

When Jesus Can't Be Found

(John 12:35)

(preached 4/7/19; Pine Grove BC Sun AM)

Introduction

Read text John 12:35-50..

35 So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. 36 While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light."

These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and [m]hid Himself from them. 37 But though He had performed so many [n]signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. 38 This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" 39 For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, 40 "He has blinded their eyes and He hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and [o]be converted and I heal them." 41 These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him. 42 Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be [p]put out

of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the [q]approval of men rather than the [r]approval of God.

44 And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me.

45 He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. 46 I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. 47 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. 48 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.

49 For I did not speak [s]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. 50 I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."

Let us pray.

Tensions between the United States and Japan were rising in the late 1930s.

In 1937, Japan attacked China in attempts to grow its empire.

In response, the US restricted much trade with the Japanese in 1938.

In early 1940, Japan responded by aligning itself with Germany and Italy who were waging war in Europe.

In mid 1940, the US sent Pacific fleet to Pearl harbor to flex its military muscle..

So in early 1941, the US and Japan began intense negotiations with hopes of improving their relationship.

The Japanese ambassador Kichi Nomura and US Secretary of State Cordell Hull were in charge of these negotiations for several months in 1941.

Then on November 20, Japan sent a proposal to the US promising to remove some troops in Asia in exchange for the US ceasing its support of China and lifting all trade restrictions.

On November 26, the US responded to the proposal by demanding Japan leave all parts of China.

Days passed and no response came.

Then a Japanese reply known as the 14 Part Message arrived...

Their response was long, but ended with these chilling words..

“Thus, the earnest hope of the Japanese Government to adjust Japanese-American relations and to preserve and promote the peace of the Pacific through cooperation with the American Government has finally been lost.

The Japanese Government regrets to have to notify hereby the American Government that in view of the attitude of the American Government it cannot but consider that it is impossible to reach an agreement through further negotiations.”

Interestingly, that reply arrived in Washington at 2 PM on December 7 as Japanese planes were in the process of destroying Pearl Harbor.

You see, there are times in the history of nations when negotiation end and war begins..

There are times when the talking is over and tanks roll into town.

There are times when a peaceful settlement is no longer possible and nations must go to war.

As we come to John 12:35-49, peace between Jesus and the Jewish people of his day is no longer an option.

For 3 years now, Christ has begged the Jews to make peace with God through belief in Him.

For 3 years now, Jesus has demonstrated his deity through miracles and healing and teaching, but to no avail.

And now their incredible opportunity is over.

This generation of Jews in Jesus day who were so blessed to live in the time of Messiah's arrival are now going to be the worst generation of Jews ever.

In the text before us today, Jesus is going to walk away for a final time from the Jews he came to save.

The invitation to peace has ended.

Judgment is now coming to them.

They have rejected their only source of peace, so now the wrath of God awaits..

As we come to this important text this morning, I want us to see 4 truths about the Jews rejection of Jesus.

And my prayer hopes no one in this room will die having rejected their only hope of salvation..

The first truth is really the saddest truth to consider..

I. A Final Rejection (35-36)

As we come to verse 35, we are in the Jewish temple.

It is now either Wednesday or possibly Thursday morning.

Jesus will be crucified on Friday outside of Jerusalem, but on this occasion he is still in the heart of the city in temple.

He came into Jerusalem on Monday to the cheers of the crowds, who were hoping that he was the politician that would restore the nation of Israel to its former greatness.

Yet on Tuesday, Jesus didn't kick out the Romans.

Instead, he kicks the Jews out of the temple for making it a place of commerce.

He then launches into a long message about the corruption of Judaism, while inviting the crowds to believe in Him.

Needless to say, the cheering crowds on Monday are not cheering so much for Jesus on Tuesday..

On Wednesday, Jesus continues to teach truth in the temple by calling out the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders and pronouncing series of woes on them.

Then last week, Jesus dropped the bombshell.

He was the Jewish Messiah, but he was going to be killed by the Romans.

This was the final straw for the crowds.

Their cheers for Jesus were now over.

They have heard enough.

But guess what?

Jesus has also had enough of their unbelief.

Let's read verse 35 and 36 again.

35 So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. 36 While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light." These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and [m]hid Himself from them.

As the father of a 6 year old, a constant response to him is "in just a little while."

Whether he wants to throw a football, shoot a basketball, or is simply wondering when we will get to Zaxby's, my favorite phrase is "just a little while."

And that phrase is meant to cover an indefinite amount of time.

We may be 20 miles or .2 miles from Zaxby's and "just a little while" is the same response.

I may be 30 minutes or 30 seconds from going outside with him, but "just a little while" is still my standard response.

Jesus has been telling the disciples for some time now that he is only going to be with them a little while longer before he departs..

