John 12:30-36

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Date: 01 November 2026

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[0:00] We saw last week some Greeks arrive, chapter 12, verses 20 through 22, which signals the movement of Jesus' mission to the nations.

Jesus responds to their arrival by speaking about his death. The grain of wheat must fall into the earth and die in order to be fruitful, verse 24.
And the son's obedience will glorify the father, verses 27 through 29. In our text for today, Jesus explains what his death will accomplish.
The world's judgment, Satan's defeat, and the gathering of a redeemed people. Before I read, beginning in verse 27, let's pray together and ask for God's favor.
Father, we do ask that you would help us today. We humbly recognize as we take up your word that we will not understand it. We will not rightly believe its promises or obey its commands or have affection for you as its author without your help.
[1:10] So we pray that you'll help us by the power of your spirit to this end. And we pray it in Christ's name. Amen. So John 12, beginning in verse 27, but our text will begin in verse 30.

Jesus says, He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.
So the crowd answered him, We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?
So Jesus said to them, The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light that you may become sons of light. When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.
[2:51] At the center of our text is the cross of Jesus Christ. Unmistakably so. All roads in the Bible lead to Golgotha. But here we see it so very clearly presented.

This morning I want to make four observations in light of the cross of Jesus Christ. I'm going to give them to you very quickly and then we'll walk through each one together as we walk through the text. Number one, the cross reveals God's judgment. Number two, the cross secures God's victory over Satan. Number three, the cross accomplishes the saving of peoples.
And number four, the cross requires belief. Firstly, the cross reveals God's judgment. We see this in verse 30 and the first part of verse 31.
In response to misconceptions about the voice, he says, This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world.
[4:01] Jesus does not need God's confirmation. He is not somehow uncertain of the purpose for which he came. God speaks for the benefit of the disciples and the others gathered.

God speaks from heaven, confirming the centrality of the death of the Christ for your sake. In the immediate context, again, the disciples and the crowd, but also for us this morning as we take up the text and we read.
It is for our sake that God the Father confirms the centrality of the cross of Jesus Christ. The crowd does not deny that something supernatural has happened.
This explanation of it thundering. Last week I explained I think that this is an allusion to Sinai. I think they are rightly comprehending what's happening here.
Some believe it's an angel speaking. But as we have seen all throughout, repeatedly throughout John's gospel, there is a mix of response.
[5:12] Rejection and receipt. Misunderstandings all along the way. And so Jesus teaches on.

It is just so incredibly merciful as you read through the gospels. It just struck me in my reading of John how often people misunderstand and yet he continues.

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He goes on to explain. He says, now is the judgment of this world. This now refers to a decisive judgment bound to the approaching crucifixion.
Not merely final judgment, although it does include that as well. Hear this, what I'm about to say. Adults, young people, what you do with the Christ makes all the difference in the world. I have presented to you previously the trilemma of Jesus Christ.
[6:18] He says astounding things about himself and about the work that he came to accomplish. We take it up now and read as work he has accomplished.

He states that he is God. Unequivocally, he says he is God. Now he is claiming that he must die in order to save.
He puts the cross at the center of his salvific work. He says that he is going to be raised again. We read later that he is in fact.
So we can only do one of three things with him. This is the trilemma. He is either, number one, a liar. Nothing he said was true.
And he didn't believe it to be true. He was just lying. Or, number two, he's a lunatic. Nothing he said was true. And he did believe it to be true.
[7:18] It wasn't true and he was crazy for saying the things that he said. Or, third, everything that he said is true.

And he is Lord. It's your only three options. What to do. How to respond to Jesus. Liar, lunatic, or Lord.
You must choose one. Your judgment at the end of all things will be based on the correctness of your answer.
He says now is the judgment of this world. This world is understood as humanity in rebellion against God.
The system in which we live. Rebelling against God. He says now is the judgment. It's brought about by. It's inaugurated by his soon coming death on the cross.
[8:21] I've watched this again and again and again. This attempt to explain away the exclusivity of the claims of Jesus Christ. Shortly in our text we're going to see in John chapter 14 and verse 6.

