

John 12:12-37

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Preacher: Paul Levy

[0 : 00] So this week has many contrasts, doesn't it? We begin with the triumph of our Palm Sunday and what many people were hoping for and the contrast is what was on the mind of the Lord Jesus.

And what we can see clearly from the text is that regardless of what was on everybody else's mind of hosannas and proclamations and kingdoms coming Jesus had one thing on his mind and that one thing was to get to the excruciating experience of Calvary and there to lay down his life that he may win for us our eternal salvation.

And it's difficult for us to understand as it seemed to be difficult for the people of Jesus' day to understand how those two things could be together how it is that the crowds could be in one direction so zealously on Jesus Christ in another direction.

Now let me try and introduce to you some of the themes of John's Gospels. I read through John's Gospel and this week in preparation. It's a really good thing to do at any time but a really good thing to do this week I'd encourage you to do that.

When Jesus is approached by his mother in chapter 2 they're at a wedding and they're running out of wine and Mary says to the servants listen, go and speak to Jesus he can sort it out he says to her, what do you have to do with me?

[1 : 44] My hour has not yet come. So there's an hour that Jesus is waiting for and now in John chapter 12 we come to the point where Jesus says this is the hour the hour for which he was waiting for at the end of John chapter 2 when he turned water into wine.

In chapter 2 John says that many people believed in him or you could translate it they trusted in him or they believed in him and John recalls that Jesus responded in this way it says that Jesus did not entrust himself into their hands because he did not need a human testimony he did not need someone to tell him about the human heart he knows what is inside of a man Jesus knows what is inside of your heart and my heart and Jesus knows what is in the heart of those palm wavers and he knows that there is something more than an inauguration ceremony that is needed for you and I to be healed.

So Jesus comes to Jerusalem in his face sat towards the cross while everybody else has got a different agenda. Now I'd like to look at the text in three ways firstly, this is 17 to 22 I'd like us to see there are many things that would distract Jesus from the cross.

Then in 23 to 33 we will see that nothing distracts Jesus from the cross. And then in verses 34 to 36 we will see that nothing must deter and distract you from the cross.

So first of all there are many things that would distract us distract Jesus from the cross. Look at verses 17 to 22 I've put them in three categories first of all you have the enthusiastic crowd you have the crowd who are popularly is that a word?

[3 : 34] That isn't a word is it? Popularly? No. Well they were promoting Jesus as king weren't they? Zealously. They were promoting Jesus as the zealous king as the messianic king little children laying down palm trees adults taking off their outer garments and laying them before Jesus so that it would be a sacrificial royal path for Jesus to come into the city of Jerusalem.

They were zealous for his popularity there were many who wanted to make him king we read that in John chapter 6 didn't we? We're told that Jesus there in chapter 6 had to escape the crowds because right there and right then they wanted to proclaim him king and John said his hour had not yet come.

Your popularity your desire for popularity can be a great distraction from the cross. Secondly you'll notice it's not just the crowds it's the clergy look at verse 19 if the crowd were frenzied in their appreciation of Jesus then the clergy are furious and frustrated look at what they say to each other

in verse 19 you see that you are gaining nothing look the whole world has gone after him and of course ultimately the whole world has gone after him but here they are they're complaining aren't they?

They're saying what is the use of our good solid theology? What is the use of our religious office? What is the use of us being clergy if no one is going to follow us?

Just look at these people look at them unintelligently irreligiously following this undrained rabbi and they're frustrated and they were plot to kill him.

[5 : 18] Here's a temptation to be deterred by the clergy. Thirdly if you look at verse 20 there is the distraction of the curious verse 20 with the crowds the clergy and the curious well who are these people?

Well they are the very people that Jesus said the gospel was to go to the Greeks the world look at he says in John 10 verse 16 I have not just come for the lost sheep of Israel but for the sheep the lost sheep of the whole world he's bringing sheep in from all the folds of the world and ultimately we know that the great commission does bring those people in and here they come here are the Greeks they go to somebody with a Greek name Philip one of the apostles who understood Greek culture and they say sir we wish to see Jesus verse 21 or they want to see him and it would be very tempting for Jesus to take his time there to have a kind of Sunday school class or an apologetic session to gain international popularity and perhaps these people have got enough wealth and income to travel to Jerusalem perhaps in their places in Greece and in Athens they could promote the name of Jesus Christ internationally and Jesus is not distracted but look at verse 23 verse 23 tells us secondly that Jesus would not be distracted from the cross and it gives us the reasons now notice in verse 23

Jesus' answer to the Greeks actually isn't really an answer is it? to the question of the Greeks Philip and Andrew come to him and say there are some Greeks that want to see you and Jesus begins to talk about dying now what's the connection?

