

# *A Final Appeal*

JOHN 12:44-50

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From time to time, I will ask myself, “If I knew that this coming Sunday would be my very last sermon, what would I say?” Of course, I often have this thought right before we leave town on an airplane! Not that I am terrified of flying or anything, but the thought does at least cross my mind, “If this is to be the last time, what needs to be said?” With this question in mind, I would invite you to turn with me to John 12 as we consider what would become the Lord’s final appeal, the Lord’s last public plea, to the people of Israel. The passage is John 12:44-50 (p. 1682). In verse 44, we are about to find that the Lord **“cries out,”** and the word Luke uses here is a word that is sometimes translated as “scream.” It refers to a loud shout, a cry. And the reason for the urgency is that this is the Lord’s final offer. This is it.

As Scott read for us earlier this morning from John 20:30-31, the purpose of John’s gospel account is to encourage belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and that ultimately, through believing, we might have life in His name. The book of John, then, is organized in a way to encourage belief. The first half of the book is organized around seven of the Lord’s most famous miracles. The second half of John is focused on the Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection. Our text for this morning is found right at the transition. Starting in John 13, the Lord turns to his own disciples. Starting in John 13, the account focuses in on the Last Supper. In John 12, therefore, we have the Lord’s last real interaction with the public. And that is what I would like for us to focus on this morning, the Lord’s final public appeal, the last plea to believe in Him as the Son of God.

As we look at John 12:44-50, we are about to see pretty much a summary of the Lord’s entire earthly ministry. As every good author does, John closes this section with a summary, with a little bit of review. What was Jesus all about? What was the focus of Jesus’ earthly life? This morning, let us please look together at the Lord’s final offer – John 12:44-50,

***<sup>44</sup> And Jesus cried out and said, “He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. <sup>45</sup> He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. <sup>46</sup> I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. <sup>47</sup> If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. <sup>48</sup> He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. <sup>49</sup> For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to***

***say and what to speak.*** <sup>50</sup> ***I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.***

As we keep our thoughts focused on these seven verses, as we look at the Lord's final appeal to the large crowds (before he turns to his disciples), I want us to notice how Jesus summarizes the entirety of his earthly ministry. As the Lord looks back over the last 3-1/2 years, as he looks forward to his own death and resurrection over the next few days, what does he see as being the most important information to include in this final appeal?

**I. As we look at verses 44-45 (and also in verses 49-50), I'd like for us to notice, first of all, that JESUS IDENTIFIES HIMSELF WITH HIS FATHER IN HEAVEN.**

And certainly this very basic concept is key to understanding who Jesus really is. Jesus is God in the flesh. His mission is the Father's mission. His words are the Father's words. Jesus and the Father are one. As Jesus said in verse 49, ***"I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak."*** If we can understand and accept that one statement, then we have a pretty solid understanding of who Jesus really is. Many around us would consider Jesus to be a great teacher or maybe an interesting religious leader. The Lord Jesus, though, is so much more than that. As the Lord explained, if we believe in Jesus, we don't just believe in Him, but we believe in the Father who sent Jesus into this world. And if we reject Jesus, then we reject God himself. As Paul said in Colossians 1:15, Jesus is ***"the image of the invisible God."*** And as we read in the opening verses of the book of Hebrews, Jesus ***"...is the radiance of [God's] glory and the exact representation of His nature."*** And at the end of his earthly ministry, as he makes one final appeal to the public, this is what Jesus cries out. This is what he wants the world to know. As the Lord Jesus summarizes his entire life on this earth, he wants the world to know that he and the Father are one, that he represents the Father in every way. If we can only understand this, then we come a long way toward the kind of belief that John is trying to encourage in this book.

