

John Chapter 12 v 12 - 28

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[0 : 00] that first Palm Sunday, and that's in the Gospel of John in Chapter 12. Gospel of John in Chapter 12. The open-air service next week, we did this in the summer.

We did two in the summer, if you remember. We're very encouraging times, evangelistic services in the sunken gardens on the clifftop there. I encourage you to bring a chair, if you can bring a chair, or a blanket.

Pray for the weather, that it may be reasonably mild. Paul's going to sing a song there, and I'm going to preach, and we're going to sing hymns, and so on, some Easter hymns.

But one of the things we have done in the past is have a word of testimony. Now, I don't want to have to come and leap out at you from around the corner and nab you and twist your arms. So if you fail, that you would be able to give your testimony.

It only needs to be two or three minutes at the most. In the open-air, please would you speak to me about that. Otherwise, I will be lurking and looking for volunteers otherwise.

[1 : 10] But if I get more than two, that's great, because then somebody can do that in the summer as well. We want those things in the summer as well. But please be praying for that. Please aim to be there. And it's a wonderful opportunity for us to take the gospel and the Easter message out to the folk around about us.

Well, we're in John 12, and we're going to read from verse 12 through to verse 30. So verse 12 of John, chapter 12, reading through to verse 30.

Verse 30. Just to give you the background, as you know, Jesus has been spending several weeks traveling towards Jerusalem. And he, on the way, in one sense, was at the funeral of Lazarus and raised Lazarus from the dead after four days in the tomb.

And all of this was stirring up greater hostility against Jesus from his enemies. And into chapter 12 now, the beginning of this final week of the Lord Jesus' ministry before his death and resurrection. The next day, the great crowd that had come for the feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, Hosanna!

[2 : 33] Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the King of Israel. Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, Do not be afraid, O daughter of Zion.

See, your King is coming, seated on a donkey's colt. At first, his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.

Now the crowd that was with him, when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him.

So the Pharisees said to one another, See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him. Now there were some Greeks among those who went to worship at the feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. Sir, they said, we would like to see Jesus. Philip went to tell Andrew. Andrew and Philip, in turn, told Jesus.

[3 : 41] Jesus replied, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain.

But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it. Well, the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. Now my heart is troubled.

And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? No. It was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name.

Then a voice came from heaven. I have glorified it, and will glorify it again. The crowd that was there and heard it said it thundered. Others said an angel had spoken to him.

[4 : 42] Jesus said, This voice was for your benefit. Sort of snaky things, and it's amazing, isn't it? You can see everything inside.

You can see the lungs, the heart. You can see all that things are meant to be working okay or not. But however much technology and however much insight we can get into the physical of the body, we can never see within the human heart and mind the thoughts, the emotions of another, can we? Those are always hidden from us. That is, of course, unless somebody chooses to reveal them. Unless we choose to tell others. Unless we choose to open up our hearts to them.

And our minds to them. And here in John, in chapter 12, in verse 27, in the midst of what is a remarkable episode in the life of the Lord Jesus, we have Jesus opening up his heart to us and saying, Now my heart is troubled.

Now my heart is troubled. And even so, though Jesus opens his heart to us and tells us, even then, we can't really plumb the depths, can we, of his heart or his mind.

[5 : 53] We can't really understand everything that's going on. But what he has to say here is very helpful to us. Not only in understanding Jesus, but also in understanding ourselves. It's not the first time, of course, that Jesus has opened his heart up in the Gospels.

Just go back a page to John in chapter 11, while at the graveside of Lazarus. And there we see Jesus completely open. We're told in verse 33 that he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. And the evidence of that, of course, was seen in those two brief but amazing words. Jesus wept. There are other times as well that Jesus quite openly and plainly displayed his emotions and his feelings.

Times when he was filled with sorrow and grief and distress and trouble. Times when he was filled with compassion for those who was before. Times he was filled with great joy and ecstasy in that sense.

Times. And what we see here again and what we're brought back face to face with is the reality that Jesus was a real man who had real emotions. He was human in every possible way, just as we are.

[7 : 04] Yet still God. And we see there that it is right for us to be emotional people. It is not wrong for us to show our emotions.

It is not wrong for us or unchristian of us or lacking in maturity of us or lacking in faith for us to show our emotions. We are to be open as Jesus was open.

Sometimes as Christians we are taught that or it is implied, isn't it? Well, if you are a Christian and have faith in God, you shouldn't be troubled in heart. And you shouldn't weep over this situation. And you shouldn't be anxious. And you shouldn't be distressed.

