

John 12:44

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[0 : 00] I want to turn for a little to our first reading, John's Gospel, John chapter 12, verse 48.

Jesus says there in verse 48 of John 12, The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge.

The word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. Now, this was quite a unique moment in the life of our Lord, because this was the moment before Jesus goes from the public into the private.

For three years, he had exercised a public ministry, teaching, preaching, healing, comforting, talking, being involved with people all the time.

Here we are, as it were, at the very last. This is his last dealing publicly, as it were, with the public.

From then on, from John chapter 13, we find that Jesus goes into private, into private with his disciples, where we have the upper room, the foot washing, the institution of the Lord's Supper.

[1 : 27] We have Jesus' tremendous teaching that we find in John 14, 15, and 16, and then into the high priestly prayer. So, as we say, it's moving from the public domain into the private.

And in a sense, Jesus, as we have here, Jesus' final message, because that's what we have from verse 44. There's this last section where it says, Jesus came to save the world.

That's the heading that we have here. And Jesus is in this particular part there. He is re-emphasizing and teaching again who he is, why he has come, and what he brings.

That's really what he's teaching, who he is, why he has come, and what he brings. And he's telling us the great blessing of accepting him and how serious it is a thing to reject him.

And that's one of the things that we really have to take to heart, because the rejection of Jesus is the most serious and solemn thing that we can do.

[2 : 39] Now, it's not for me and it's not for anybody to work out really as to who the Lord has saved and who he hasn't.

And as we know, the Lord, in a second, in a moment, takes people. And I believe, I believe firmly that the Lord is taking to glory far, far, far, far more than we realize.

I am fully persuaded of that. And I believe that there will be many surprises in glory. But that doesn't in any way take away from the fact that we ourselves must examine ourselves as to where we are, because this teaches us the great blessing of accepting him and the absolute folly of rejecting him.

Now, Jesus had uttered the great words again in verse 46 that, I am coming to the world as a light, that he is the light of the world. But sadly, there were many who didn't see it that way.

And back in verse 37, it says, Though he had done so many things before them, they still did not believe in him. And then it tells us something very sad, so that the words spoken by the prophet I say might be fulfilled.

[4 : 00] He has blinded, goes on to verse 40, He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.

What's that saying?

This is what we believe is termed a judicial blindness, where people who have lived with the light and in the light and have had the light day in, day out, and have refused at every turn and every opportunity to come into that light, that there comes a point where the Lord says, and this is obviously what he did with these people, where he says, right, you are in this darkness.

The light is beside you, and you are refusing to acknowledge and to look upon the light that is Jesus, my son. And because of your continued refusal and your continued denial of who he is, I am leaving you in that darkness.

For the Lord, as it were, it's by way of judgment, hands people over as they are. And it's a very, very solemn and serious thing.

And so I would urge everybody here, when you are in the light, and tonight we're in the light, that you seek that that light will shine into your own heart.

[5 : 27] Now, Jesus sums up his teachings and his three-year ministry really from verse 44. And he shows us there that it is the Father who sent him into the world.

He tells us that to see him, the Son, is to see the Father. He tells us, Jesus says, that his words are really the words of God, that to accept him, Jesus, is to bring salvation, and to reject him is to bring eternal judgment.

And it's verse 48 that I'm wanting to look at tonight. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words that are judged. The word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.

But before we actually look at this, at verse 47, I think there's something we need to clear up here because it says in verse 47, if anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him, for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.

Now, what does Jesus mean here? Because I think we all know that the Bible makes it very clear to us that there is going to be a judgment.

[6 : 45] There's going to be a judgment day. And the Bible teaches us who that judge is going to be. It's going to be Jesus. He's going to come and judge the world in righteousness.

Right throughout the Bible, it makes it very clear that the judge on that day will be the Lord Jesus. So what does it mean when it says, I do not, if anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him, for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.

Jesus is here speaking about his first coming. Jesus came into this world 2,000 years ago for an express purpose.

He came to save the world. That's why he came. Number one priority was to save sinners.

