

Title: "Don't wait. Watch your walk. Stand firm."
John 12:27-50. August 9, 2020

The context: In chapter 11, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. The Jewish leaders decided to kill Jesus. John Chapter 12 began "Six days before the Passover ..." Less than a week before his death. Mary anointed Jesus' feet with perfume. Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem. People cheered. Jesus addressed a crowd including some Greeks.

Jesus told them: The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. If anyone serves me, he must follow me, and the Father will honor him. Jesus was in Jerusalem speaking to a crowd, just 3-4 days before his death.

The 2004 movie "Passion of the Christ" was a biblical portrayal of the last 12 hours of Jesus' life, condensed into a 2 ½ hour film. It was R-rated, due to the violence, blood, gore. If you saw the movie, you will remember it was a bloody, brutal, cruel, gory, violent and gut-wrenching depiction of Jesus' arrest, trial, torture, crucifixion and death. Not a movie for children. Not for the faint of heart. As bloody, brutal, and shocking as the movie was, it was an accurate portrayal of how Jesus was whipped, beaten, tortured, crucified and died.

Jesus is all knowing, so he had a clear picture of what was coming only 3-4 days away. If you can imagine that, you will have a good understanding of how Jesus felt as we go to John 12:27.

John 12:27-29: "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. 28 Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." 29 The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."

"My soul is troubled", Jesus said. The verb "troubled" is a strong word in Greek, meaning: horrified, terrified, anxious, unsettled. What was Jesus troubled about? The pain, agony and physical pain he would experience; shame of bearing the sins of the world; separation from his Father for a time.

Jesus is fully God and fully man. As fully God he knew the future. Like a movie. Jesus knew the day of his death. It was 3-4 days away. He knew exactly what was coming. He knew it was unavoidable. He had to go through with it. As fully man his pain, agony and suffering were real. His human emotions overtook him: fear, terror, anxiety. What happened in Jesus' mind here?

Jesus did not rebel against his Father, and then correct himself. He didn't say: "Whoa! Stop! Father, I can't go through with this. Save me! Oh, wait, that's sinful. Sorry. This is part of your plan. Father, glorify your name." That did not happen.

Rather, Jesus spoke to God from his heart, something like: “Father, what shall I say? “Stop! Don’t do this?” No. Help me to persevere through the terrible agony of my crucifixion, in accordance with your will. For I wish to do your will, in order to glorify your name.”

Jesus had an unwavering commitment to do the will of God the Father. Namely, that he would die a bloody, gruesome, painful death to pay the penalty for the sins of men. Despite his fear, terror, horror at the pain and death to follow, Jesus remained committed to God’s sovereign plan. “Father, glorify your name.”

Then a surprising thing happened: God answered Jesus in an audible voice: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” This is the 3rd time that God spoke audibly to Jesus, when others could hear it. The other 2 times: at Jesus’ baptism and at his transfiguration on the mountain.

God had glorified his name throughout Jesus’ ministry. At his birth, when he became a man, and in the miracles that Jesus performed. God said: “I will glorify my name again”. God would glorify his name again, in the future, in the death, resurrection, ascension, and the return of Jesus. Jesus heard what God had spoken. The crowd around him heard something, but they weren’t sure what. Maybe thunder or the voice of an angel.

John 12:30-33: Jesus answered “This voice has come for your sake, not mine. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. 32 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.

Jesus said a lot in 3 short sentences. What did he say? Five things:

1. “God spoke out loud for your benefit, not mine”. God’s voice from heaven was for the crowd’s benefit, not for Jesus’ benefit. What benefit was it to the crowd? There were 2 important benefits.

First: Encouragement that God listens and answers prayers. God’s voice came immediately after Jesus’ prayer. God the Father heard Jesus’ request and immediately granted it. This would have been a great encouragement to the people there. They would know that God hears and responds in the moment. It is also a great encouragement to us.

Second benefit: Suffering leads to God’s glory. God confirmed that Jesus’ suffering would bring glory to God’s name. Those who heard it, and later believed in Jesus, would suffer. They would remember that suffering for God’s purposes brings glory to God’s name.

2. “Judgment of the world is now”. We usually think God’s judgment of the world comes at the end times. That is true. But it begins with Jesus’ death and resurrection. That is when people had the first opportunity to believe in Jesus – or reject him-- as savior. Judgment “begins now”, at Jesus’ death and resurrection.

