

John Chapter 12 v 23

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[0 : 00] for what God has done for us. This was a song, of course, that he sung as the Holy Spirit filled him and equipped him at the birth of his son, John the Baptist. Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us. A horn is a picture of strength, a mighty one, a strong one, in the house of his servant David.

As he said through his holy prophets long ago, salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham, to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, my child, that's John, will be called a prophet of the Most High. For you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins. Because of the tender mercies of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven, to shine on those living in darkness, in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace. The whole of his song is not about John. One small bit where he speaks about John. The rest is all about Jesus Christ.

Everything else is about him. He's the strong and mighty one that God has given us through the house of David to save us. He's the one who fulfills the covenant promise of God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that a savior would come, that through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

It's Jesus who's the one who's come. He's the one who's the outworking of God's tender mercy.

He's the rising sun, the light of the world, who shines into the darkness of our lives.

He's the one who brings to us a path of peace. Peace with God to walk and to live day by day. I don't know if you've ever done this. I would encourage you to think about at some time, write your own psalm. Sit down and write your own psalm. How would I praise God? You do it when you're praying, but put it down on paper, just between you and the Lord, and bring your worship and praises to him. And really for me, this next hymn, 501, is really, I feel, if I was to write a psalm, it would be something like this. Oh, how the grace of God amazes me. And I trust that it amazes you to preach and praise and sing his name. 501, let's stand and sing together.

[3 : 01] Go on a bit further as well. So the Gospel of John in chapter 12, we're going to begin at verse 20 and read through to verse 41. Actually, verse 43, sorry, verse 20 through to verse 43.

This are the events following just after the Palm Sunday, the day that we are remembering this morning. So here's God's Word, John chapter 12, verse 20.

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up 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. 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 seed.

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

[4 : 18] Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am my servant also will be. My Father will honour 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 had thundered.

Others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus said, this voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world.

Now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

[5 : 16] The crowd spoke up. We've heard from the law that the Christ will remain forever. So how can you say the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?

And Jesus told them, You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you.

The man who walks in the dark does not know where he's going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light. When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet. Lord, who has believed our message?

To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For this reason they could not believe. Because as Isaiah says elsewhere, He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes nor understand with their hearts, nor turn, and I would heal them.

[6 : 21] Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him. Yet at the same time, many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees, they would not confess their faith, for fear they would be put out of the synagogue.

For they loved praise from men more than praise from God. Good. So we're in John 12 again this evening as we were this morning, following up the events surrounding that Palm Sunday, that triumphal entry, as it's often called, of the Lord Jesus into Jerusalem.

And I want to particularly think about verse 23 and the repercussions of that, which Jesus speaks about later on in the chapter.

For there in verse 23, Jesus replied, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

This year there will be a series of celebrations planned to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain and other events at the beginning of the Second World War.

[7 : 38] That phrase, the Battle of Britain, was one which was coined by Winston Churchill in one of his most important speeches in June 1940. And although nowadays we think of the Battle of Britain as only referring to those months in the summer of that year, over the skies of southern England with the dogfights between the Spitfires and the Messerschmitt and so on.

Yet Churchill had in mind, originally, that the whole conflict for the salvation of Britain and beyond that the world hinged upon the Battle of Britain.

Here's the final paragraph of that speech he made in the Houses of Parliament. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. Upon it depends our own British life and the long continuity of our institutions and our empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must soon be turned on us.

Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be freed and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands.

[8 : 50] But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we've known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new dark age made more sinister and perhaps more protracted by the lights of perverted science.

Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and its commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say this was their finest hour.

Well, when we come to chapter 12 and the words of the Lord Jesus, we come to, I believe, him announcing the arrival of his finest hour.

The hour has come. Speaks about it just a bit later. We thought about this morning. Father, save me from this hour. No, it is for this very reason.

I came to this hour. The hour has come. And just as Churchill was aware that Britain's finest hour was a time of crisis, when the very future of so much would be decided, even more so, Jesus' finest hour is the turning point in the history of the world upon which the future of the world was decided so that nothing would ever be the same again.

[10 : 15] An hour, Jesus says, in which both he and the Father would be glorified. Later on in verse 28, Father, glorify your name. I have glorified it and will glorify it again.

So the Son of God and God the Father are to be glorified in this finest hour, this hour, this time, which the Lord Jesus is now declaring has arrived.

Now, of course, when we think of something glorious, we think of a triumph, we think of success, we think of achievement. On one of the DVDs which Rico Tice gives the Christianity Explored course, he talks about the fact that when he goes back to his old university, college, there are two large plaques bearing the list of past students on the wall in one of the halls.

On one plaque is a list of those students who'd won Olympic gold medals. On the other are the names of those students who were Nobel Prize winners. These were the only achievements considered to be worthy of recognition.