He didn't come in judgment. His second coming, because he's coming again, and the Bible makes that very clear to us, he's coming again, and that time he is coming in judgment.

[7 : 53] When he comes again, he is going to judge the world. But that is in the future. We don't know when. It could be tonight. It could be tomorrow. It might be, we might never see it in our own lifetime, but it's going to come.

But at the moment, we are living, we are still living in this period of his first coming. And Jesus has come to save the world.

That's where we're at tonight. And isn't that wonderful that it's not as a judge of the world that he's here tonight, but as a savior of the world. He has come to save.

And all the glorious invitations of the gospel are going out to you tonight. What are you going to do with them? Are you just going to say, oh, it doesn't bother me. Or are you going to respond to them or seek that the Lord will come into your own heart?

Tonight, Jesus, as we say, is savior. And Jesus has come, he tells us, into this dark world as a light, to be a light.

[8 : 56] And that's a great message of the gospel. Verse 46, whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. Can I ask you a question tonight?

Are you in spiritual darkness? In other words, is the way of salvation clouded in mist? Is it such that you say, well, I think we mentioned this, by the way, in the morning, I can't remember, but did we, when you look at the way of salvation and the whole scheme of salvation and Jesus dying on the cross and all these things, are you saying to yourself, you know, I just don't get it.

I just can't piece it together. I look at people and I say, how come, how come they were able to believe and here's me and I can't. I just can't see it.

Well, if that's the case, you're still in darkness. And Jesus says, it's for you, I came. Because there are loads of people in here tonight who are exactly like that.

I can remember that situation myself so clearly where I was saying, how do I get from here to there? I know that the Bible asks me to believe, but I can't.

[10 : 19] And even when I came to the point of wanting to, sometimes I didn't know what I wanted. Did I want to or did I not want to? There were certainly times I really wanted to. But how could, do I get from here to there?

I couldn't work it out, though I knew the gospel said, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved. I knew all the answers. If somebody had said to me, how do you become a Christian?

I could have told him chapter and verse where to look up. But I still couldn't see it myself. I was in spiritual darkness. And it's not until Jesus, who is a light, opens your heart, opens to see.

And that's why you have to go to him and say, Lord, I can't see myself. But open my mind. And that's what he will do. And that's the great thing about light, is light dispels the darkness. You cannot have light and darkness together. Because as soon as the light comes, the darkness goes. And that's the great and the wonderful thing about the Lord Jesus Christ.

[11 : 22] You see, it's like at the very beginning when God created this world. At the very beginning, he said, we find it saying, God said, let there be light and there was light.

And just as in the initial creation, God brought light in by the power of his word, so he brings light into our heart. And that light dispels the darkness.

When you put on a light, you're able to see. And that's what happens with the whole way of salvation.

All of a sudden, it becomes clear. Now, I shouldn't say all of a sudden. For some people, it's all of a sudden. It's like switching on a light. I once was blind, but now I see.

For others, it's gradual. It's like the dawn. You know the dawn of the day? It's dark. And then it comes into the light. And it's so gradual.

[12 : 22] You can never really say, well, at which particular point you're saying, I can see. If you're out in the night, supposing for whatever reason and you're out in the moor or anything, supposing you were doing a night's fishing and making your way back or something like that, it's sometimes very hard to say just when the light of the day has fully arrived.

But gradually, you're seeing a little more clearly, a little more clearly. And that's how it is for a lot of people. The Lord is bringing that light. And you're saying, you know, it's now beginning to make sense.

I understand. These things that were all kind of clouded and I just couldn't work them out, now it's become clear. Or it's becoming clearer.

Because as long as we're in this world, there'll be aspects of salvation which are beyond us. And that's what Jesus is doing. He's bringing light into our understanding.

And I remember once I came to faith, once I came to an assurance of faith, it all seemed so clear. And I was saying to myself, how was I so bogged down back there?

[13 : 32] How could I not manage? It was because I needed that light. I had to cry for that light. I had to come to the place and the point and I said, Lord, come into my heart.

But not only does the Lord bring light to our mind, He brings light not only to our mind and understanding but also to our heart and to our will and to our affections and to everything about us so that our whole being has moved Godward.