3. “Now Satan will be cast out”. The “ruler of this world” – Satan – will be cast out now. Satan’s defeat was sealed -- “now” -- when Jesus rose from the dead. Satan’s future defeat is sovereignly assured by the perfect plan of God.

4. “I will be lifted up”. Jesus said he will be “lifted up” on the cross. This was to show what kind of death he was going to die: crucifixion. He would also be “lifted up” to glory into heaven after his resurrection.

5. “I will draw all people to myself”. This refers back to John 6 and the drawing power of God, carried out by Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God the Father draws: John 6.44: No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him... God the Son draws, as seen here in 12.32: And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. God the Holy Spirit draws by regeneration: Titus 3.5: God saved us... according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

Who gets drawn to Jesus? “I will draw all people to myself” meaning: all people without distinction; Jews and Gentiles alike; people from every nation, tribe, people and language [Rev 7:9]. Jesus was not saying that every individual person will be saved. In John 5:28-29 he had already made it clear that some would be raised to everlasting life, some to everlasting judgment.

John 12:34: 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?”

The crowd said they knew from OT scripture that Christ would remain forever. So if Jesus was the Christ, why would he be lifted up and die? What OT scripture did they have in mind? John doesn’t say. Could be:

Isaiah 9.7: Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end... from this time forth and forevermore...

Psalms 89:35–37: ... I will not lie to David. 36 His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me. 37 Like the moon it shall be established forever...

Daniel 7.14: And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom... his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

The Jews expected the Messiah to be a triumphant political king, and to rule Israel forever. Unfortunately, they had neglected to properly interpret the whole counsel of God. Several other OT references said that the Messiah would be “cut off, pierced for our transgressions, poured out to death, mourned for, buried in the grave of a rich man...” [Isaiah 52-53, Daniel 9.25-26, Zechariah 12.10, etc.]

They asked Jesus: “Who is this son of Man, who you say will die?” They were not asking: “Where is he? Point him out.” They knew Jesus was referring to himself, because Jesus referred to himself as the “Son of Man” in verse 23. Rather, they were asking: “What sort of Messiah are you? You say you will die, but that is contrary to OT scripture.”

John 12:35-36: 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. 36 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.

Jews had asked Jesus: “What sort of Messiah are you?” Jesus didn’t answer their question. Instead, he sensed their bad attitude, and gave them a warning: “Don’t wait. Believe in me now, while I’m still here. I won’t be here for long.” Jesus referred to himself as the light. Jesus had said in John 8.12: I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

The contrast between light and darkness is a recurring theme in John’s gospel. Light is holy. Dark is evil. Jesus compared “walking in the light” to “walking in darkness”. A person who “walks in the light” has the “light of Jesus” in his heart. His actions – how he walks – reflect the light / holiness of Jesus. A person who “walks in darkness” does not have the light of Jesus in his heart. His actions – how he walks -- reflect the darkness of evil.

Jesus said essentially: “Believe in me -- “the light” – now, while I am still here. I won’t be here for long. Become “sons of light”, that is, like me, the Light of the World. Do it now, so that when the darkness comes, it will not be able to overpower you.”

Then, Jesus left and hid from them. He stayed in Jerusalem, but kept to himself and his disciples. He avoided public crowds altogether.

Then John made a statement about the unbelief of the Jews. It’s a sad statement. The unbelief of the Jews was a fulfillment of OT prophecy.

John 12.37-43: Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, 38 so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” 39 Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, 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.” 41 Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. 42 Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

John said: Jesus performed many miracles. These miracles proved that he was the Son of God, the promised Messiah. But the Jews didn't believe in him. The phrase "they still did not believe in him", in the Greek, it has the imperfect tense. Better translated as "they were not believing", meaning "there was a constant and progressive unwillingness to believe in Jesus".

Why did the Jews not believe? John repeated what Jesus had said in John 6 and John 10. Two reasons why the Jews didn't believe in Jesus: (1) Divine sovereignty: The Jews' rejection of Jesus was part of God's sovereign plan. Therefore the Jews did not believe. (2) Human responsibility: The Jews freely rejected Jesus: "they were not believing". Therefore the Jews did not believe.

John said that Isaiah prophesied hundreds of years earlier. God had blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts. Therefore the Jews could not believe. Why did God blind their eyes and harden their hearts? Because the Jews were not believing.

Then in verse 42, John seemed to reverse his previous comment that the Jews didn't believe in Jesus. "Nevertheless, many even of the authorities [meaning the Jewish religious leaders] believed in him..."

