained to them at once that the death of Jesus was so much the heart of our message that we could never join with the movement which gave it a lesser place.

[23 : 41] And in many respects, today's flourishing Christian student work is the result of that one decision in 1919. We live in a culture where there are many groups, many churches which profess to be Christian.

The pressure will always be on to work with all of them. We may be thought of divisive if we don't. But I take it that if we understand John chapter 12, we will ask the question, do they see the death of Jesus as the most important event in history?

And is the achievement of his death central at the very heart of their message? Because God himself says in the passage we're looking at today that the cross is the moment of Jesus' greatest glory.

And particularly important for us to grasp that today as we share bread and wine together in a few moments. Because as we remember Jesus' death for us, these verses show us, don't they, the enormous cost at which these achievements came.

You see, look again at verse 27. As Jesus says, now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?

[25 : 04] Father, save me from this hour, but for this purpose I have come to this hour. Here is the one who could heal diseases with a touch, who could cast out evil spirits with a word, who could calm a storm in a moment and instantly.

Yet here is the one who is troubled in agony as he contemplates his death. Now it can't, can it be simply that he's troubled at the prospect of death?

Because we know from John 11 that he is the resurrection and the life. So then what can explain it? Well surely it is that he feels the burden of what his death will achieve.

He feels the weight of mankind's sin pressing down on him. He senses the mighty guilt, the weight of our guilt pressing down on him as he prepares to bear the judgment for sin.

As he prepares to bear the judgment that is rightly ours, why he groans, he cries out, now is my soul troubled. And therefore I take it that as we do share bread and wine together this morning, we can be confident, those of us trusting in him, that he has carried our sins, that he has died bearing the judgment our sins deserve.

[26 : 27] Our sins have been laid upon him, born by him, that his righteousness might be accounted to us. Well let's pray together.

Father, glorify your name.

Then a voice came from heaven, I have glorified it and I will glorify it again. Heavenly Father, we marvel afresh that the Lord Jesus Christ should come to earth and humble himself even to death. death upon a cross. We praise you for what his death achieved. Thank you that in his death the world is judged, that Satan is driven out and that all sorts of people are drawn to the Lord Jesus, part of his people.

Thank you, Heavenly Father, that in that wretched act we see your moment of great glory. glory. And we pray, Heavenly Father, you'd help us to grasp these things more clearly for ourselves, to believe in them, and so to grow in confidence in the life, eternal life, that Jesus offers.

[27 : 55] And we ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.