

# John 12:37-50

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Date: 19 September 2019

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, you've got to be careful what you throw away, haven't you? Lest you throw away more than you thought you had. The story goes of a couple in Las Vegas who were queuing for too long so they unwittingly tore up the winning lottery ticket!

and bought an instant scratch card instead. The ticket would have been worth \$900,000. And then a cleaner who was working in a modern art gallery came across an art installation by the modern artist Paul Branca.

It looked like a couple of dustbins in the corner of the room. That's no comment on modern art. But she assumed it was literal rubbish and got rid of it. And it would have been worth an absolute fortune.

Or then there's the person who took an old computer they found in their attic, took it to the local dump and threw it in a skip. They later discovered that it was one of Apple Corporation's originals made by Steve Jobs himself.

And it was worth at least \$200,000. You have got to be careful what you throw away and what you discard. Lest you throw away more than you thought you had.

[ 1 : 13 ] And in this passage that we read today Jesus is concerned that his listeners do not make the same mistake with him and with his message of throwing away somebody who is worth more than they know.

In this section in John 12 we're in between the two main parts of John's Gospel. It's separated into two halves. And this is the interval in between those two halves.

The first half deals with the three years of Jesus' public ministry. The second half deals with the last four days of his life. And we're told, aren't we, in the interval that Jesus' listeners have thrown him out.

They've rejected him. And so Jesus here, he wants to make one last proclamation to them. These are Jesus' last parting words before he removes himself from them in his public ministry.

John tells us in verse 44 he cries out to the people who've rejected him. It just shows his patience, doesn't it? And his compassion for people who have turned their backs on him who reject his wonderful message and his work.

[ 2 : 35 ] That he doesn't finish the relationship with one last jab at them with a witty retort that have put them in their place. He is still, even now, seeking to give skeptics one last chance not to make the mistake of throwing him away and his message.

And in these six verses here he sets out, really, a summary. It's his final sermon to them of what he is about and why skeptics should believe in him.

And really, they are the core elements of his message and of what Jesus is about. And it's a really dense passage. It's difficult to know what to leave out.

But I just want to highlight three positive things that Jesus tells them here. And we need to think as well, don't we, what Jesus is saying to us lest we throw out more than we thought we had in Jesus. So he says to them, don't reject me because to receive me, to believe in me is to believe in the one who sent me.

[ 3 : 45 ] That's the first thing. To believe in Jesus is to believe in the one who sent Jesus. Now most leaders we've seen in the world are people who appeal to us and they want our trust and they want our belief on the basis of their qualities, aren't they?

They are better at this and they're good at that. They've got more YouTube subscribers or whatever. They are the reason to talk themselves up, aren't they?

For our trust. But oddly, Jesus' appeal for belief and trust comes not in himself but in his relationship to somebody else.

Did you see who that other person was? If you look at verse 44 again, whoever believes in me believes not in me but in him who sent me.

It's very, very humble, isn't it? Jesus is not like many of the leaders. He's not in it for his own ego. He says, come to me and look at me so that you can find somebody else.

[ 4 : 56 ] He's not in it to build popularity for himself. Actually, he says, I am here so that you might know and believe in somebody else as well. Namely, in the one who sent him.

He's saying, isn't it, that you need to receive Jesus, you need to trust in me because when you're doing that you're not just dealing with just me. I am not a man that you can take or leave in isolation. You don't deal with me simply as a man who knows a lot. I'm not simply an expert in the Jewish law. I'm not simply a wise and loving compassionate person.

I'm not simply a good preacher or a good teacher. You're not even dealing with simply a man. But a man who has been sent by God the Father.

And so you need to come to me because of my relationship to him, Jesus says. Now to use an illustration you might think of it a bit like a king sending an envoy to a different country or a land or sending an ambassador.

[ 6 : 08 ] And the way you treat the ambassador is the way you treat the sending king, isn't it? When you receive the ambassador you receive the sovereign that he represents.

And so Jesus is making a unique claim. He is saying that I and my Father in heaven are so united and so closely related that when you treat one of us one way then the other one feels it too.