Jesus say, I am the way and the truth and the life. Right? Emphasis mine. But this is what he says. I am the way and the truth and the life.
And in case any of us misunderstands what he means. He says, no one comes to the Father except through me. By believing in his person and his work.
We're restored to relationship with God. And this just, they labor to explain away this. The liberal theologian Frederick Buechner, I believe I'm pronouncing his last name correctly.
Says this, quote. This is an explanation to explain this away. Quote. Jesus said, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me. He didn't say that any particular ethic, doctrine, or religion was the way, the truth, and the life.
[9:32] He said that he was. Okay. Well, he's not totally missing at this point. He goes on. He didn't say that it was by believing or doing anything in particular that you could come to the Father.

He said it was only by him. By living, participating in, being caught up by the way of life that he embodied that was his way.
For me, Jesus' way is the way of unconditional, radically inclusive love. End quote. An ethos embodied by Jesus is the way that you're restored to the Father.
Not by placing, saving faith in his person and his work. And the cross sets at the center.
Us understanding penal, substitutionary atonement. Is at the very center of the way in which we're restored to the Father. Our rebellion against God's law deserves infinite punishment.
[10:43] It deserves it. The wages of sin is death. Every one of us guilty before a holy God. And so what we need to be restored to God in order for God to uphold his justice while also being merciful.

Get this. Both things need to be true all the time. This doctrine of God where he never changes, he's never in flux, is called the simplicity of God. God is always who he is at all times.
So God is just. We want him to be just. Transgressors deserve punishment. But we also, because we're transgressors, want him to be merciful.
And he is. So how does he uphold his justice and his mercy? Be just and be justifier? He sends his son.
He sends himself. God himself takes on human flesh. We're going to spend a bunch of time thinking about this in the coming months. The incarnation of Christ takes on human flesh.

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[11:50] Jesus lives the life that's expected of us. Perfectly occupies the law. And then dies the death that we deserve. In our place. Substitutes for us.

Dies the death that belongs to us. An infinite sacrifice to pay an infinite debt. Jesus is the way and the truth and the life.
And it's by believing in his person, right? That he is the one that can accomplish this. And that work. That it is finished work. That we can be restored to God.
And the judgment of the world will be based on whether or not you accept the crucified Christ. Christ. So the cross reveals God's judgment.
It is the deciding point. Who is this? Jesus. The cross not only exposes the world's guilt. It overthrows the enemy who has exercised influence over the world.
[12:58] So our second point. The cross secures God's victory over Satan. The last part of verse 31.

Now will the ruler of this world be cast out. This ties into the first observation to be sure. The ruler of this world is a reference to Satan.
His influence is evidenced in the rebellious unbelief. The spiritual blindness of this world. Listen to 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 3 and 4.
There Paul writes. And even if our gospel is veiled. It is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the God of this world. Has blinded the minds of the unbelievers.
To keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. Who is the image of God. However, Jesus says. Now will the ruler of this world be cast out.
[14:02] The cross is a decisive blow against the enemy. His authority has always been a bridled authority. His power has always been subservient to divine sovereignty.

Even the death of Christ. The greatest evil of the world. Satan thinks he's working to his advantage. But it lies underneath God's sovereign control.
And works against him. Jesus communicating here that his death on the cross. Will be the death blow of the power of Satan.
Satan will writhe in anguish before the end. We ought to neither minimize nor maximize the power of Satan today.
He will writhe. He will cause damage. He'll try to do what he can. But his dominion has a guaranteed demise. Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus.
[15:04] So the cross reveals God's judgment. Second, the cross secures God's victory over Satan. The cross defeats Christ's enemy.

And also gathers the people that he came to redeem. So our third observation is the cross accomplishes the saving of peoples.
Verse 32 and 33. There Jesus says that when I am lifted up from the earth. Will draw all people to myself.
Jesus speaks typologically in verse 32. And then John clarifies exactly what he means in verse 33. He said this as some commentary on Jesus' teaching.
To show by what kind of death he was going to die. Jesus is speaking of his death on a Roman cross. By referencing a significant episode in Israel's history.
[16:06] You may be familiar with this. If you're not, if you want to join me in Numbers chapter 21. I'm going to read it just quickly to you. Beginning in verse 4. Numbers 21 and verse 4.