**II. As we look back at our text for this morning, we see another part of the Lord's final appeal as he straight-up reminds the people of his mission, and that is: JESUS CAME TO THIS WORLD AS LIGHT.**

We see this in verse 46, ***"I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness."*** And of course, we know the importance of light! We usually don't like stumbling around in the darkness. For those of you who know me at all, you probably know that I have a love for flashlights. I would point out, though, that my love of flashlights is rivaled only by Carl's love of flashlights. I thought I was rather unusual in my love of flashlights...until I got to know Carl a year or so ago. Carl takes it to an entirely new level. I don't want to embarrass Carl or anything, but I would probably be on safe ground to offer each of you a dollar for every time you can catch Carl without a flashlight. But we know the value of having light with us at all times. I thought I had a pretty good flashlight collection going on, but about a year ago, Carl started to get me feeling a little inadequate. My Maglites were apparently not good enough, not bright enough, not tough enough. And so after doing some research, I did a little upgrade to a Fenix, the Fenix LD41. The Fenix LD41 has a whopping 520 lumens. I won't shine it at you or blind you with it, but it is amazingly bright. I would compare it to car headlights, if not brighter. And I can tell you, whenever I camp, the last thing I do at night before getting in the tent is to shine this thing out in the woods for one last look – just to check for any bears, or cougars, or anything else that might be hiding out there in the trees. And then the light I started carrying in my bag, just about everywhere, is the Streamlight StylusPro. The Streamlight is also a direct result of Carl and Stacey moving back to the Madison area. We know the value of light! At our house, we have Maglites by the front door and in each vehicle. We have a flashlight by the woodstove to check the temp in the middle of the

night. We have lights by the bed, lights in the office, lights in the furnace room, we have weapon lights, headlights, bike lights, flashlights everywhere – we keep Rayovac in business! But there is a reason for this, and the reason is: Light is good! If something goes wrong, if something breaks, if something goes bump in the night, we are going to light it up! The alternative is to stumble around, blindly groping in the darkness.

And this is a picture of the world before the coming of Jesus. The world was lost. The world was dark. We remember the prophecy made by Isaiah in Isaiah 9:2, ***“The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.”*** And that is exactly what happened. We come over into the New Testament, and this is how John starts his book, ***“In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it”*** (John 1:4-5). The Lord, then, does not want us to continue living in darkness. He doesn’t want us groping around, bumping into walls, stepping on Legos in the dark; instead, he wants us to ***“...walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light”*** (1 John 1:7). Over and over again, throughout John’s gospel account, we read about Jesus being the Light of the world. In the book of John, in fact, if I remember correctly, there are at least fifteen metaphors comparing Jesus to light. There is a contrast, therefore, between the darkness of a worldly way of living, and the light of living according to the word of God.

Of course, the only problem is that those who are evil actually hate the light. As some of you know, we are having more and more burglaries and break-ins and home invasions down on the southwest side of Madison. I have talked to a number of Madison police officers about this, and their number one suggestion (obviously) is to lock your doors at all times. But a very close second is to light it up at night. Several years ago, then, we put a timer on our outside lights. It is actually a pretty neat little device. It is hardwired in as a switch, you enter your latitude and longitude, and it automatically figures out when the sun goes down and when it comes up. You can then adjust it from there. But those lights are now on from when it first starts to get dark in the evening all the way through until the sun comes up each morning. And the reason is: Those who break in do not want to do it in the light. Light is one of the greatest deterrents to crime. Those who do evil, therefore, hate the light, and that is exactly what John said earlier in John 3:19-21, ***“This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”*** This, therefore, sets up the conflict that showed itself throughout the Lord’s earthly ministry. The Lord was always opposed. People were always mad at what he said. I think we see, then, why Jesus summarizes his life in this way. It explains so much of the opposition. He came as a Savior, and yet, like the teenager who hides under the covers when you turn the light on, the world (for the most part) absolutely hated the Lord and his message. For many, the light was too much. For many, the light was too bright.

And so, as Jesus makes his final appeal, he nails down the fact that he and the Father are one, and then he emphasizes the fact that he came into this world as Light. Our job as Christians, by the way, is to reflect that light to those around us.