But now Jesus tells this to the world and it is more true than ever.

He will be dead in a matter of days.

His ministry will be over in a matter of days.

His invitation to the Jews will be over in a matter of hours.

This is the final invitation for the crowds to come to the light of Christ.

Darkness is coming to them, both literally as the sun darkens while he hangs on the cross..

But more concerning than the approaching physical darkness is the spiritual darkness coming to the crowds of Jews that are rejecting him..

In fact, the sun came out of darkness after the crucifixion, but the Jews have been walking in spiritual darkness ever since.

One of the greatest lies in the world is that God will never turn his back on the sinner, but I must tell you the truth.

There comes a day of final rejection for anyone who doesn't believe in Christ..

In fact, you see at the end of verse 36 that Jesus goes away and hides from these Jews.

What a frightening verse that is for anyone living in rejection of Christ.

One day, Jesus rejects you.

One day, God hides from you.

If you know where God is today, you better come to Him in repentance and faith.

Because one day, your sin may have you in such spiritual that you can't find Christ.

The Jews had their chance and now is gone to a place where he can't be found.

One day, everyone has their final offer to come to Christ before he ultimately rejects them.

I pray for you that today is not your final rejection of Christ.

Come to Him while he still may be found.

A second reality of rejection is found in verses 37-41..

We will call this..

II. A Forecasted Rejection (37-41)

Though the Jews that rejected Jesus are fully responsible for that rejection, it was not a surprise.

In fact, the OT prophet Isaiah predicted this rejection 600 years before it occurred..

Look at verse 37-41 again..

***37 But though He had performed so many [n]signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him.
38 This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: “Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”
39 For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, 40 “He has blinded their eyes and He hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and [o]be converted and I heal them.” 41 These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.***

Before you ask, -yes, the Bible is clear, the Jews around Jesus refused to believe in Him because they could not believe in Him.

To put in very simple terms, their hearts were heartened by God so that they would not be converted.

Now before you grab an egg to throw at me, I remind you that these are not my words, these are the words of God right here in verses 37-41.

God spoke through Isaiah in Isaiah 53, and he told Israel that they would reject their Messiah.

The arm of the Lord simply represents God power and might and person..

Yet, the Jews of Jesus day did not recognize the arm of the Lord seen in the person of Jesus Christ.

It was hidden from them because their eyes were blinded by God and their own sin.

Now the frequent comment of anyone who read things about God hardening hearts and blinding eyes of people is usually this..

Man, that sounds so unfair.

How could God blind the hearts of the Jews so that they couldn't believe in Christ?

That sounds like an unjust God.

Before that charge fills your heart, let me remind you of Romans 9:14-20..

14 What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! 15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." 16 So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed [k]throughout the whole earth." 18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. 19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" 20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

Long story short, God blinds hearts to serve his purposes in the world.

I can tell you this.

If the Jews had believed and not sent Jesus to the cross, you and I would still be lost in our sin with no hope of salvation.

Though those Jews are still responsible for the rejection and crucifixion of Christ, God was at work in that rejection as well..

Now before you ask the question after service, let me answer it here.

If you are here this morning and want to embrace Christ as Messiah, ask God to soften your heart and uncover your eyes, and He will.

Then repent of your sins and put your faith in Christ alone, and God will grant repentance and faith to those who earnestly seek Him.

The Jews around Jesus had no desire to know Him in a saving way.

They wanted a King who offered a great nation.

What they needed was a Savior who offered great forgiveness.

Sadly, they rejected that Savior for a final time here..

This leads us to truth #3 this morning..

Though that rejection was final and forecasted, it was a fearful rejection..

Let's look at verses 42-43..

III. A Fearful Rejection (42-43)

42 Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be [p]ut out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the [q]approval of men rather than the [r]approval of God.

Despite the blindness and hardness of heart, some Jews showed an interest in Christ.

John even writes that many of the rulers believed in Him, but this falls short of saving belief..

First of all, belief in Christ is clearly a requirement of salvation, but there is belief in Christ that doesn't save.

How do we know this?

Well, the book of James describes demons who believe in Jesus, but we all know that no demon is saved or will be saved.

There were also followers who believed in Jesus, but John 6 says that they stopped following him.

Look, you must believe to be saved, but you better make sure that belief is saving belief..

And what does saving belief look like?

Well, we get a few clues here...

#1 - Saving belief is public belief.

These Jews believed but they wouldn't confess Jesus publicly.

People who have true saving faith are truly public with their confession of that faith..

We don't get saved in secret.

We get saved for the world to see..

#2 - Saving belief is radical belief.

These Jews believed in Jesus but they weren't willing to give up their place in the synagogue.

In other words, their comforts and their lifestyle meant more than Christ.