what is going on? well those of you who know John's gospel and all will know that John's gospel is a game of two hearts chapters 1 to 11 Jesus talks about the great signs the great signs that Jesus has accomplished he changed the water into wine that's the first one he healed people and there are other signs and then ultimately in chapter 11 with the resurrection of Lazarus who's been in the tomb for three days Lazarus comes out at the word of Jesus and that is the last great sign of the first 11 chapters and the signs of Jesus are followed by the teachings of Jesus at every point and then comes chapters 12 to 21 the book of glory the book of signs and the book of glory and at the end of the gospel it's called the book of glory why is that?

why is that? well it's because the son of God is what he's going to accomplish and he is going to accomplish the glory of God and the glory of God is intimately intricately tied up with this concept of the hour the special hour that would be coming so in chapter 2 chapter 7 chapter 8 and in some other places Jesus makes it clear my hour has not yet come he would not be made a king yet because his hour had not yet come chapter 7 and chapter 8 they try to address Jesus and they try to seize him but they're unable to do it why are they unable to do it John tells us because his hour had not yet come but when we come to chapter 12 Jesus tells us the hour has now come the hour has now come for the glory of God and what is the glory says John the glory is the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and his resurrection from the dead and his ascension into heaven that is the glory of God and so everything in Jesus' ministry is leading building towards this day furthermore we've seen

[9 : 06] Jesus' strategy he's not just to reach the Jews he's not just to reach the Israelites and the church people but he intends to reach the unchurch people from all over the world and when these Greeks come to him and say we would see Jesus here is effectively Jesus' answer he's saying that unless you understand the crucifixion you will never see Jesus unless you understand the crucifixion you will never really see him and rather than this question of the curious being a distraction for Jesus actually it becomes a great catalyst for Jesus it triggers him to talk about the very heart of what he came to do and he says you would see Jesus and he leads them straight to the cross now brothers and sisters this is so important isn't it because there are so many people this week who will try to understand Jesus unbelievably without understanding the depth of our need without understanding our own sin and without understanding the substitutionary atonement of Jesus

Christ that is his death on the cross as our substitute in our place and without understanding the depth of our need and the glory of what God has done to meet our need in Christ we cannot possibly see him we cannot possibly understand him we might have many theories about him but it will not be the right theory from God's perspective without the cross and Jesus wouldn't even let he would not even let his disciples go out to preach he told them to be quiet didn't he until they understood the resurrection through the cross of Calvary now they are ready to preach because they have a crucified and risen saviour so it's not just moralistic lessons about when you're in trouble look at this teaching it's not this teaching if you want to live a good life if you want to set a good moral example if you want to have social justice and care for the poor all of which is good and true and is right but that is not the heart of the gospel whatever you do don't mistake that you won't see him you will not understand him without the cross and certainly you cannot understand the Christian religion without embracing the cross of Jesus

Christ so when the Greek comes and the world comes and wants to see Jesus he says let me tell you about my death and he's talking about his death he's going to give you five things five reasons why he will not be deterred why he will not be distracted from the cross why he's eager to go to the cross so let's listen to Jesus on Palm Sunday firstly verses 23 to 26 the first reason why he will not be distracted from the cross is because the cross glorifies Jesus Christ the cross glorifies Jesus Christ the son of God the son of man it is in the cross that Jesus finds his own glory you could say that makes no sense at all does it when we put a man to death how is he glorified well you can see what Jesus says about it in verses 23 to 26 he says it's like a grain of wheat if you hold a grain of wheat in your hand in the air what will happen when it might blow away but nothing will happen it will just be a single seed that's what it will remain but if you put that single seed into the ground when that seed dies it will bear fruit to many there will be many many many more seeds the death of the seed brings about many many seeds and Jesus is glorified by laying down his life and so now there are many little Christs that is what a Christian is

Christianos means little Christs many little Christs many little Christs many Christs that are harvested for the kingdom of God but ultimately Jesus finds his glory in this one thing he says it over and over again in John's gospel he says I came not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me I came not to seek my own glory but to seek the glory of the one who sent me you see Jesus his whole life is bound up in submission to the father and he found his glory in submitting to the father and now we come to the hour of his greatest glory here is the spectacular display of submission to the father he lays down his life in a painful death on Calvary's cross for the sake of his father and for the sake of his church what a glory to the son of man no wonder Christians gather all over the world today to sing hymns of praise to the glory of Jesus