III. **As we go back to our passage in John 12, to the Lord’s final appeal, we discover something else, a message all of us need to hear, and that is: In his final appeal, Jesus puts the emphasis back on THE WORDS THAT HE SPOKE.**

Again, notice verses 47-48, ***“If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who rejects Me and does not receive my sayings, has one who judges him; the word that I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.”*** And this, in a nutshell, is

what we need to know about Jesus: He represents the Father, He came to bring light into the world, and when all is said and done, His words will judge us on the last day. As the Lord points out, of course, he did not come to judge, but he came to save.

At this point, some might say, "Yes! We are off the hook! We can do whatever we want to do with no consequences!" And yet that is not the case, is it? When Jesus came to this earth 2,000 years ago, he came to deliver a message of salvation. He came to deliver a message from God, a message of grace and mercy and love. However, the Lord also explains that there is a day coming when the word that he spoke will judge. In verse 48, the Lord refers to the **"last day."** Judgment is coming for those who **"reject"** the Lord and his message. We may be able to get away with things here and there in this life, but as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:10, there is a day coming when **"...we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."**

The emphasis here, then, is on the word of God. And this, if you remember, is how John started his book in Chapter 1, Verse 1, **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."** John wants us to believe and obey the word of God, because the word of God is the Law, the word of God is the standard of judgment. NOTE: We will not be judged by popular opinion. We will not be judged based on what our church teaches. We will not be judged by a jury of our peers. We will not be judged based on the fact that we have sinned a little bit less than the guy who lives next door. Instead, we will be judged based on our obedience to the word of God. Note also that we will not be judged based on whether we are perfect. Instead, we will be judged based on whether we have believed and obeyed the words of Jesus.

### **Conclusion:**

As we come to the end of this passage, we come away with a summary of what Jesus was all about. In this final public invitation, Jesus makes the case that he spoke for the Father. He makes the case that he came as light into the world. And finally, he very clearly states that his words will judge the world on the last day. And so, as we look back over this little paragraph, John pretty much leaves us with the question: What will we personally do with this information? What will we do with Jesus?

As Christians, we know Jesus, and because we know Jesus, we know the Father. And because we have the words of Jesus, we have the ability to walk in the Light of God's word. For us, then, this passage is an encouragement, an encouragement to make sure that Jesus always stays in first place, an encouragement that we always honor and respect his word. Let us give God's word a place of honor in our lives. Let us immerse ourselves in the word of Christ that will ultimately judge us on the last day. Let us reflect the light of God's amazing love into the world around us. And in light of that amazing love, let us fall at God's feet in worship. Let us then go out and be Jesus to somebody. We can be Jesus to somebody today. That is what this passage means for us. Let us serve Him, not out of fear, but out of love. Let us confess our sins and repent, knowing that we are safe in the arms of God. That is what this passage means for us as Christians!

For everybody else, I would ask a very simple question, and the question is: Have you personally obeyed the gospel? The gospel is the good news that Jesus came to this earth and died for our sins, that he was buried, and that he was raised up on the third day. The Bible talks about obeying that. How do we obey a death, burial, and resurrection? I would encourage you to look into that on your own. I can explain it briefly as we do at the end of each lesson every Lord's Day, but our obedience to the gospel means everything. I would encourage you personally, therefore, to dig into that. What does it mean to obey the gospel? It all goes back to what we believe concerning Jesus. Is he the Son of God? We believe that he is. We believe the evidence

supports that conclusion. We can't just say that he was a good man, or a great teacher, or even a prophet. He is so much more. He is the Messiah. He is the Christ, the Son of God.

Within just a few hours of making this final appeal, the Lord Jesus sealed these words with his own blood. We obey his words by turning away from sin, and by allowing ourselves to be buried with Him in baptism. We are raised up out of the water as Christians, our sins having been forgiven by the blood of Jesus. If you have any questions about God's plan, let us know – pull us aside after worship, make a call, send a message – we would love to sit down and study. However, if you are ready to obey the gospel right now, we would invite you to let us know about your decision as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: [fourlakeschurch@gmail.com](mailto:fourlakeschurch@gmail.com)