

John 12:27-36 “A New Kind of Power in Power, pt. 3”

Preached @ Harambee Church by Pastor
Michael Gunn on July 8th, 2007

“If we were but part of nature, death would be as ‘natural’ as life. But if we have been awakened out of the meaningless cycle of nature to believe in and to obey and to follow one who leads us toward a new world, then death is the cruel and blind contradiction of the confidence by which we have learned to walk.”

Leslie Newbigin

“He is the best Christian who has the clearest knowledge of God and His attributes.”

Puritan Richard Baxter

Introduction

Last week we saw the paradox that in order to live, we must die, and yet today we see that Christ is in agony at the thought of His pending death. He would become that “kernel of wheat” that would go into the ground and die so that we could live, and yet we see Him here, as well as in the other gospels (**Mark 14:34; Luke 22:44**), as someone who appears to fear His own death. Why is this so? Doesn't He have faith? In today's passage, we see three aspects of the cross that helps us understand its importance and our hope as a result.

From the Head...

The Cross and Jesus (John 12:27-30)

Death is not natural and rightly causes distress since we know it to be unnatural. Therefore fear and agony are normal responses (**Psalms 42:11; 55:46**). As noted, Jesus appears to have more fear and anguish than many men. How come? There are at least two good reasons for His response. **First**, death is not natural (see Newbigin quote). It is an outward sign of the judgment of God upon all of humanity. Nobody escapes death. This shows the true humanity of Jesus Christ. This also shows us that the bible reports truth and doesn't aggrandize their heroes as most literature of this kind does. **Secondly**, the agony that Christ is about to experience goes far beyond what any death could bring. He who was sinless was about to become sin, and separate from His Father. He was going to experience physically and existentially what was meant for humanity: the wrath of God for the sin of humanity and the physical separation from His Father (**2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24; Psalms 22:1** cf. **Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34**). His pain is far more than the physical pain of death. His natural agony over death is not like those who have no hope, but is laden in the hope of God (see **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**). It is clear that despite Christ's distress, He turned to His Father for comfort. This is why He is able to speak to His follower's anxiety in regards to His death (see **John 14:1**). Jesus can empathize with our pain. He is not a transcendent god who doesn't care. In spite of His agony and distress, His anxiety is regulated by His motivation and love for His father and His will. **Two imperatives** show us what makes Christ balanced, and how we too can deal with the real pain of death and loss in our own lives.

Two Imperatives to Live by (See too John 14:1):

Call on God in times of stress (v. 27)

Ask God to use your stress for His Glory (v. 28)

John shows us that the atonement is important to this world, and in spite of the fact that many even deny its reality, there are others who are mitigating its power.

The Cross and the World (John 12:31-33)

1. The Cross brings both condemnation and reformation.

The idea of “Judgment” (Mishpat) in the Hebrew mind was a “well-ordered society” (Calvin). It is ironic that while Christ was being judged by the Moralists (Scribes, lawyers), Religionist (Pharisees), Establishment (High Priests/Sadducees), Politicians (Roman Authorities), and Social Revolutionaries (The Zealous Crowd), His very death that they are causing will be used to judge them (see **1 Corinthians 2:8; Colossians 2:14-15; Acts 4:27**). It is sin itself that God uses to sacrifice His Son for our sake (See **John 12:24** cf. **Acts 2:23-24**).

2. The Cross will destroy the root of evil.

Satan is a real entity that blinds the hearts and minds of men and women and confuses the world as to the means of salvation.

3. The Cross will demonstrate Christ's glory.

Christ is “lifted” up by His death (see verse 33; see too **Isaiah 52:13; Philippians 2:9; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:3**). It is by His death that He is glorified. According to one commentator “*Being glorified is not a reward for dying, but is inherent in His crucifixion*” (F.F. Bruce). “All men” means that all “nations” will be drawn to Him (personal) not just to His cross (abstract). This drawing of all men is occurring now, not just in the end times.

The Cross and Those That Hear (John 12:34-36)

The crowd could not understand what Jesus was saying. It was their scriptures that told them that the Messiah would be eternal (**Psalm 89:4; Isaiah 9:7; Ezekiel 37:25; Daniel 7:14**). However, in the fullness of scripture we see that the Messiah also had to suffer first (**Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Zechariah 13**). The use of the word “before” (NIV) in verse 35 is a poor choice. The NASB’s “so that” seems to reflect the point of the text better. The idea of before seems to be temporal and indicates that it may be inevitable. The context seems to be exhorting those that hear what Christ is saying to put their trust in Him now so they won’t be tempted to reject Him when He dies. There is a remedy for spiritual blindness and darkness, and His name is Jesus Christ.

...to the Heart

How does knowing what the cross is all about affect the way you live your life? What motivates you to do anything? Is it fear? Pride? Self-centered pleasures? Or are you motivated by a God who loves you, and calls you to look to Him in times of distress as your sustenance? What is getting in the way of your relationship with the Lord? The gospel doesn’t call you to try harder to answer that! The gospel commands you to fall at Jesus’ feet and trust that He will guide you and sustain you in the time of your distress, and into eternity.

For Further Reading: “*The New Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of John*” William Barclay; “*The Gospel of John*,” F.F. Bruce; “*The New Testament Commentary: The Gospel of John*,” William Hendriksen; “*Preaching the Word; John: That You May Believe*,” R. Kent Hughes; “*The NIV Application Commentary: John*,” Gary M. Burge; “*The Pillar NT Commentary: The Gospel According to John*,” D.A. Carson

Next Weeks Verses: John 12:37-50

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