

The Gospel of John
Week Twenty
John 12:20-50

Day One

20 Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. 21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." 22 Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. 23 Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

v. 20 – These Greeks were either converts to Judaism or Greek-speaking Jews who did not come back to Judea after the Babylonian captivity. They had come up to the Feast but the local Jews did not care to associate with these Greeks. We see this in Acts 6:

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food (Acts 6:1).

Prejudice and bias are part of the human sin experience. **Are there any groups against which you are biased?**

v. 21 – Some Greeks approached Philip, thinking he would be more sympathetic to their cause, and requested to have a meeting with Jesus. **When was the last time anyone told you they wanted to meet with Jesus, knowing that you are close to Him and could gain them access?** There are many out there who are like these Greeks, who would like to meet Jesus. Our job is to get close enough to them so they can ask.

vs. 22&23 – The disciples were so excited by this request that they took it straight to Jesus. **Was it because those who asked were Greeks?** Their report seemed to stir Jesus' heart, for He began to talk about His imminent departure. **Was this because He knew He would die so that those Gentile Greeks would have access to the Father?** We aren't told if Jesus actually answered the disciples' about the Greeks meeting with Him.

Notice that the hour had finally come for Jesus to be glorified. **How would He be glorified?** He would do so by carrying out the will of the Father to the cross. We will visit this issue again when we get to John 17.

v. 24 – Jesus used another agricultural parable to describe what was about to happen to Him. He was going to die so that there would be life, just like a seed. This principle applies not only to Jesus, but also to you and me. There are times when it looks like we are being restricted or maybe even dying to a dream or vision God gave us. If we can see this as an opportunity for growth, then we can embrace our own "death" just like Jesus

did His! **Is God asking you to fall into the ground and die at work, in ministry or your career? Can you trust Him for your life and success in those areas?**

Day Two

25 The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. 27 "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." 29 The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

v. 25 – This was a theme that ran throughout Jesus' public ministry. Some reference to self or living by dying is in every gospel. The stakes are real, for those who lose their self-life now will inherit eternal life. That's a good deal, but it can be painful in the short-run as you walk through the death process. **Where is God asking you to lay down your life? In your family, career or ministry? Will you take this verse and promise to heart and willingly surrender your dreams and aspirations to Him?** He will take good care of what you entrust to Him, for sure.

That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day (2 Timothy 1:12).

v. 26 – Jesus is not looking for admirers, He is looking for followers. Many think Jesus was and is a great man, and they are correct. He was not just worthy of admiration, however, but worthy of worship. And one way you can worship Him is to follow Him. Where He goes you will go, and He went to the cross.

That gives you an idea of your ultimate destination now (death), but the good news is that resurrection life is available and free to everyone who takes that cross-ward journey. What's more, Jesus made an even more astounding promise for those who follow and serve Him: The Father will honor anyone who serves Jesus! **Can you imagine?** The Father will honor you and me for our service to Jesus!

v. 27 – **If you knew you were going to die in a matter of days, would you be troubled?** You probably would, even though you may be ready to die. Jesus was troubled knowing all that He would face. He had considered the option of asking the Father to spare Him from this hour. **How do I know that?** Because He mentioned it as an option now and when later He said:

Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels (Matthew 26:53).

Jesus had the option to stop the process, but He did not exercise it. He chose to proceed to pick up His cross and die. **Can you do the same as you follow Him?**

v. 28 – Jesus cried out and prayed that God would glorify His name as Jesus embraced the cross. God the Father was so pleased that He spoke audibly from heaven! What Jesus did and said did not escape heaven's notice. When you make the same commitment to glorify God's name in the midst of you painful circumstances, God will notice and speak as well.

v. 29 – It is interesting that, while God spoke, many misunderstand who it was and what He said. Some thought it thunder and others that an angel had spoken. There is plenty of room for misunderstanding when God speaks and everyone has an opinion about it when He does. There is even a wide array of interpretations of what God said through His Word. Yet Jesus knew what the Father said; He didn't need anyone to interpret it for Him. When God speaks to you, you will know as well. God is a good communicator.