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea. So the Israelites, after they've been let out of captivity.
To go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses. Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?
For there is no food and no water. And we loathe this worthless food. Proceeding, they've been receiving manna from heaven every day. And water has poured forth from a rock.
So there is both food and water. Food from heaven, which they call worthless food. They're being rebellious against God.
[17:06] And in verse 6, there's a judgment that comes from God. Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people. Which I just take to mean venomous. I think that's what is meant by the text.

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Fiery serpents among the people. And they bit the people so that many people of Israel died. And the people came to Moses and said, We have sinned, for he has spoken against the Lord and against you.
They repent. They turn from their rebellion. Pray to the Lord that he takes away the serpents from us. So Moses prayed for the people.
Now you might expect at this point that the serpents just go away. God sent them. He can take them away. But instead, verse 8 says, And the Lord said to Moses, Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole.
And everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live. Right? So if they're bit by these venomous snakes, they're to look to this statue of a venomous snake on a pole.
[18:09] And they will live. So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent to live.

Now again, I said it before, Jesus is speaking typologically. That is to say, the bronze serpent is the type. Jesus is stating that he is the anti-type.
Or, if you're not familiar with that language and you prefer, the bronze serpent is the symbol, and Jesus is the fulfillment. The Bible is most certainly way much more than just literature, but it should be read that way, and there's all sorts of foreshadowing, pointing toward Jesus as fulfillment.
Now, you would do well at this point to ask, how did you get from John 12, 32 to Numbers 21? Am I drawing an unfair conclusion at this point?
I would say, do you know? I get there very easily because Jesus does this for us. I hope little sparks flew in your mind as we've been in the Gospel of John for quite some time.
[19:21] Back in chapter 3, verse 14 and 15, Jesus says this, as Moses lifted up the servant in the wilderness. What's he talking about, this Numbers 21 episode?

As Moses lifted up the servant in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.
So this whole Numbers 21 episode is typological in this way, right? Rebellion against God, just punishment, repentance, and faith that delivers them to temporal life, and Numbers 21 to eternal life for all who would look to Christ.
Now, as a side note, I think this is why the crowd's questions in verse 34 employ the title for the Christ, the Son of Man.
I think these questions are being asked by people who heard Jesus or had heard that he said this in John chapter 3. As Moses lifted up the servant in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.
[20:29] This is a reference to the book of Daniel, which we'll point out in just a bit. I think that's what's going on here, why they shift their language as they're speaking about him.

So, Jesus says, when I am crucified, I will draw all people to myself. Now, Jesus is not making a universalist claim here.
It could be easy to do that with this text if you don't read the Bible more widely. In fact, in the Greek, you could translate this, I will draw all to myself.
A pretty simple Greek word there. It could also be translated everyone to myself. But that's not the claim being made. Universalism is the belief that all humankind will be saved eventually.
A bunch of different theories how this comes to pass. However, John will take time in the verses that follow today's text, Lord willing, we'll look at next week, as he's done many times previously to explain the rejection of Jesus as the Christ.
[21:46] Again and again, we see this pattern. Those who will not be saved because they don't place believing faith in Jesus. So that's not possibly what he could mean.

So what does Jesus mean when he says, And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. Well, to comprehend that, we do well to remember the context of this passage. Always. Context, context, context. Recall the prophecy of Caiaphas and John's following explanation in chapter 11. Do you remember?
We set this up last week as well. Chapter 11, verse 49. One of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, You know nothing at all, nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.
He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation. And not only for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of

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God who were scattered abroad.
[22:58] Not just Israel, but also all of those who were not of this sheepfold. Also recall the exasperation of the Pharisees in John chapter 12, and verse 19.

So the Pharisees said to one another, You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him. And they're not declaring that those outside of Israel will be saved by the Christ. They're exasperated. They're exaggerating what's going on. But then John places a bit of information in the next verse. So 12, verse 20. Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks.
Non-Israelites. And they come and seek a counsel in the following verses with Jesus. Jesus here is speaking of the redemption of people who were not just Jewish people.
Will Israelites believe in Jesus? Yeah. They will. Right? We're seeing that happen even in the text. Right? Disciples believe in Jesus. They are Jewish.
[24:12] Yes, they will. But not just Israelites. Jesus will draw all kinds of people. I titled this observation, The Cross Accomplishes the Saving of Peoples, Quite on Purpose.