Rico Tice conceded he was sure that his name wouldn't appear on either in the coming days. Yet the greatest hour of Jesus' life, the finest hour, that crisis moment that would bring about such a momentous transformation in the world was anything but an achievement, was anything but an accomplishment, was anything but a triumph or a success.

[11:46] In fact, rather when we consider it with human eyes, it seems a rather pathetic failure, a defeat, a conquest, because of course we're talking about the death, the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the Roman cross.

But that's exactly how Jesus understood the hour. That's exactly what Jesus was thinking of when he said, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

For he goes on there in verse 24 to speak about in illustration his own death like a grain of wheat falling to the ground. He speaks about losing his life.

He knew that his death was the very center of the battleground, the finest hour for him. Of course, the cross by anyone's judgment is a tragedy.

The cross by anyone's judgment is a terrible thing, an awful, a vile, a cruel thing. It's the very opposite of glorious. The reason the Romans chose the cross to put to death and execute the slaves and the revolutionaries and the very scum of humanity was because it was so humiliating.

[13:01] You were stripped naked and nailed up for everyone to see to die a slow, agonizing, awful death. As Paul points out later on in his letter to the Corinthians, by the thinking of the world, the cross that Jesus died on is something utterly foolish.

For he says this, the Jews demand miraculous signs, Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews.

In other words, something unbelievably foolish to Gentile and foolishness to Gentiles. the cross of Jesus Christ is far from glorious.

So why should we as Christians consider the cross as Jesus' finest hour? Why should we think of it as a place where his glory is revealed?

Why must we consider it as something wonderful, marvelous, triumphant, as Jesus surely does?

Well, because that is how God the Father declares what he is about to do in his Son at the cross.

[14:15] The Father says, I have glorified it and will glorify it again. He speaks from heaven confirming the Son of God to be who he truly is, confirming that he is in the Father's will and about the Father's business.

It says, Jesus responds to that voice and he speaks to the crowd that I believe we see three aspects of the glory of Christ in the cross. Three glorious, wonderful things that are accomplished, that are achieved at the cross.

For there, Jesus says in verse 31, now is the time for judgment on this world. Now, the prince of this world will be driven out but I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.

Three aspects of the glory of Christ that the cross reveals to us. He begins by declaring that now, this hour, this time, is the time of judgment for the world.

The word that's used there for judgment is in fact crisis. Now is the crisis. That's the Greek word from which we get our word, crisis. crisis. A deciding moment in history, a turning point involving suspense, life and death matters.

[15:38] By the cross and at the cross, the world is judged. Its evil is tested. The litmus paper, as it were, is applied to it.

will the world receive God in his son or will they kill him and reject him? The world in all of its rottenness is exposed for what it is.

It is brought to a crisis point. It's brought to that place where it's all been leading up to. To reveal the very heart of humanity. To reveal the very judgment of God upon the world.

How does God see the world? What is the world really like? It's like this. It's a rebellious, wicked, sinful world that has rejected its maker and God and sent the innocent, sinless son of God to die a cruel, vile death.

If we want to say, if we want to see the very darkness of the human soul, then we see it at the cross. We need to get rid of that silly, silly nonsense that is promoted everywhere that the human heart has lots of good in it.

[17:00] That at the deepest level, in the most bitter and evil heart, there is always something nice and lovely and good. That's not the case. At the very deepest level, the human heart is sinful, rebellious, greedy, shameful, vile, wicked.

It's seen there in the cross. It's seen there as Christ, the one who only ever did good, who only healed the sick and raised the dead, who only spoke forgiveness and love and mercy and grace, who was the love of God personified, was rejected and cast out and murdered.

There's something else, of course, isn't there here when Jesus' words time for judgment on this world. God. See, the glory of God is seen in his justice.

One of the glorious things about God is that he is just. No one else is just like God. No one else is perfectly just in being fair, in doing right, in judging properly.

And in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, we see the justice of God being revealed against the sin of the world. See, the wonderful thing about our God is this.

[18:19] He is not a God who takes a backhand. He's not a God who turns a blind eye. He's not a God who clears the guilty. He's not a God who ignores evil and injustice when he sees it and he sees it always in every heart and life.

It's to the glory of God that he is just and deals justly with sin. When Moses was given this incredible revelation of the person of God in Exodus, one of the aspects that God revealed to him was this, that he is the God who does not leave the guilty unpunished.

In this world, God acts with justice. Men and women may do atrocious and evil and criminal things and appear to escape justice but they cannot and neither can you and I escape justice for we must face the justice and judgment of God.

He does not leave the guilty unpunished. So in the cross, as your sin and mine is laid upon Jesus, as he has made sin for us, so there the justice of God is seen gloriously that even on his son where sin is present, he must punish and act with judgment.