People who have true saving faith are truly ready to give up anything for the sake of Christ.

#3 - Saving belief is unashamed belief.

These Jews believed in Christ but they feared man more.

People who have true saving faith are truly only concerned with pleasing the Lord.

Let me offer a clear warning in light of these verses..

You may say you believe in Christ, but what kind of belief is it?

The demons believe and they will occupy hell forever.

Some of the Jewish leaders believed but they will accompany those those demons to a lake of fire.

Heaven is only accessible based upon saving belief in Christ.

A belief that can be seen its public declaration of faith.

A belief that can be seen in its willingness to forsake all to follow Christ.

A belief that is also unashamed of what others think..

I pray that describes your belief in Jesus this morning.

If not, be warned by what you see here.

These Jewish rulers believed but they didn't belong to Christ.

They were so close to salvation but they might as well have been miles away.

To have the wrong kind of belief in Christ is just as damning as having no belief in Him..

If Christ is calling you to truly repent and believe in Him today, don't worry about what man says...

Only fear what God says if you continue to reject Him.

A final reality of the rejection of the Jews is found in verses 44-50..

We will call this..

IV. A Fatherly Rejection (44-50)

Though Jesus has already said on a previous occasion that He and the Father are one, he makes that crystal clear one more time in verses 44-50.

Ultimately, a rejection of the Son is a rejection of the Father and the Spirit, since they are One.

Listen to all the times that Jesus references his connection to the Father in these verses..

Verse 44..

44 And Jesus cried out and said, “He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. 45 He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. 46 I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. 47 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. 48 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. 49 For I did not speak [s]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. 50 I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.”

Why does Jesus say this here and now?

Well, the argument from the Jews from this day forward is that that they are God's people.

They maintain that they have a relationship with God today..

But Jesus makes it clear that rejection of Him is rejection of God.

Listen to how John wrote about this back in chapter 5..

John 5:23...

He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

Listen to how John puts in a later letter to the church..

1 John 2:23..

23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

Long story short..

You can't reject the Son and be right with the Father.

And knowing that will be their argument throughout history, Jesus closes out his ministry to them by reminding that rejection of Him equals rejection of the Father..

Now, this would also apply to cults..

The Mormons say they believe in Jesus but they see him as less than God.

The Jehovah's witness say they believe in Jesus but they see Him a creation of God.

Look, if you miss the boat on Jesus, you miss the boat on the Father and the Spirit because God is three in one.

A Son rejection is the same as the Father and Spirit rejection, and that is very important in day and age where everyone claims to know God...

Remember, you cannot come to a knowledge of God apart from a relationship with the Son..

Modern Jews may look religious but they don't know God.

Mormons may look like church people but they don't know God.

Jehovah Witnesses may be passionate about their belief but they dont' know God.

The only way to the Father is through the Son.

The Jews today are in just as much need of our evangelism and prayers as they were in Jesus' day.

Conclusion

So what do we hide in our heart from this passage?

#1 - God is sovereign.

I wish I could work out for you the tension between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man.

How can God hold these Jews around Jesus responsible for not believing when he is the one responsible for blinding their hearts and eyes?

Simply put, that answer is way above my pay grade.

But I will tell you this.

Both are equally true and equally taught in the Scriptures.

The sad reality is that people sacrifice God's sovereignty in order to make more of man's responsibility..

That is dreadful error.

God is fully sovereign, and man is yet fully responsible for his actions.

May we embrace both of those truths even when we fail to put them perfectly together.

#2 - *God is patient.*

Unbelieving skeptics look at the Bible and accuse God of being overly vengeful and unkind.

They look at the flood and accuse God of being unmerciful, but they forget that God sent Noah to preach to those same people for 120 years before the flood came.

They look at Egypt and accuse God of being brutal to wipe out the children as part of the 10th plague, but they forget that Paharoah was given numerous chances to release Israel without punishment..

Then they look at the Jews in the NT who experienced the judgment of God by having their entire way of life wiped out by the Romans, but they forget the 3 + years that God sent his Son to call them to repentance and faith in Him..

As Jesus hides himself from the Jews in this passage, he only hides himself because they rejected his message time and time again..

You see, God is ever patient.

He told Adam and Eve in the garden that the penalty of eating from the forbidden tree was death.

They ate and died 930 years later.

This is the patience endurance of God.

This is mercy and grace of a long suffering God.

WE can't wait in a traffic jam on I-20 without crying out for justice..

Yet, God waits for years, for decades, for centuries so that people can repent and truly believe in Him..

If you are here this morning, it may be your final invitation..

But don't for one second think that makes God unfair or impatient.

HE has called to you to come to Him.

Now is the time to respond before his patience turns into his wrath.

Let us pray.