And so there is this light. And that's what Jesus is talking about. Tonight, Jesus, as we said, is Savior who is offering this light and life.

However, very solemnly, and that's why we have to, because we've got to remember that while Jesus is the Savior of this world and while He is setting out before us great and glorious invitations, here at the very end, as He did so often, He sends warnings as well.

because Jesus knew in a way that none of us can understand what it means to be lost. It's a fearfully solemn thing.

[14 : 45] And He's saying, no, don't let that happen to you. Look to me. And so Christ, as He is offering Himself, He said, really what He is saying is, it's not a take it or leave it.

Or it is, if it is, what He's saying is this, you either take it, but if you leave it, it's at your peril. It costs, it'll cost you all if you ignore Jesus, if you turn away from Him.

Because that's what He's saying, the one who rejects me and does not receive my words as a judge, the word I have spoken will judge him on the last day.

It's very interesting how often this word judge appears in these last, in these verses 47 and 48. There is to be a judgment.

That's what's going to happen. And as we know, Jesus is going to be that judge. And we're told there, the one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge.

[15 : 51] The word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. The last day. There's going to be a last day for everybody. Everything is not going to carry on as it is.

And so often when we look at the great events taking place in the world and all the international conferences and all the great sporting events and the Olympic Games coming this year and every four years and already people planning for the next and the next World Cup and people.

And again, we've got to do, we've got to plan. That's part of life. We're always planning. But there's going to come a time when it's a last. It's a last of everything. And Jesus says there's going to be a last day.

And again, Jesus tells us that that last day will come when everything appears normal. Just as in the days of Noah and the days of Sodom, they ate, they drank, they were given in marriage. In other words, it was normality. Everybody was going about their normal business, doing this, doing that, and then all of a sudden things changed and Jesus said that's how it's going to be when the Son of Man comes again.

[17 : 03] And Christ is going to be judge and there's going to be a judgment. Now the Bible shows us very clearly that those who have accepted Him, He will take to be with Himself.

Those whose identity in this world is in Jesus. Is your identity tonight in Jesus? Do you belong to Him? And remember, this is a very personal thing.

And I believe there are people in here tonight whose identity is in Jesus and they've never told anybody else about it. Well, you should tell because not only are we to believe in the heart but confess with the mouth.

It's your identity tonight in Jesus. Or is your identity in something else or somebody else? Because you see, at the end of the day, there are only two destinies.

There's either heaven or hell. And we read about that in the rich man and Lazarus. And just as over the last few Sundays, I was preaching about these last few, the last two or three chapters in Revelation, wonderful truths that we were hearing about glory and what will be.

[18 : 24] But it's still hard for us to understand. It's also hard for us to understand what hell itself will be like. The individuality of the passion will not be destroyed.

There'll still be that individuality. But you know, I believe that in hell there will be a loss of identity in a way that there won't be in heaven.

And you say, how's that? Well, if we go to what Jesus told us about the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man in hell has no name.

He has no name even on earth. His identity was all caught up in his riches. That's who he was known as, a rich man. It was the riches that gave him impetus to his life.

His whole being was caught up with this. Once that was taken away, he was a nobody. He had nothing. And I cannot think of anything more awful or solemn than that.

[19 : 32] All these things that he loved and all these things that he lived for, they were all taken away. And I would say to you tonight, what are you building your identity upon?

Because you're building on something. If you are building your identity on anybody or anything other than Jesus, it'll collapse. It will come to nothing.

It will disintegrate. And we have the picture in hell of fire. And I don't think that my own understanding of it is not so much in the literal sense of burning flame, but of that which consumes, that which will cause disintegration.

although the person will continue forever. You put anything on a fire, whether it's peats or log or coal or anything, it disintegrates.

And everything that we have built in this world outside of Christ, it will disintegrate. And it's an awful thing.

[20 : 39] And this is part of why Jesus is telling us so clearly to flee from the wrath to come. the rich man, he was a somebody in this world, but he was a nobody in the next one.