Quite on Purpose. You may not like the word peoples. The language is fluid. And as long as I tell you what I mean and you agree, then we're communicating.
Right? Because, you might not like it, because people is the plural form of person. But I love the word peoples. Peoples. Do you know the vision statement for our church?
I hope that you do. It's on the front of your bulletin every single week. You can see it there. Providence Baptist Church exists to glorify God by experiencing, proclaiming, and displaying the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things to all peoples.
When we wrote this ages ago, we had two debates. The first was over the order that we should put experiencing, proclaiming, and displaying in.
[25:22] We had some debate about that. The word peoples did not go uncontested. I made a case for it. We had a friendly, brotherly argument.

My argument for it went like this. When you have more than one type of fish you call them the plural fish. Fish, fish.
You've got a bunch of trout in the stream. There are fish in the stream. However, when you have more than one of a bunch of different types of fish, so imagine yourself at a coral reef and there's groups of schools of fish, guess what you call them?
Fishes. That's proper English to do that. So, peoples communicates not just that God saves a plurality of people, but that he saves a plurality of types of people.
Peoples. That's what we're communicating there. Now, if that's not enough for you, this idea is carried and the language itself in Revelation chapter 7 and verse 9.
[26:35] This was what won me the argument at the end. There John records, after this I looked at this vision of heaven and behold a great multitude that no one can number from every nation, from all tribes, right?

See, these are groups of people and then I just love, love that the ESV translator said and peoples and languages standing before the throne and before the Lamb clothed in white rows with palm branches in their hands.
And so we have in English the word peoples in Revelation chapter 7 and verse 9 and I managed to sneak the S into our vision statement. The point being, the point being that God sent the Christ not just to save people of Jewish descent.
And you may be of Jewish descent but I have fair confidence that the majority of us are not. I'm not. Praise be to God that when Jesus was lifted up he drew all peoples to himself.
It's a wonderful promise found here. Now before we press on to my last final observation I think it's worth our attention to note what or in Jesus' statement who we are drawn to.
[28:04] Christ draws people to himself. Not merely to an institution, some kind of a movement, some moral philosophy.

Salvation brings communion, relationship with God, restoration to God himself. So the cross reveals God's judgment, the cross secures God's victory over Satan, the cross accomplishes the saving of peoples, yet not all who hear believe.
The crowd's confusion exposes the danger of biblical familiarity without submission revelation to God's revelation. It's possible to know the things that I've said.

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To hear me proclaim the gospel and go, yeah, yeah, I know. The fourth observation is that the cross requires belief.
These last three verses and we'll skate through this pretty quickly. So the crowd answered him, we have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up?
[29:19] Who is this Son of Man? So Jesus said to them, the light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you.

The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.
When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself. from them. Now the crowd isn't wrong in their understanding of Daniel chapter 7.
I read some of that this morning in the scripture reading. Verse 13 and 14. I saw in the night visions and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a Son of Man.
Every time you hear Jesus refer to himself as the Son of Man, this is the text he's talking about. And he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him.
[30:23] His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. So this is what they're doing. And they're saying, we heard you say this before.

Son of Man must be lifted up. Here you're saying it again. How is this possible? Because Daniel chapter 7, which also says peoples, I just noticed, says that his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.
How can this be? They clearly know exactly what Jesus means when he speaks of being lifted up. John gives us some commentary there. They know that's what he's talking about.
What they have failed to do is synthesize their understanding of the Son of Man and of Daniel 7 with the suffering servant of Isaiah chapter 53. Verse 3 and following.
He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not.
[31:25] Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray.
We have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. They failed to put these two things together, right?
They loved the crown, they didn't love the cross. Jesus answered in response to the crowd's question, who is this son of man?
Jesus answers metaphorically by calling himself the light. I can't know this for sure, but I suggest to you that John's use of this very same metaphor at the opening of this gospel is informed by Jesus' words here.
[32:32] Jesus says this, I think that John is thinking about this and under inspiration he writes the opening of this gospel account.

So turn back to John chapter 1. There John says, In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God.
All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.
He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.
[33:41] He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, sons of light.

