

John 12: Surrendered or Self-Serving

The Ultimate Worth of Surrender

John 12.44-50

Then Jesus cried out, “Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the One who sent me. The one who looks at me is seeing the One who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

“If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day. For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. I know that His command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”

JOHN 12.44-50

A. Whoever believes in me does not believe in me alone, but in the One who sent me.

B. Whoever sees me sees the One who sent me.

C. I have come into the world as a light so that no one who believes in me should remain in darkness.

D. As for anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him.

E. I have not come to judge the world, but to save the world.

E. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not receive my words:

D. The word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.

C. I have not spoken on my own; the Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and how to say it.

B. I know that His command leads to eternal life.

A. I speak exactly what the Father has told me to say.

Background Notes

- ❖ The Gospels record five times when Jesus called or cried out—
 - ▶ Twice on the cross - Mark 15.34; Luke 23.46
 - ▶ At the Feast of Tabernacles when he gave his “if you are thirsty” invitation - John 8.37
 - ▶ When he called Lazarus to come out of the tomb - John 11.43
 - ▶ Here at the end of his public ministry - John 12.44
- ❖ No setting or occasion is ascribed to this declaration of Jesus. In this *Summary Sermon*, Jesus reaffirms the unique truths he has proclaimed (eg. chapters 3, 5, 8).
- ❖ With this sermon, John’s Book of Signs is concluded and Jesus will turn his attention to teaching his disciples.
- ❖ The dynamics of self vs. surrender have been in tension throughout this chapter. In his “gospel mission” summary, Jesus will reveal the ultimate value of surrender.

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, “Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die.”

The LORD said to me: “What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put My words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to My words that the prophet speaks in My name.”

DEUTERONOMY 19.15-19

Who is Being Seen?

Then Jesus cried out, “Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the One who sent me. The one who looks at me is seeing the One who sent me.

No one has ever seen God the Father, except for the Son-One-and-Only, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father; in coming into the world, he has made God the Father known.

PROLOGUE 18

- ❖ Three times in this sermon, Jesus refers to himself as being sent by God. (44, 45, 49) This was Jesus' unique identification and mission: he is the *Sent-One-From-God*, the one and only Authentic Representative. Jesus cannot be understood apart from this identification, and likewise, God the Father cannot be understood apart from this relationship. Jesus is the “personal Word of the Very God” and the only capable representation of the *God-Who-Cannot-Be-Seen*.

❖ Humanity was created in the image of God to be a visible representation of His nature and purposes. Sin destroyed our image-bearing role and our ability to reveal God's heart and character. It is only through the *One-and-Only-From-God* that it can be restored.

... you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness

EPHESIANS 4.21-24

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature ... put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

COLOSSIANS 3.5, 10

As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.

JOHN 20.21

- ❖ As followers of Jesus Christ, our mission is not to be blessed, successful, or fulfilled; it is to be like Jesus so that God is revealed through Christ in us to those who are ignorant of or misinformed about Him.

But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of Him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. . . . in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.

2 CORINTHIANS 2.14-15, 17

- ❖ It is a critical assessment of our lives as followers of Christ: does my life reveal the likeness of God or is my representation of Him skewed by my self-likeness?

Light in the World's Darkness

I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth).

EPHESIANS 5.8-9

- ❖ The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth that “*the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*” He went on to say—

For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

2 CORINTHIANS 4.5-6

- ❖ This mission to be the *Revealing-Light-of-the-World* and represent the *God-Who-Dwells-in-Unapproachable-Light* leads to life for those who believe in the light.

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

JOHN 8.12

- ❖ The plea of Jesus was that no one would stay in darkness and that extended to those who believed in him—as it does to us.

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

JOHN 8.31-32

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth.

JOHN 8.31-32

A Time To Be Saved, A Time To Be Judged

"If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

JOHN 3.17-18

- ❖ We will hear Jesus emphatically state that the only words he spoke were the words that the Father spoke to him. Jesus came as the *God-Word*—he is the word(s) of the Father. His words spoken and believed lead to eternal life; his words rejected result in judgment. Therefore, they are the most ultimate words ever to be spoken in the course of human history.

- ❖ Behind unbelief there is a moral cause, a rejection of “the righteousness that has appeared from God” (Romans 3.21-22) and a determination that I decide for myself what to believe and what to dismiss as irrelevant to me.
- ❖ Jesus’ cry is that his light will be received and his words will be believed before those hearing him were overtaken by the darkness. The words of Jesus might be dismissed today but his words “will never pass away.” One must come to terms with the words of salvation today or find those words resurfacing in judgment on the final Day.

For himself, Jesus is nothing; he is the Revealer who makes God visible. As in his actions and words God's actions and words are played out, so also in him God is really visible and accessible. But this, of course, also implies that only in him is God visible and accessible. Thus, man's relation with him is decisive for his fate. . . . If man brings down judgment on himself by rejecting the word, then in a certain sense the word is his judge. The reason for this—and this brings us back to vv. 44f.—is that it is God whom we meet in Jesus.

RUDOLPH BULTMANN, *John*, 345-346

The Exact Representation

For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. I know that His command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."

- ❖ Jesus is emphatic that the only words he speaks are words spoken to him by the Father: "my words to you were spoken to me by the Father."

The Sovereign LORD has given me a well-instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed. The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears; I have not been rebellious, I have not turned away.

ISAIAH 50.4-5

- ❖ It is a most extraordinary truth that Jesus strives to impress on us: In reading and studying his words, we are hearing the very thoughts and words of the *Infinite-Invisible-Omnipotent-Originator-of-Heaven-and-Earth!*

- ❖ Jesus does not aspire to be independent or original—neither in words or in works.
 - ▶ “I say what the Father tells me to say.”
 - ▶ “I can only do what I see the Father doing.” (5.19)
 - ▶ “I watch the Father and imitate Him.” (5.19)
 - ▶ “The Son can do nothing by himself.” (5.19)
 - ▶ “I can’t do anything on my own if I want to please Him.”

By myself I can do nothing, for I seek not to please myself but Him who sent me.

JOHN 5.30

- ❖ Jesus teaches us that to please the Father we must:
 - ▶ Listen to know what He wants us to say and how He wants us to say it.
 - ▶ Watch what He is doing and be attentive to what He wants to show me—then do it—His works, not mine.

The Ultimate Worth of Surrender

- ❖ There are only two choices: please self or please God. Jesus could not represent himself and also fulfill the Father's will. As the *Son-Servant*, he was relentlessly focused on the will of the One who sent him.
- ❖ A true servant has no personal agenda. Every thought, word, and action of Jesus was to represent the Father and to reveal Him to the world.
- ❖ Without surrender, I cannot represent God and He cannot be seen in my life. Only by surrendering self and counting my life as nothing—except for revealing the heart and purposes of God—can my life have any value to God.