Christ because of what he's done on Calvary's cross it was the essence of his glory and let me tell you something the essence of your glory as a little Christ as a Christian is to what is to take up your cross and following him as a supreme act of submission to the father that you would lay down your life for him out of love that is your glory as a human being and Jesus saying that is his glory Jesus did many many things which we give him glory for don't we he turned water into wine he took a lame man for 38 years and he said rise up take your mat and walk and the man got up and walked he took a man who'd been born blind man who'd never seen the glory of God's creation and Jesus gave him sight Jesus disturbed funerals by raising the corpse when Jesus' friend is in the tomb for two days he simply says

[15 : 14] Lazarus come out come forth and Lazarus comes out and we say glory is Jesus for that but the most glorious thing that Jesus ever did was to lay down his life on the cross of Calvary and look at the life that comes out of that tomb because he has done that the cross of Calvary is precious to every believer because it glorifies the son of man but Jesus doesn't stop there does he on Palm Sunday he says verse 27 32 he said it's not just the glory of the son of God but it's the glory of the father and Jesus himself says it he says my soul is troubled on Palm Sunday long before he gets to Gethsemane his soul is troubled within him like a psalmist said the word here is exactly the same as Psalm 42 why are you down cast on my soul why are you troubled in my soul and Jesus says I am troubled what shall I do ask the father to save me to rescue me from this hour no he says this is the very purpose for which

I came to glorify the father so beautiful isn't it that as you gaze upon the cross you gaze upon the glory of the father that is what Jesus came to do he came and found his glory in the cross and he found the glory of the father in the cross you say again you may be new here and you think what is

going on how can the father be glorified by his son being slaughtered on a Roman cross why would the father be pleased with his son dying on the cross how on earth does that work why well here is why the apostles of Jesus explain it to us later in the epistles particularly if you look at Romans 3 where Paul says that none of us none of you can earn your way into heaven there's not a person here even Moses can take the law and apply it perfectly to his life and thereby achieve admission into heaven he says the law of God shuts every mouth but then he says in Romans 3 21 now a righteousness a justification from God is revealed to us and what is that righteousness what is that justification it is the admission that we are received into heaven simply by putting our trust in Jesus Christ who died for us at Calvary and by his shed blood we are forgiven our sins and we receive a righteousness from him that is acceptable before God Paul goes on to explain in verse 25 of Romans 3 here the justice of God is satisfied on the one hand and on the other hand the love of God is satisfied God loved sinners but how in the world will he get you into heaven God has already said surely the soul that sins well it shall surely die God has already said the wages of sin is death how in the world can God be a just judge and also allow you and me into heaven well because he sends his only son to take on human flesh to live a perfect life in our place and then to die a perfect death in our place so that the justice of God is truly satisfied in Jesus

Christ that's the reason why John gives that God is faithful and just and he will forgive us our sins that if you've trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ today for God not to forgive your sins would be a violation of his justice because the sin has been paid for by the blood of Jesus and therefore it is only just that the judge should set us free because payment has been made justice has been completely satisfied and that is what allows him to satisfy the love of his love for us so that when the Lord Jesus comes and he willingly lays down his life he is exalting the justice of God and he is exalting the love of God in a way that never has been done and never will be done but Jesus goes on look at verse 31 it's not just that the son of man is glorified and that the father is glorified but he will not be distracted because the conviction of the world look at verse 31 now is the judgment of the world the judgment of the world all of this world with all its violence and all its pride and all its greed and all its social injustices and all its racism and all its pride and all its immorality all of it at the cross is completely judged and condemned so that in due time we his people shall be delivered from it though it looks like doesn't it to the uneducated human eye that the greatest act of injustice is performed against Jesus

Christ at the cross doesn't it that the most innocent and most beautiful man that ever lived and here you have the political authorities the religious authorities putting him to death it looks like the death now for justice but what Jesus is teaching us before he goes to the cross the reason he was determined to go to the cross he knows that when he goes to that cross he shall put to death all of the injustices in the world and all the sin privately and socially he shall put it all to death at the cross of Calvary he has cleansed the world we can say that we're on our way to that day of judgment on that day now it's just a mopping up operation because of the work of Calvary Jesus would not be deterred from the cross no matter what the crowds wanted him to do no matter what the clergy wanted him to do no matter what the curious wanted him to do he's going straight to the cross for the sake of the world that he loves notice there's a fourth thing in verse 31 there's a fourth reason that because of the cross