Day Three

30 Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. 31 Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. 32 But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." 33 He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. 34 The crowd spoke up, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this 'Son of Man'?"

v. 30 – Jesus explained that the voice did not come for His benefit, but for those with Him. While you often don't need anyone interpreting what God has said to you, you may need to now that He spoke to you for the benefit of someone else. I had it on my mind to meet with one of my staff yesterday and it turned into a tearful but fruitful session. God spoke to me but it was for her benefit.

v. 31 – Jesus was about to perform the great sacrifice that would break the yoke and bonds of the devil. Jesus referred to Satan as the prince of the world. Unless I am mistaken, a King outranks a prince. Jesus was set to take His place on the throne, but He was not going to do it through conquest or political maneuvering. He was going to assume His place by going to the cross. **How do you think you will find your place to rule and reign in this world?** It will be through the cross as well. By the way, don't ever underestimate the spiritual power and authority of the devil. Then also rejoice that Jesus outranks Him in every way.

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

v. 32 – Jesus said that He would draw all men to Himself. He did not say all men would come. There is a yearning in every person for God, but some never find Him and others reject Him when they do. It is our job to take the message of Jesus' sacrificial love to any

and all who will hear and accept it. And when we go, we preach the cross, just like Paul did, but a cross of love and not of condemnation:

But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles (1 Corinthians 1:23).

v. 33 – Jesus was referring to His crucifixion when He said He would be lifted up from the earth. We know that now because we can see the crucifixion in hindsight and put Jesus’ comments in context. Jesus also made reference to His being lifted up earlier in John’s gospel:

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life (John 3:14-15).

v. 34 – The crowd must have understood what Jesus was saying, for their question revealed that Jesus was talking about His death. So I was wrong to say that our view was superior because we know about the crucifixion, but I was right because the listener back then had no concept of the resurrection as it was about to unfold. So Jesus would be lifted up (killed) but He would also live forever as the people expected of the Messiah because of the resurrection. **Does that make sense to you?**

Day Four

35 Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. 36 Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light." When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them. 37 Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. 38 This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: "Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

v. 35 – Jesus had already referred to Himself as the Light of the World, so this is obviously a reference to His imminent departure. Yet I don’t believe this is a reference to the week following in Jesus’ life. He was urging them to put their trust in Him before it was too late, before circumstances would make it even more difficult to put their trust in Him. They saw Jesus and what He had done, what he was doing and the Spirit in which He did them all. If they could not “walk” in that light, then it would be more difficult to do so later.

We have seen this come true, for there has been very little evangelism among Jews since the first century. The opposition to the Way became more intense as the first century progressed

v. 36 – Jesus said what He needed to say and then went into hiding until the Passover so that they would not try to seize Him “before His time.” If one does not put their faith in

Jesus and become a son of light, then that must mean he or she is a “son of darkness.” I want to be a son of light, which means I have light and am a source of light for others. When I am around, I want people to see more clearly, enjoy the warmth of the light and to be released to have their own light shine. **What does it mean to you to be a “son of light”?** **What will you produce if you are that kind of child?** Keep in mind that I am not the source of this light, only Jesus is.

v. 37 – The people and leaders still refused to believe in Jesus. They had hardened their hearts and then they embarked on a course of events that would make the softening of their hearts unlikely. This is why there must be some urgency in the work that we do for the kingdom of God. We do not know how long we have to do the work or people have to respond to God’s initiatives to them through us. Yet in the process, we cannot manipulate people into responding to the light no matter how much we sense they need to do so.

v. 38 – This could sound like God would not permit those who heard Jesus to respond so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. This is not the case. Those who refused to respond to Jesus were accountable for their actions and Isaiah predicted they would do this because their hearts were hard. Of course, there were many who had put their trust in Jesus but, for the most part, the leadership rejected Jesus’ claims and thus led the nation to the brink of judgment, which of course took place 40 years later in 70 AD. More on that tomorrow.

Day Five

39 For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: 40 "He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them." 41 Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him.

vs. 39&40 – You may say after reading this verse, “Aha! You see, God *did* arbitrarily blind their eyes to fulfill prophecy.” And you would be correct, in part. Look at the dynamic in Exodus:

But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said (Exodus 8:15).

First Pharaoh hardened his heart and he did so repeatedly, in spite of Moses’ appeals. Then look what happened eventually:

But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said to Moses (Exodus 9:12).

The leaders in Jesus’ day had hardened their hearts again and again, so eventually God cooperated with their choice and hardened them even more. I pray I never get to that point where God cooperates with my bad choices and hardens my heart! Yet having said

what I just did, **does it bother you in any way that God would do what is described in these verses?** It is a lie to believe anything less than God is good all the time, but from our human perspective, it can be difficult to understand at times.

v. 41 – Wow! Read that verse again. John reported that Isaiah saw Jesus' glory! Isaiah saw it 600 years before Jesus came. He saw it! The question would be: **What and how much did he see?** I have been thinking lately that these Old Testament writers saw more than we give them credit for seeing. This makes me think of a verse we already looked at:

Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56).