God's not moved by favoritism. He's not a God who deals differently with people but he's a God who shows no favoritism because surely here as his son, his innocent, sinless son was on the cross, surely there was a time for him to be lenient.

[19:50] There was an opportunity for him to spare his son some of the punishment that our sins deserve but he didn't. He bore all of our sin and all of our shame.

He judges the sin of his people which is upon his son. He holds back none of the wrath that our sin deserves. Here's Paul as he writes to the Christians in Rome in chapter 8.

Wonderful words. He said this, If God is for us who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all how will he not along with him all graciously give us all things? He didn't spare his son. Isaiah as he looks forward to the cross of Christ as he by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit sees what God is going to do upon the cross says the most striking the most awful the most tremendous words it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer.

Can you believe that? Can you understand that? That God the Father who had loved his son from eternity past who had loved him with a love that we have no true concept of should because of your sin and mine be willing to crush him and cause him to suffer.

[21:15] Jesus says the judgment of the world has come in this hour. This is the finest hour. Astonishing.

And secondly here as well we see that Jesus says not only is now the time for judgment on this world but now the prince of this world will be driven out. In the cross of Christ the glory of God is revealed in the victory that he accomplishes over Satan over the devil.

Notice that Jesus calls him the prince of this world. He is the prince. Elsewhere Paul refers to him in 2 Corinthians as the god of this age.

Satan is the god and the prince of all the inhabitants of this world. We are born with sinful hearts and sinful natures so much so that Paul tells us in Colossians that we are those who are in the domain the dominion of darkness.

all people whoever we are whatever our education our background our religion whatever our circumstances however good we try to live we are those who are followers of his ways.

[22 : 29] Here's Paul again describing how even we before we were Christians used to live like the rest of the world. You follow the ways of the world the ruler of the kingdom of the air the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

Don't be conned into thinking that somehow the devil is just a figment of imagination just a bogeyman. He is very real he is the personification of all that is evil and he is actively at work in the hearts of men and women who have denied Christ and who have walked away from him.

Paul says that he's the one who blinds the eyes of those who don't believe. The reason that men and women are so hardened against Christ the reason that people don't believe in God is simply in one sense because that Satan has blinded them.

Jesus calls him the prince of this world it's because Adam and Eve chose to have him as their king. They rejected the king who is God his laws and his commandments in that garden of Eden they submitted themselves freely to the devil's lies and did what he asked of them.

And so we continue that as we continue to turn away from God as men and women continue to not have the true king of their hearts and lies rule over them so they continue to acknowledge that their prince is Satan.

[24 : 05] The devil whether they recognize it or not that's the case. But but says Jesus now the prince of this world has cast out now something has changed now there is a turnaround now the battle that seemed to be going all of Satan's way is now changed as Christ stands up and defeats him at the cross.

He's cast out from his throne so that those under his sway can be delivered and freed to return to their creator God their rightful king. The devil is removed from his authority yes he continues as it were to engage in terrorism he continues to assault his subjects he continues to lead many in fear but there is coming a day when he shall utterly and completely be crushed and all his forces with him the death blow has been struck.

Somebody's likened what Christ did on the cross to the D-Day landings of 1944 the spearhead of the allied forces broke into Europe and began to break down the forces of Nazism until several months later the whole of the empire the Third Reich was crushed and defeated and so it is with Christ came to the cross and there the fatal blow that he took was a fatal blow against the devil and his forces here is what Paul says then the end will come when he that's Christ hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he's destroyed all dominion authority and power for he must reign until he's put all his enemies under his feet the glory of God is revealed in the cross in the victory that he accomplishes over Satan there's one more thing here one final thing here and really it is the most glorious the most wonderful the most delightful because in the cross we find there the revelation of God's grace the revelation of God's grace

Jesus says when I am lifted up I will draw all men to myself when I am lifted up he's not talking about his ascension he's not talking about his resurrection we know because he tells us he's talking about his death being lifted up on a cross lifted up from the earth in that sense see in the Jewish tradition anybody like Jesus who had blasphemed in their eyes God should have been stoned to death and they tried to stone him but he wasn't he walked away from them unlike John the Baptist he wasn't beheaded in the prison no he was crucified suspended between heaven and earth in that sense and what Jesus declares to us is this that in the cross in the lifting up of Christ at the cross we have God's divine instrument of grace by which he draws those under judgment he draws those who are in the devil's power into the liberation and the justification of the Son of God when I am lifted up

