

March 26, 2017 “It Was Always About This” John 12:42-50

Every time we open this treasured Book, we are being exposed to truth that is almost beyond our understanding. For example, this morning we turn our attention to this little portion in the 12 chapter of John. Before we even look at the words there is something of significance to see and to try and grasp. John's Gospel has been divided by the Christian monks of the middle ages into chapters and verses. The Gospel consists of 21 chapters. Chapter 12 is the exact centerpoint of the document. And if you look at the 12th chapter before our reading today you discover at verse 12 the description of what we call Palm Sunday, and the excited, celebrative entry of Jesus and HIS followers into Jerusalem.

In other words, half of the text of this document which John wrote “in order that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in HIS name,” (John 20:31), ...half of the volume of the text focuses on 7 days. 7 days that have literally changed the world. 7 days which include Jesus teaching on the temple steps in Jerusalem, His being betrayed on the Thursday evening, arrested, tried, brutalized and finally crucified, and then His resurrection from the dead. Those 7 days in this precious season leading up to and including Good Friday and Easter are what the history of Jesus ministry is all about. And we will see some of the details of that truth in spectacular fashion in John 12:42-50.

John sets this portion up by telling us that many Jewish priests, Pharisees had become followers of Jesus. They believed in HIM! And yet because of what it could cost them, expulsion from the Temple community, they sought not to be known as disciples of Jesus. A reminder that there has never been a time when people have

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not played the political game where Jesus is concerned. On the one hand attracted to HIM and the hope and joy that abounds with HIM. On the other hand, afraid, afraid of the cost of it being known that they were HIS followers, HIS disciples, HIS people. Standing up for Jesus and with Jesus has always been an issue. We would be foolish, if we failed to understand that that is an issue for us and in our time. I do not say this to make anyone feel extra guilt, I wrestle with this issue too... being identified with Jesus, regardless of the cost, among family members, at work, and especially out there in what we call the real world. Too often we would rather that people did not notice...that we are disciples of Jesus. It was an issue that very week, in ancient Jerusalem.

So it is on the Temple steps, that Jesus cries out, “When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.” At least 2 things there. The concept of the trinity, God being one and yet three, three and yet one. Jesus proclamation during the last week of HIS earthly life and ministry is that believing in the Son of God, is indeed to believe in God the Father. Anyone inside or outside of the church who makes the claim that the concept of the Triune nature of God was invented by a Council of the Church, has not read the Gospels and the words of Jesus, or does not accept that the Gospels contain the words of Jesus.

In our pilgrimage to Israel we once again visited Qumran, the site of the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls. And we visited as well the Museum of the Book in Jerusalem where Dead Sea Scroll texts are on display for Israel, Christianity, and for that matter all the world to see. And the verdict that these ancient texts draws us too is the tremendous accuracy of the Biblical text with which Christians among others have worked for the last 2,000 years. There is no

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indication of anything other than the accuracy of the Bible you hold in your hands in terms of translating Biblical documents before the time of Jesus, and those written shortly after Jesus resurrection. The councils of the Church adopted specific statements regarding the nature of God One in Three, Three in One, because the Bible talks and teaches of a God who is One in Three, Three in One. Jesus said, "If you believe in me, you do not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me"... His Father. In fact in case we did not get it the first time Jesus says, "When as a believer you look at me, you see the One who sent me." The Father. I have said it before and you will probably hear me say it again. You are fathers and mothers. You are or have been, husbands and wives. You have been parents of children. Everyone of those relationships involves you with people who see you marvelously different from the other relationships. Don't overcomplicate this concept of The Trinity. It is a real life concept. Jesus said over and over again...you hear what I teach...and you hear what the Father has revealed to me as the Son. You see me? You are seeing the Father revealed in real time, in this world.

Jesus claimed to be God the Son. Some of the top theologians of HIS time, believed HE was and is God the Son. It just took time for them to realize they were willing to be known for that recognition of Jesus as the Messiah. And it was always about this. Jesus is God veiled in flesh in this world in real time.

Jesus went on to say that HE came into the world as a light, in order that no one who believes in HIM should find themselves surrounded by the darkness. (John 12:46) What's that about? It is an explanation of 3 years of ministry, condensing down to 1 week of ministry, in which Jesus would teach that HIS coming is about the battle between the forces of good and evil. His coming is

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about defeating Satan and dealing in the ultimate way with the problem of human sinfulness. Why do good people do bad things? Why do we who believe behave in an inconsistent fashion. It is because we are involved in a spiritual warfare. And sometimes in spite of our good intentions and our choosing to be believers, we lose some of the battles. Fortunately the war has been won for us.

I am not a fan of Mel Gibson's lifestyle. Like many Christians he has on a number of occasions been an embarrassment to the Christian movement. I am not trying to rehabilitate his "image" as a man or an entertainer. But I give him credit as a movie producer that when he chose to portray the passion of Christ in film, he really nailed it. If you have never seen the film *The Passion of Christ*, it opens in the Garden of Gethsemane. And the serpent is there as Jesus struggles in prayer over what HE understands is coming in the next hours. One of the reasons it is a faithful portrayal is that it is a Biblical portrayal of the passion of Christ. And that means from beginning to end it is set in this framework of spiritual warfare, the battle between light and darkness. The victory of God in the death and resurrection of God's precious Son. The victory of the light...Jesus...over the darkness of Satan and human sinfulness. This is what the Gospels are all about. On this, the Gospel focuses our attention.

Verse 47. This is really important. It is what I saw so clearly in the pilgrimage to Israel in 2015, and it is what attracted me to make that pilgrimage a second time. "As for the person who hears MY words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come into the world to judge the world, but to save it." It is not just the three years of Jesus public ministry. What John tells us Jesus said, is that from Bethlehem to Calvary, from the announcement of

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the angel to Mary, to HIS dying on the cross, it was always about this. The season of Lent is always a reminder Jesus came into the world to save the world. He came to the lost, to seek, to find, to save. What HE has wanted for you, HE has wanted for everyone. This first coming of Jesus was about saving us. Saving lives. That is the crucial (there is that cross word again)...that is the crucial difference between the first coming of Jesus and the 2nd coming of Jesus. The first time was and will always have been about saving. Not so the second.

The final phrase of this study in John 12 from Jesus ministry on the Temple steps is verse 50. "I know that His command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father told me to say." Regarding what Jesus said about saving and judging, regarding what Jesus did about saving and calling people to see God in HIM and revealed through HIS words and HIS deeds...The Father gave HIM those words to say. The Father gave HIM that work to do.

Once again we have turned our face toward Calvary and the open tomb. Week by week, and Sunday by Sunday we will work our way to the Thursday Night of Holy Week, to Good Friday, and our community recognition of the meaning of the cross. And three days later we will celebrate the fact that Jesus rose from the dead, was seen by the women, and then in the upper room gathering of disciples, a number greater than twelve and closer to 120. And each step along the way I will be attempting to remind you and to call you remember that God's sending Jesus into the world was about giving us the way to eternal life. That Jesus came into the world to save the world, including us, from our sin.

I want you to remember that you are Heaven's treasured children. God has saved you. And when it comes to God's will for

your life...it was always about this.

Let us pray;

Our Lord and our God we bow before you and sing your praises. You have given the one word of hope when there was no hope. And that word is the precious name of Jesus. Hear our praise songs Heavenly Father. Help us to live like disciples of Jesus we pray. Lead us in the joy of YOUR Holy Spirit, that we might bring glory to your name in what we say and do. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.