When you believe in me and when you receive in me you receive not just me but my Father in heaven as well. Now that has implications for us doesn't it?

Just imagine for a second if you can and the person who is searching for God and for meaning in life perhaps it's a person who wants to get to know their spiritual side I've got friends like that.

A person asking the big questions like is there a God out there? And you can look into the world can't you and there are all sorts of answers around all sorts of cultures and religions that dress God up in different costumes and give different answers to the questions that people worship different kinds of gods don't they?

[ 7 : 29 ] Some people worship the sun or stars or ancestors or Allah or Buddha or they worship no gods at all. And so on your search for God you might go into the world you might travel the world you might go to China or India to visit some temples or you might go to the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem to find out who this God is who is out there somewhere.

But the audacious claim that Jesus makes is that you don't need to do any of that and you don't need to listen to any of that at all to know God.

Notice what he says in verse 45 Whoever sees me sees him who sent me. So actually the illustration of the ambassador is a bit weak really because Jesus is claiming here to be much much more than just the messenger boy.

He is saying I am the embodiment of this God. The God that you cannot ordinarily see is now made visible to you in me.

I am more than just a messenger boy. I am the one who allows you to see the unseeable God. But just pause to ask what that actually means.

[ 8 : 52 ] I received a note in the post a while ago it was a sales leaflet advertising a statue of Jesus Christ that they wanted me to buy and put on my shelf at home.

And the company that was selling these statues thought they had worked out what Jesus of Nazareth looked like using records and things. And so they made a representation out of stone so that I could see Jesus' face and kind of be inspired by it.

Now is that what Jesus means when he says when you see me you see the Father? I don't think it is. Because the way that Jesus reveals himself is not through pictures and images and statues but through words.

John ends his gospel doesn't he not by saying these things are painted or drawn or sculptured but he says these things are written that you may believe in Jesus.

And actually the whole Bible is written so that we can see who Jesus is. That we can see what he is like as a person. We can learn about his character and his ways.

[ 10 : 13 ] His sovereignty, his compassion, his justice. He wants us to do more than simply recognise a picture but to get to know a person.

And as we do that, as we see him and get to know him in the scripture, in the Bible, we are getting to know this God who is behind everything. As the saying goes, like father, like son. God, like man. So you don't need to travel the world on a pilgrimage or read endless books on the religions of the world. You can come to know this God right now in Ealing.

As you see Jesus in the pages of the Bible, you will find this God. The one true spiritual God who is behind everything. And so if you throw away Jesus, you are throwing him away more than you thought you had.

It would be to throw away the only way of knowing the glory and wonder of the God who made the universe. It is to receive the one who sent him.

[ 11 : 24 ] So to believe in Jesus is to receive the father, to receive the God who sent him. But secondly, to believe in Jesus is to have light. This is the second thing he says to the skeptics.

Look at verse 46. I have come into the world as light so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. Now it's similar to something that he said earlier in John 8 where he says I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. As you get to know me, Jesus says, you will get to know God and it will be like a light shining on your life.

A light that enables you to do what you're meant to do as a human being and to not walk in darkness. The idea there is of everyday living and of walking, being a human.

You'll know that we've got a seven-month-old at home at the moment. He's getting pretty good at night but he'll wake up and quite often it falls for me to try and calm him down. So I'll go in the room where he is and get his teddy, put his dummy in, move him around a bit, try and make him feel better.

[ 12 : 45 ] The only problem is when I go in the room it's always dark. We've got those black out blinds so it's pitch black in there. And if I try and do what I'm supposed to do in the dark it always goes very, very badly.

I'll kick a toy and it'll make a noise, stub my toe on the chair leg, shove the dummy in his eye and I'll just be fumbling around. See when it is dark we cannot act confidently or appropriately can we in what we're supposed to be doing.

And Jesus is saying here the same goes for life in general. Where of course in John darkness darkness for him is synonymous with things that are much more sinister than what goes on in my living room at night.

That darkness is what we experience before we get to know Jesus. It is our confusion and blindness morally.

It is our proneness to living in a way that is muddled and inappropriate and that has many many falls in the dark. As if we were living as blind people needing to know where to go but not being able to find the way.