Well, that's not right. As those who are Christians are following the example of our Lord Jesus, we are one who is clearly not afraid to wear his heart on his sleeve.

Even before people who were strangers as well as before his friends. How wonderful it is for us to know that our Lord Jesus Christ has truly experienced the breadth of human life.

[8 : 06] We do not have an ivory tower God in the Lord Jesus. We don't have a saviour who somehow hides away his feelings from us. But we have one who, being fully God, at the same time fully man, entered into all that we experience and go through.

So, whatever trouble we have of heart, whatever anxiety, whatever difficulty we face, our saviour understands it and has felt something of it. Later on in the New Testament, we're told about Jesus speaking about how he too shared in their humanity.

So that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death. And later on, for this reason he had to be made like his brothers, that's believers, in every way. In order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God.

We have a saviour who understands. We have a saviour who weeps. We have a saviour who says, I'm troubled in heart. Doesn't wear a mask, put it that way.

Or a false smile. The question is really, here, why does Jesus say, now my heart is troubled? Why now? Why is he so troubled in heart that he expresses it, that it comes out in this way?

[9 : 24] Why, especially when we think of the events of the day? Just before. I mean, really, you would expect him almost to say, after what has happened to him, now my heart's glad. Now I'm filled with joy.

Why? Think, look at through the events of the Palm Sunday. He's been welcomed into Jerusalem with crowds, a great crowd we're told. Hundreds, maybe thousands of people, cheering and praising and honouring him.

And laying down this red carpet, as it were, of welcome to him. At last, acknowledging who he is. Blessed is the King of Israel. Hosanna, which means, Lord save us.

Blessed is he who comes. They're recognising who he is as the Christ. The one that God had sent into the world for his people. And think as well, here, as we talked with the children in verse 14 and 15.

The prophecies concerning Jesus were all lining up and being fulfilled. That God had promised aeons ago. God's will was being accomplished. His revealed purpose for the salvation of humanity was falling into place.

[10:34] Even more than that. News of his miracles was being spread and broadcast. People were gossiping the gospel and talking about Jesus everywhere.

Talking about him raising Lazarus from the dead. And so it was drawing even more people to come to him. To seek him. Many people were told, verse 18, because they'd heard that he'd given this miraculous sign, went to meet him.

There was huge interest now as the hour, in one sense, of his greatest triumph, so it seems. Even non-Jews were coming. There in verse 20, when it speaks about Greeks, it just means Gentiles. Non-Jews who were there were coming as well. And they were saying, we want to see Jesus. We want to meet with him. And even those enemies of his, the Pharisees, the religious leaders who hated him, because he threatened their power and their hold over the people.

Even they were caused to be concerned and frustrated, feeling isolated. See, this is getting us nowhere. They're plots to kill him. Look how the whole world's gone after him.

[11:43] He was going up. They were going down. Everything was working in the human eyes, in one sense, marvelously and wonderfully for Jesus. And now, in spite of all of that, now my heart is troubled.

Now my heart is troubled. There's a very, very simple and plain lesson for us here, dear friends, that no amount of outward success can guarantee inner peace.

It doesn't matter what you have in the world. It doesn't matter what popularity you have. It doesn't matter what honor you receive. It doesn't matter how high you climb the ladder in your career.

It doesn't matter how people think of you. Or whether you are given a CBE or whatever. Whatever money or finance you receive, none of those things can deal with our troubled hearts.

None of those things can fill the gap, can deal with the real issue of the heart and the soul. It's foolishness in the extreme to think that material things and the popularity of men and women are actually what makes life worth living.

[12:51] Solomon, in his wonderful book, Ecclesiastes, speaks about seeking after contentment in things like chasing after the wind. It's just not going to be hard, is it?

No, we know the distress. We know the reason, don't we? The real reason why Jesus says, my heart is troubled, it's obvious. He's just been talking about his imminent death, hasn't he? In that illustration of the seed, that grain that falls to the ground and dies, he's talking about himself.

He's talking about the man who loses his life. That's himself. He's facing death. He's facing imminent death and suffering. But even then, in one sense, that doesn't fully explain why he now says his heart is troubled.

Other people have faced death with a sense of stoicism, haven't they? Other people have faced death and they've been able to sort of face it with a sense of stiff upper lip.

Not falling, in one sense, to this sort of crying out in grief at the troubled heart. Martyrs, Christian martyrs have been able to face lions singing hymns of praise to God.

[14:04] People who have been terminally ill and knowing that they're dying have been able to face it with a sense of satisfaction that life is complete. Why is Jesus here crying out, my heart is troubled?