[21 : 42] Satan is finally defeated do you see that verse 31 the ruler of this world is cast out you might think that's a funny thing isn't it I see Satan and his work and his pawprints all over the world I see him running free but he is not running free he's been condemned he's been contained he's on a chain I granted it's a long chain he's very angry the bible says but the reason why the devil is very angry is because his days are numbered his days are numbered and his kingdom has ended his kingdom ended when the lord jesus christ died on the cross at calvary and once again it looks doesn't it to the uninformed human eye that here was a triumph on good friday the triumph for all evil here was a triumph for evil religion and evil politics because they took the one who was proclaiming the kingdom of god they stripped him naked they put nails in his hands and nails in his feet and a sword into his side until he took his last breath and it looked as though they had conquered him and here is what jesus is teaching them that this is one of the great ironies of the cosmos that what happened to be what seemed to be happening at the cross was the defeat of all good and all righteousness was actually the opposite what happens at the cross according to paul in colossians 2 is that the principalities and the powers were put up to public shame and christ triumphed over them by the cross the cross defeated all of satan and all his legion of demons they were destroyed there and then and they know when the final day is coming and so they're angry

cleaning up operation is just around the corner and when jesus returns that defeat will be seen jesus would not be deterred from the cross because he knew that when he went to the cross he and the devil knew that that was the end of the kingdom fifthly what compelled jesus to the cross above all things was the salvation of his people look at verses 32 and 33 and when i'm lifted up from the earth will draw all people to myself so again you read through john's gospel and the terms keep coming up so lifted up john chapter 3 john chapter 8 was used to describe jesus being lifted up just as a serpent was lifted up in the wilderness so i will be lifted up this verse should not be we're going to lift jesus up in praise no he doesn't mean lifted up on the final day when his throne will be given to him and he is exalted no he's talking about being lifted up on a roman cross and he's saying the reason i will be lifted up is because it will be through the cross and the work that is accomplished there to provide the forgiveness for my people's sins and then people will be drawn to me from all over the world so the

Greeks and the Romans and the Asians and the Africans and the Australians and the Austrians and people from Leighton and from every continent and country in the world will be drawn to jesus christ because they see that the only answer for the evil that is in their hearts and they understand the problem of evil the problem of evil is not out there it's in here they understand finally the solution that god has provided the one and only way by placing his own son to die the perfect death on our behalf do you see does this make sense i asked that at the lunchtime talks expecting the answer to come back no no we're here but there is a sense i think as you understand the gospel here there's no paradigm for it it is new it is phenomenal it's too hard to believe without help and jesus goes on to explain that from the middle of verse 36 to the end of the chapter jesus explains why it is that people don't believe and it's because it seems like disney world it seems like a fairy tale something fantastic even mythical and yet what jesus is saying is this is life this is life eternal and when jesus is raised up on the cross we are told that people from all over the world will effectively be drawn to him the word drawn again is used in chapter 6 no one comes to me unless the father draws him the father is in that drawing and here's how he does it the father raises his son upon the cross and he sets the cross before your eyes the spirit of god comes into your heart and effectively draws you to the cross and because you've come to know your need and you've humbled your heart and you've confessed your sins and you've asked jesus christ to be the provision for you before his throne of grace and that is what we see in this text there are many many distractions from the cross none of which jesus allowed in his own life because the accomplishments of the cross were too great the glory of the son of man the glory of the father the condemnation of the fallen world the destruction of satan and the salvation of his people and then lastly and really quickly we have to see in verses 34 to 6 that you must allow nothing to distract you from the cross you must allow nothing to distract you from the cross you can see the people jesus was teaching that day they've got a very significant question of name verse 34 they say functionally jesus we've been reading our bibles and the torah teaches us about the messiah in several places and we are told that the messiah will reign forever and ever and ever and we know this to be true because one of the most famous passages in the bible is isaiah 9 6 until you a child is born until your son is given until you a child is born and he will reign over david's throne forever there'll be no end so please tell me jesus you claim to be the son of man and the messiah and yet you're telling us you're going to die isn't a dead messiah an oxymoron is it it's like it's like fried ice it's completely impossible to accomplish a dead saviour cannot exist well you've got to wait to get the answer to that you need to read on into the epistles but i do want you to notice in verses 35 to 36 jesus answer these are legitimate intellectual questions but jesus says let me tell you what the real problem is there is light jesus says there is light and i bring it to you and there is darkness in which you are naturally born and in which you naturally walk and if you do keep walking

in this darkness verse 35 you don't know where you are going and that will mean you are lost jesus is saying there are two ways to live you can either live by the flashlight of jesus gospel on the path of life and it will keep you on the path or you can live here and you can stumble around in darkness and not know what you are going to hit and when you hit it have no explanation for it and so without answering the intellectual question that comes later through the apostles jesus simply says you've got the light for a while so let me say something to all of you you've been in this room for the last 30 minutes you've had the light i'm telling you about jesus christ and him crucified i'm telling you that the answer about life itself and that is light john speaks of light and darkness all the way through his gospel here is the light where is the light it's on the cross and if you want the light you've got it in the