[ 14 : 08 ] And we're full of anxieties of things that we can't see in the darkness. And we're morally confused as to what is right and to what is wrong. And as we look at society that is a really accurate picture isn't it?

But then when we come to meet Jesus it's as if this great big floodlight is switched on in the living room and we begin to see the obstacles and the dangers and the things to avoid in life.

And we begin to see what is right and what is wrong. And what is deceitful and what is true and what is good. And we become morally cited. And so he is the person who claims to bring us to God and to give us true enlightenment to our questions and to our speculations.

And he will keep us from falling over in the darkest places in our lives. To believe in him is to have the father, to believe the father and it's to have this light, the light of life.

But thirdly and lastly the third thing he says is that to believe in Jesus, to believe in me is to have life. It's to have the father, to have light, it is to have life.

[ 15 : 26 ] Just drop your eye to verse 49, just at the bottom. He says, for I have not spoken on my own authority, but the father who sent me has himself given me a commandment, what to say and what to speak.

And I know that his commandment is eternal life. Now, again, we see, don't we, the link between the person of Jesus and his father in heaven.

That not only in his works, but in his words, Jesus' message isn't stuff that he's just made up, or things that he wants to say. No, he's been given what to say, hasn't he, by the father.

It's very humble again, isn't it, that the last thing that he says to people in his public ministry is to discredit any claim that he is only speaking for himself. He says, no, no, it's not my message, it's my father's message that I'm giving to you.

But what is, what is the foundational word that the father speaks through him? Well, we see this word coming up twice, don't we, in the words that Jesus speaks.

[16:40] And it says, he says there that the father has given him a commandment. See, once in verse 49, and then in verse 50, he has come to give his father's commandment.

And what is that commandment? Verse 50, eternal life. Now, that is strange, isn't it? What is strange about the way that he describes this life?

Jesus says, I've come that people might have life, but notice he doesn't say, the father has sent me to give the promise of eternal life, or the offer of eternal life.

But he's given me a commandment, the commandment of eternal life. And what Jesus is doing here is he is showing us a God who is so concerned for his listeners and for people, that he doesn't send Jesus to merely suggest the way to life, or to offer the way to life, but to command that we believe in Jesus and receive life in his name.

That is the most loving thing to do, isn't it? When God the Father knows what we need. This is the message of God the Father, I command you to trust in Jesus and to receive life in his name.

[18:09] They are the words of a God who loves us enough to command what is best for us, to command life. And so Jesus, in his humility, he is being extremely positive, isn't he, with these people who have rejected him.

He is humble and gentle and compassionate. He gives people another chance. He even says, doesn't he, I've not come to judge you. I've come to save you, people who have rejected me.

But, I think there is a note of warning that we need to see before we finish, before we close. For there is a warning for those who still don't receive him, isn't there?

And he speaks to a person who still rejects. Jesus, if you look at verse 48, there's the person, the one who rejects me and does not receive my words, has a judge.

The word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. One of my old tutors at college pictures the scene in heaven. I think it describes this really well.

[19:23] He says, imagine the person who comes before God says, I'm not going to judge him on judgment day. And God says to him, why haven't you believed in Jesus? And the person says, well I didn't want to stop doing the things that I wanted to do in my life, I just wanted to live for myself.

And God will reply, well did you hear the command that I gave through Jesus for eternal life? And the man said, well I did hear it, but I wanted to spend my money and my time and my life my own way.

And God says to him, you mean to say that you chose death and have rejected the glorious message of Jesus for those stupid reasons? And the man says, yes I did.

And God replies, well the message that you have heard stands as witness against you today. And so to throw Jesus out may not feel like much of a big deal, but there will come a day when we will realise just how valuable he and his message is to us.

And how wonderful his message is. And that we've thrown out much more than we knew we had in him. And so God's command to us today, through Jesus, is that we do not get to that point.

[20:48] And that we receive him, the only way to God, and to light in our lives, and to eternal life forever with God. And so let us do that, shall we, in a prayer as we close.

That's great. Amen.