I'll draw all men to myself the very clear teaching of the Bible is this is that men and women cannot get to God by their own power we cannot draw near to God of ourselves we cannot approach him we can do nothing in fact as we've already begun to see the devil has put people in chains and sin has put us to death and we are ultimately impotent to be able to get to God and draw near to God Jesus himself said in the gospel of John chapter 6 here verse 44 no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him it must be a supernatural spiritual work that God does in the heart to bring a person who is dead in sin and in captivity to Satan and under the judgment and wrath of God it's a supernatural work of God that can bring people to him but that's the accomplishment of the cross that's what Jesus is saying because of what he would suffer for our sake he is the one who is able to take us and bring us to God to draw us to God to lift us into that living and everlasting

relationship with him now we need to understand carefully for a moment the words that Jesus says because in the original it says

[28 : 51] I will draw all to myself the word men isn't there I will draw all to myself it's implied and in one sense there's nothing wrong with that because he's talking about human beings of course people but it cannot mean what some have suggested that it means that every individual person in the world who's ever lived will be drawn to Christ and saved we know that cannot be so because we read through the Bible again and again those who reject Christ those who reject God and are self-propelled into judgment into hell he's not talking about a universal salvation for every person when he says I will draw all to myself nor is he saying this that in the cross there is a powerful effect that draws every single person there is something that every person is drawn to in the cross but some choose not to receive him as their saviour some choose not to turn to him to limit the drawing power of Christ to something so weak and insipid that it's something that can be rejected something that can be ignored something that can be disposed of is to insult the cross and insult the power of Christ and the gospel of Christ in the cross rather we're to understand what Jesus is saying here something which is so marvellous and wonderful it's a declaration that in the cross the Lord Jesus Christ will draw to himself all those from every nation and tribe and tongue and language people of every class and system but particularly he will draw all those whom he has purposed and chosen to save not one shall be missing of his sheep not one shall be missing from his bride you see until that time when Christ came to live and to die the gospel of God's grace was for the Jew not for the Gentile but in the coming of Christ those walls of hostility have been broken down the very reason that Jesus speaks as he does if you notice there when he says the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified is because the Gentiles had come hadn't they we want to see Jesus that's how Jesus responds to it he says now is the hour this is the beginning of why I came into the world to save those not just the Jew but the Gentile to save people of every race and nation this is the marvellous and glorious grace of God here's what Paul says about it in Ephesians chapter 2 therefore remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called uncircumcision remember that at that time you were separate from Christ excluded from citizenship in Israel foreigners to the covenants of the promise without hope and without God in the world but now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near how?

through the blood of Christ it's the cross it's the cross that's done it it's the cross that's broken the power it's the cross which glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father it's the cross that saves the wicked out of the clutches of the devil and makes them God's children not by ignoring their sin but by fully fulfilling his justice in judging that sin and dealing with it upon the cross and not by stealing away surreptitiously those who are under the devil's control but by winning them in conquest not leaving them simply to find their own way but by drawing them by irresistible grace so that they gladly and willingly come to him with faith that's the glory that's the finest hour of Jesus that's the crisis point and the turning point in all of history now Jesus says the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified do we long for men and women to be drawn to Christ do we pray for them to come to him then let's never stop talking about the cross let's never stop preaching about the cross or rejoicing in the cross that mighty magnificent magnificent this demonstration of the love of grace of God let's not think that we can drive men and women to Christ with scare stories let's not think that we can beat them to the cross or force them to the cross or bring them to the cross by any power but let us point to the bleeding side of the Saviour that they may too be captivated by his love and drawn to him let us tell them of the one who died for them the one who's done all to forgive them and to free them let us make the gospel of Christ centred on the cross and nothing else in an age when the blood of Christ is a despised thing as it always has been it is the power of God unto salvation for those who believe what a message we have this Easter the finest hour of the Lord Jesus Christ the glory hour the triumphant hour the one who died for sinners like us that's why Paul himself and I close with his words not mine the end of Galatians as he's been speaking to those believers who are being drawn away from the cross and drawn to works drawn away from grace alone to doing those things ritual and religion to somehow justify their works with God at the very end what does he say to them may I never boast except in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ our boast is the same let's sing together as we close our final hymn sovereign grace over sin abounding 504 we rejoice in the power and the accomplishments of our Lord Jesus Christ at the cross 504 let's stand as we sing the Sid abounding rancen The Tidings Well Tis And deep That Close The Srounding Through His Breath On End Can Tell All His Glories

All His Glories Let My Soul Forever Dwell What such Love
My Soul So Ponder Love So Great So Rich And Free Safe And Lost In Holy Wonder Why Oh Such
Love To Me Hallelujah Hallelujah Fresh Shall Rain Eternally May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself And
God Our Father Who Loved Us And By His Grace Gave Us Eternal Encouragement And Good
Hope Encourage Your Hearts And Strengthen You In Every Good Deed And Word The Grace Of
Our Lord Jesus Christ Be With You All Ever More Amen