While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light. I think we don't really comprehend light and dark metaphor to the measure that they may have.

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Jesus is speaking. Darkness to us is fairly easily resolved. We have switches to flip. we all have phones in our pockets that have flashlights on them now.
Amazing it is. Light can be produced instantaneously all the time. Darkness is a scary thing. You have a welcome to young adulthood trip to the Okie Finocie and we stayed on an island out in the middle of the swamp and we had lights to be clear but it was very dark out there.
We heard a critter in the woods bigger than any critter I have ever heard in the woods before. I was trying to think about what to say I thought it was but everything I can think of is probably bigger than it was but it really felt like a bear.
[35:06] It was a big alligator. It was something crashing around in the woods and we could not see what it was ever spent.

It was like being in the Amazon sleeping in and out of sleep in that place. And as I think about this metaphor of darkness and light I think about what it would have been like to be on that island with no light.
Zero light. Perhaps we could muster a fire together and try to use some of that flame to light the place that we were at. man the racket and the noise and the potential threat that was out there.
This metaphor it should elicit rich feeling from us. The darkness is a place of danger destruction demise.
While you have the light believe in the light that you may become sons of light. The cross reveals God's judgment secures God's victory over Satan accomplishes the saving of peoples and requires belief.
[36:23] So as we close our time let me give you a few points of application. Number one examine whether you have embraced the Christ of scripture or a Christ of your own making.

The crowd in John 12 was not ignorant of the scriptures. they're citing things. They knew that the Messiah would reign forever but they struggled to reconcile that truth with Jesus' insistence that he must die.
The problem was not that they had no knowledge of divine revelation but that they were attempting to accommodate that revelation to their own expectations. They were shaping the Christ into what they wanted and we must be careful that we do not make the same mistake.
It's entirely possible to have an impressive familiarity with scripture, to possess well-developed theological convictions, and even to defend the authority of God's word while nevertheless resisting those portions of divine revelation that confront our assumptions or challenge our preferences or demand our submission.
The question is not whether Jesus conforms to your understanding of who he ought to be but whether your understanding of Jesus conforms to who he has revealed himself to be.
[37:48] He's either a liar or he's a lunatic or he is Lord. I hope you'll join me in that last assertion. Second application.

Let the certainty of Christ's saving work produce confidence in evangelism and a commitment to world missions. Jesus does not say that his crucifixion will merely make the salvation of the nations possible.
He declares that when he is lifted up he will draw peoples to himself. What an extraordinary encouragement that should be for our church.
The success of the Great Commission does not ultimately depend upon the persuasive abilities of the preacher. praise God. The creativity of the church or the receptivity of the surrounding culture.
It rests upon the promise and power of the crucified and risen Christ. We proclaim the gospel because Christ has commanded us to do so but we proclaim it confidently because Christ has promised to gather his people.
[39:04] He will build his church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. This ought to affect how we think about our neighbors, our coworkers, families, and peoples at the ends of the earth.

We should never look upon an individual as beyond the reach of God's saving grace nor should we look upon a particular people group as beyond the concern of God's redemptive purposes.
Third application point and this is the last one. Do not mistake proximity to the light for belief in the light. There's something particularly sobering about the conclusion of this passage.
These people had heard Jesus teach, they had witnessed his miracles or heard tell of them, they had listened to the testimony of his divine authority and some had even heard a voice from heaven.

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Yet Jesus warns them that the light will not remain among them indefinitely. And then John tells us that Jesus departed and hid himself from them.
[40:21] Consider the seriousness of that. You can read right over that detail. It's possible to be surrounded by the privileges of divine revelation while remaining personally alienated from the God who has revealed himself.

Young people, children, you can grow up in a faithful Christian home. Attend a church where the scriptures are carefully taught.
Memorize substantial portions of the Bible. Understand the doctrines of the Christian faith. Work on your catechism, all good things, but all of that without ever having personally trusted in the personal work of Jesus Christ.
Adults, you can attend worship for decades, participate in all the activities, develop an impressive theological vocabulary without possessing saving faith.
familiarity with the gospel is not the same thing as faith in the gospel. Jesus does not merely command the crowd to admire the light or to discuss the light, accumulate information about the light.
[41:35] He commands them to believe in the light. Let's pray together.

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