So if Isaiah could see Jesus' glory centuries before He came, what should you and I see? If Isaiah spoke about things that had not yet happened as though they had, what should you and I speak about? How much more should we see of Jesus' majesty since we have the benefit of history, the New Testament and Holy Spirit? I want to exceed what Isaiah saw and said. Is that too ambitious of a goal?

Day Six

42 Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved praise from men more than praise from God. 44 Then Jesus cried out, "When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. 45 When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. 46 I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

v. 42 – Yet in spite of all the controversy and the opinions and interpretations of what the Messiah was going to be, many believed in Him. Jesus is so magnificent that if you behold Him for long, you will worship Him. That is because, as He repeatedly explained in John's gospel, He came to save and not condemn. Even before He was “lifted up,” He was drawing men unto Himself.

Yet those who believed were so bound with fear of the leaders that they could not openly profess. This shows the power of culture to mold and shape decisions, even when one knows the decisions are wrong! I think of two passages in this regard:

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe (Proverbs 29:25).

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2).

Has culture shaped your ability to make biblical decisions? Are you a secret admirer of Jesus instead of a disciple and follower? Don't answer too quickly.

v. 43 – John was not excusing the lack of courage by those who secretly believed in Jesus. He summarized their problem: they craved the praise from men more than from God. I have been guilty of the same thing, so I can identify with their cowardice. There was a time when I was more concerned with what those around me thought than what God thought. I was so concerned that someone would think I had ambition that I hid or buried what I thought God wanted me to do. **That's pretty sad, isn't it?** I think I have made progress, but I still have a ways to go. **How about you?**

v. 44 – I am not sure the sequence of this chapter, for John reported that Jesus went into hiding and then that Jesus said something. It isn't really important, for John positioned what Jesus said to reinforce the importance of faith in Jesus. Faith in Him is linked to faith in God the Father. So once again we see that Jesus isn't only one way to God, He is the only way to God. That is not a popular declaration in this many-roads-to-God generation.

v. 45 – Jesus went further to say that anyone who looks at Jesus also sees the Father. That is a bold statement if it isn't true, which of course it is. If you want to know what the Father is like, just study Jesus! **That makes it pretty simple to see and know about God, doesn't it?**

v. 46 – Once again, Jesus referred to Himself as light. Light comes to dispel darkness, so Jesus came with a specific mission of doing away with darkness. It requires faith, however, for this light to be activated. It is inconceivable that anyone can follow Jesus and be in darkness.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path (Psalm 119:105).

The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day (Proverbs 4:18).

Day Seven

47 "As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. 48 There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. 49 For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. 50 I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."

vs. 47&48 – Jesus did not come to judge. He spoke truth and if anyone chose or chooses to reject that truth, then those words will be what judges them, not Jesus. Once again we see Jesus making a statement about His words that only God can make. He declared that

there was authority in His words that had the power to assign men and women to their eternal reward.

Now you understand why it is important that we study God's word, for it contains the words of Jesus. Those words are so powerful that they can save or condemn. **What are you doing to study that Word? To declare that Word? You are convinced that the Word contains words of life, don't you?**

v. 49 – Jesus explained that the Father directed Him not only concerning what to speak but how to say it. Whenever I read this, I think of Proverbs 26:4-5:

Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes (Proverbs 26:4-5).

The Father commanded Jesus to speak at times and to stay silent. They formed a partnership, a covenant team, so that when Jesus spoke, He spoke *from* heaven and *for* heaven. He was not speaking of His own initiative. What He said had the force of heaven behind His words. That is true power. There is no one else in history who can claim that kind of power and authority.

Father, help me to not only know what to say but also how to say it. Please back my words not because I said them, but because you initiated and endorsed them. Amen.

v. 50 – Jesus had confidence in the words He spoke, confidence that those words would lead anyone to eternal life who put their trust in what He said. Jesus' unity with the Father was such that His words had heaven's guarantee. What power and confidence! You can put your trust in what Jesus said and urge others to do the same.

Does this chapter and even parts of John's gospel seem redundant to you? It does to me, but that must be because the Father wanted those words reiterated so that we are without excuse if we do not heed them. Remember, Jesus said His words have life and death depending on whether or not someone believes. So to repeat words of life is not a bad thing at all. Don't you be afraid to remind those around you as to what Jesus said, even if you think they already know them. Those words have power in them and warrant repeating and broadcasting.