And you know, the funny thing that when we read in that chapter in Luke chapter 16, we find that the rich man, it's very interesting, how his whole philosophy, as it were, in hell has changed.

Who is it he's calling for? Who does he want? He wants the very man that he despised and ignored all his life, Lazarus. This rich man, Jesus told this story, remember, against covetousness and against those who lived for riches because the Pharisees were, the Pharisees were the kind of people who, if you were a somebody, they thought you were great.

If you were a nobody, they ignored you. And Jesus was showing how that was so wrong. And Jesus was highlighting to them just how completely wrong the Pharisees were in their absolute obsession with wealth and with prestige and with honor and all these things.

And this beggar, Lazarus, was outside. He was at the gates of the rich man. It doesn't tell us that the rich man ever gave him anything.

[22 : 02] All he got were the scraps, the things that fell from his table. It doesn't mean that the rich man at any point ever came out and said, here you are, here's some of my food. It's just the bits that fell.

And obviously, that's what the dogs had come for because there were dogs at the gate as well. And these dogs came and they were licking Lazarus' sword. But yet in hell, the rich man is asking for the merry man he despised and ignored all his life, sitting beside him.

And Jesus is, that's one of the things that Jesus is highlighting before us. Waking up, look at what's beside you. And we're confronted with a world full of needs as well.

How do we react to these things? Do we look at these things with the heart of Jesus, with the compassion of Jesus, or do we have the hard-heartedness of the rich man who just, there's the beggar, oh, I'm not going to bother with him?

But it was a different picture altogether in hell because this is the very one, the very person that he's asking for. And another thing that's very interesting, you know, we seem to live in a, I would say, a blame culture, don't we?

[23 : 21] When anything goes wrong, anywhere, people straight away are trying to find somebody to pin the fault, blame on. Oh, it's his fault. Somebody has to pay.

Heads have got to roll. It's part of today's society. It didn't used to be like that, but we're living in this, it's always somebody's fault. Not my fault, but it's somebody's fault.

And you know, there's something of that, I think, in hell itself. Because the rich man is more or less saying, I didn't get, it's not my fault, I shouldn't be here.

It's not my fault. I wasn't told. I didn't get the opportunity. I wasn't told about this. And that's why he's wanting Lazarus to be sent back to his brothers and to tell them how things are.

And he's saying to Abraham, you've got to send them, my brother, my Lazarus back to tell my brothers. And Abraham says to him, listen, supposing one rose from the dead, they won't believe.

[24 : 22] if they don't believe Abraham and the prophet, Moses and the prophets. In other words, if you don't hear the word of God, if you, that's Moses and the prophets, it's the word of God.

And he's saying, if you don't believe the word of God, there's nothing else. And this is all tying in with what Jesus said, the one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge.

And that was a fault with the rich man. He wouldn't believe the word. He had the word, but he wouldn't believe it. And this word was coming to judge him at the last.

Supposing one comes back from the dead, he will not believe. Hell is an awful place. I believe it's a place where people are consumed with jealousy, with anger, and resentment, and with bitterness, and with lust, where everything, where a person is being eaten up, as it were, with these things.

Where God's mercy is not. That's a fearful, fearful thought. And you know the awful thing about it, and this is what, what really the Bible is showing, is at the end of the day that everybody who ultimately ends up in a lost eternity has chosen it themselves.

[25 : 55] That's what's happened. Because at the end of the day, the judge of all the earth will say, I am going to give you what you've chosen.

If throughout your whole life, to the very last breath, you have said, we will not have this man rule over us. If right throughout your life you push Jesus away, Jesus says, I'm going to give you what you chose.

That is, to be separated from me forever. Isn't that solemn? So nobody can turn around and say, oh, it's God's fault.

It's not. The choice is the choice we make. To push Jesus away is making an eternal decision. Think about it. Think about it. But tonight, my friend, Jesus hasn't come as judge. Not yet. He's going to.

[26 : 59] Tonight, he's here as Savior. The Savior of the world. Will you call out to him and ask him very simply, Lord, save me.

Do you know if you ask him that, do you know what he will do? He will do that very thing. He'll save you. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.