Does Jesus lack courage to face death? No, it's not that at all, is it? Because, of course, we understand that the death of our Lord Jesus Christ is unlike any other death, any other human death.

Any death that has ever been experienced by any human being or person in this world. They don't expose some flaw in Jesus, some lack of courage in Jesus, some weakness in Jesus.

Rather, they reveal to us the very purpose of his death, which is that he should endure and face the very wrath of God on our behalf. His death is no ordinary death, it's a unique death, a once-for-all death, an unrepeatable death, in which he, the perfect God-man, is made sin for us and treated by God as a sinner on our behalf.

Here's Paul as he writes his second letter to the Corinthian Christians. He says to them, God made Jesus, him who had no sin, to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

[15:26] His distress upon his heart, my heart is troubled, is because he feels and begins to feel the crushing weight of our sin upon his soul. Isaiah prophesied in chapter 53 the truth that Jesus, the Messiah, would come and be pierced for our transgressions, that he would be bruised for our iniquities, that the punishment that brings us peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.

It's as if Jesus here is having a premonition of that cry that he gave from the cross when he says, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? The beginning of the torment, if I can put it that way, the beginning of the distress of his soul is here a week before his death.

We know that torment, we know that suffering, we know that trouble of heart continues, and it finds greater expression in the Garden of Gethsemane. It's there he sweats drops of blood.

So yes, it is the cross, it is the bearing of my sin and your sin upon himself. It's that which squeezes from him this cry, My heart is troubled. And yet even so, even though we know it is, because of such torment and such trouble and such pain and such foreknowledge of what he must bear, it's still a great help to us that Jesus doesn't bottle up his feelings, but he openly expresses them.

He acknowledges them. Not that he should, as it were, draw from us some sympathy. Not that he should draw from us some sense of guilt and shame, because we are the cause of that, though clearly we are to be convicted of our sin.

[17:12] But we are to hear the words of Jesus, because here he wants to show us that we are to be transparent, that we are no longer to wear a mask before God or before ourselves or before others.

We're not to be those sort of people, which unfortunately we are, because we are English, most of us, which says that when we're asked, how are you, I'm fine. He is true to himself.

He confesses the very natural response of the inner conflict of his heart. In fact, he tells us, doesn't he, what shall I do? It's not just he says, now my heart's in trouble, and he says, what shall I say? There's a conflict going on. There's a battle going on. What should I pray? Father, save me from this hour. Get me out of this fix. Remove this trouble from me.

Isn't that exactly how we feel? Isn't that our natural response to trouble or difficulty or sadness or grief? Isn't it simply, wouldn't we want to pray, Father, get us out of here?

[18:15] Save us? Isn't it wonderful again that Jesus, the Son of God, the one who never sinned, the perfect and sinless human being, we know that his desire for deliverance from trouble was not a sin.

Him wanting to be freed from this trouble was something which we feel, and it's not wrong to feel that way. If Christ felt this, then surely we can feel it without fear of condemnation.

Surely we also, like him, when we're faced with those troubles and anxieties of our hearts, surely we are allowed to, as he did, struggle within ourselves and say, Father, forgive me.

I want to say, Father, get me out of this. Father, get me out of this. And yet, of course, we know that though he felt this way and wished to pray for his rescue, yet we know that that passing temptation left him, and he prayed differently.

No, he says, no. Though I want to, though I desire to, no, I'm not going to pray in that way. Rather, I'll pray, Father, glorify your name. Here is faith, isn't it?

[19:32] In the face of distress. Here is a certain faith. A certain faith, not in himself, if I can put it that way, but a certain faith in his Father, in his God.

See, Jesus' prayer reveals such a lot to us, helps us such a lot. It gives to us not only the encouragement to be open and honest with ourselves when we are struggling and we are troubled and our hearts are breaking, but it gives us also the way through those things, the way of peace in those things.

Jesus' prayer is a prayer which comes into our hearts. It's a prayer which is for every child of God. And it's this prayer, Father, glorify your name. See, now my heart is troubled, says Jesus.

And why is Jesus' heart troubled now? Because this was the very purpose of God to bring him to that now, to bring him to that hour, to bring him into that place which leads to the cross.

The hour was the cause of his troubled heart. As he said earlier on, now is the hour, verse 23, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Not the literal 60-minute hour, but the time.

[20 : 52] This hour, this time, this set time. We'll think about that this evening, particularly what Jesus means by that, that he is glorified. Now is the hour.

All of Jesus' life, he recognized, was under the very sovereign care of his heavenly Father, that nothing happened to him, nothing he went through, even those things that distressed his heart, happened by chance, or accident, or luck, or fluke.