The bible mentions by name only two Jewish leaders that believed in Jesus: Nicodemus stood up for Jesus before the Sanhedrin in John chapter 7. Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus' body and buried it in his own tomb. As for the other Jewish leaders, John says "many of them believed".

However, this belief was probably not saving faith. V. 42: "but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God."

They "believed", but they: wouldn't admit it in public, were afraid they would be tossed out of the synagogue, placed more importance on men than on God, and loved the glory of man more than the glory of God. Their faith was so weak, it is unlikely that it was saving faith. Jesus had warned them about this before.

John 5:44: How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

It was a grave warning that not every faith is saving faith. True belief in Jesus – one that saves – places Jesus above all else.

John 12.44-50: And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. 45 And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. 46 I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. 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. 48 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. 49 For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.”

Jesus had already withdrawn from the Jewish crowds in verse 36. So Jesus’ words here in John 12:44-50 probably happened at a different time. It seems to me that John was making a wrap-up statement about Jesus’ message. Like an “Executive Summary” of Jesus’ main points. Each of these main points John had already stated in the gospel of John. There are no new statements here by Jesus.

Jesus’ main points:

- Those who believe in Jesus also believe in God the Father who sent him [John 8.19]
- Jesus is the light of the world. Believe in Jesus and overcome darkness. [John 8.12]
- Jesus came to save, not to judge. [John 3.17]
- Judgment will come on those who heard Jesus’ words but did not obey them. [John 5.47]
- Jesus spoke not on his own authority, but on the authority of his Father [John 8.28]
- Eternal life will come to those who believe in Jesus [John 3.16]

3 Applications:

1. Don’t wait
2. Watch your walk
3. Stand firm

1. If you haven’t yet believed in Jesus: Don’t wait until God hardens you.

Here is a sobering reality: those who persistently harden their hearts against Jesus may someday find their hearts permanently hardened by God. That is precisely how God dealt with Pharaoh when Moses tried to get Pharaoh to release the Israelites from Egypt. Pharaoh hardened his own heart, so God hardened Pharaoh’s heart even more. In Exodus, the writer says that 10 times Pharaoh hardened his own heart, and 10 times God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. God sometimes hardens the man who has hardened himself. Paul wrote this about people who “refuse to love the truth and be saved”:

2 Thessalonians 2:11–12: Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, 12 in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Just as with Pharaoh in Moses’ day, and the Jewish leaders, in Jesus’ day. When people willingly reject Jesus, God sometimes hardens them, in order that those who were not willing to

believe may not be able to believe. God hardens the man who has hardened himself. Don't wait until God has hardened you. Believe in Jesus now.

2. If you believe in Jesus, watch your walk.

John said "many of the Jewish leaders believed", but they did not walk in the light. A person who "walks in the light" has the light of Jesus in his heart, grows in holiness, matures in his faith, follows hard after Jesus.

1 John 1:5–7: This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Many of the Jewish leaders "believed", but their faith was not saving faith. They proved their unbelief by the way they walked. John said: they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. They did not confess faith in Jesus because they feared the Jewish leaders. They did not admit that they believed in Jesus. They denied Jesus.

Jesus said if we deny him before men, he will deny us before God the Father in heaven. (Matthew 10:33, 2 Timothy 2:11). There are many subtle ways in which we deny Jesus. When our actions, words, lifestyle, do not reflect His will. When we claim to believe in Jesus but live as though we don't. When we act like Jewish leaders, unwilling to admit that we believe in Jesus. We deny Jesus.

Watch your walk. Many people -- even those who call themselves Christians -- deny Jesus in these ways because they do not want to suffer for Him. Which brings us to our final application...

3. Stand firm in the face of suffering.

This life is hard. We will suffer. Emotionally, physically, spiritually, financially, relationally.

Philippians 1:29: For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.

Jesus suffered enormous physical, emotional, spiritual pain, in his crucifixion and death. Just a few days before his death, Jesus saw with picture-perfect clarity, exactly what he would go through. His soul was "troubled": horrified, terrified. But he was committed to follow through because he was fully committed to God's will. For what purpose? So that he could glorify his Father's name. How did God the Father respond to this? He confirmed, in an audible voice, "I have glorified my name, and I will glorify it again."

Jesus set an example for us to follow. When faced with suffering, if we endure, if we stand firm, we will glorify God's name.