His life was under the care of a sovereign God. But dear friends, similarly, so are our lives.

Similarly, we also are those who are not driven by chance, or luck, or fate, or perhaps, but everything in our lives occurs and happens according to the will of a heavenly, loving, gracious, tender Father God.

Jesus, when he taught his disciples about not worrying or being concerned, in Matthew chapter 10, says to them, are not two sparrows sold for a penny, yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father.

And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered, so don't be afraid, you are worth more than many sparrows. What is he saying? It's obvious what he's saying. Just a little bird that flies in the sky, one of a million, doesn't die and fall to the ground except it's God's will that it should happen.

[22 : 23] And this God is so great and astounding that actually we are far more important to God than sparrows. We are far more precious to him than anything in this world because we have a soul and they don't.

We are made in his image and they aren't because we are born into this world to be in a relationship with the living God, not them. So everything that happens in your life and mine only happens because God in his care and his love and his sovereignty allows it to happen, wills it to happen and that blows our minds.

And so therefore we have to take it by faith. We have to take it by faith as Jesus took it by faith.

Here's the place of peace in those troubles.

It's not in racking our brains. It's not in trying to work out why this has happened and what's the reason of it and how I'm to blame for it. The place of peace is to pray, Father glorify your name here in this hour now in this thing which is causing me so much trouble and pain.

It's not to squash and crush our feelings. It's to be honest and open with our feelings but to turn them into prayer. Say, Lord my heart is troubled.

[23 : 47] I am struggling. Lord work in this situation for your glory. And there's a wonderful promise isn't there that's given to Jesus and I believe is given to us in response to that type of prayer.

We're told that when Jesus had prayed, Father glorify your name, a voice came from heaven.

Remember two other times a voice had come from heaven, hadn't it? At Jesus' baptism a voice had come from heaven.

This is my son. Listen to him. And on his transfiguration when he was changed, when the curtain was pulled back a little bit on his humanity and his glory shone out and Peter, James and John saw him.

Again the Father spoke from heaven. This is my son in whom I'm well pleased. And now on this third occasion God breaks his silence if I can put it that way and speaks to and into the situation.

Here's his response to the prayer of Jesus. I have glorified it and I will glorified again. In other words, I hear your prayer and I will answer your prayer and I will do what you ask.

[24 : 55] And notice that Jesus tells us verse 30 that God spoke from heaven not for Jesus' benefit but for those who are listening therefore for his disciples and therefore for us because we're listening in too.

It was spoken for our benefit. Yes, it was spoken for their benefit that they might know that Jesus really is God the Son who has come into the world and that they must believe on him and put their faith on him and it says the same to us.

But it also says to us this. It says to us encouragement. It says to us the Father cares and the Father hears and the Father answers prayer and the Father works in and through those circumstances of distress and trouble for his glory and for ours.

Can you and I really pray this prayer while still feeling trouble of heart? See, prayer is not about feeling if I can put it that way.

We don't just pray what we feel. It's important to let our feelings be known to God. Peter says cast all your care on him for he cares for you.

[26 : 19] It's right that we should open our heart before and be honest with him but dear friends prayer is not about what we feel. It's faith. It's an act of faith. It's a decision of the mind in one sense that says I will trust God in spite of how I feel in spite of what's going on.

Even when we're feeling I don't know what to say and I don't know what the answer is and I don't know how to get through this if we can pray with faith if we can pray Father glorify your name or as Jesus puts it in another way in Gethsemane your will be done not mine.

Then here we find a refuge for our souls. Here we find deliverance from the storms. Here we find peace. Here is contentment. Because ultimately what happens is this that as we step out in faith feelings follow.

If we are led by feelings then we shall never enjoy faith but if we step out in faith then feelings are changed. They are altered. In one sense what we're doing is we're saying what is a closed situation that I can't let anybody into.

God I'm letting you in to work and do what you want in my life. I'm letting you in to heal. I'm letting you in to give peace. I'm letting you in. As long as the door is shut and as long as we won't pray that prayer then we in one sense keep ourselves out of the peace of God.

[27 : 49] be honest with our heavenly father. Cast all our cares upon him.

Pray father your will be done and he will answer it. Psalm 139 and just close with this verse and 166 sorry in verse 16 rather.

Here's David he says this all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts oh God how vast is the sum of them were I to count them they would outnumber the grains of sand when I awake I'm still with you.

Let's just spend a moment or two responding to God's word in the quietness of our own hearts speaking to him and talking with him. Let's do that.