

## John (Part 19)

John 12:1-36 A Sublime Sacrifice of Love and Devotion

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In John the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter, we had the stupendous resurrection of Lazarus, after he had been dead for four days, which was a precursor of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That immediately had an effect upon the people who were witness of it. I do not mean necessarily right there at the moment, but they were witness of it either in that they did see it or they very quickly heard of it, as it was noised about through the neighborhood. It again began to divide people up. It seems as though whenever Jesus said anything, or did anything of an unusual nature, people immediately began to take up sides.

The things that we are going to begin to see unfold in chapter 12 are further steps in the divisions that are taking place because of the effects of Jesus' preaching. We are going to begin and go through the first eight verses, and then I am going to come back and expand upon the themes that are here.

**John 12:1-8** Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always."

When we left chapter 11, in verse 57, both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where Jesus was, he should report it, that they might seize Him. So Jesus left the area because, although it was getting close to His time, His time had not yet come. But He is not going to miss this Passover, and it is another indication, I feel, of His great courage. His life was on the line.

We will see a little bit more of this as we go through the chapter. I think that most people, were they going to seek the acclamation of the people so they could mount a

revolution, would probably want to disappear for a period of time so that the heat would die down a little bit, so that they could live a little bit longer, and then continue to plot in order to gain strength from the accumulation of people that were gathered around Him. But Jesus did not wait very long. Apparently, He came back into the area of Jerusalem very quickly.

Remember we mentioned last time that Bethany is just a few miles, two or three miles from Jerusalem, so He is very close to the lions' den, just outside of the city. Things were beginning to build up because of the Passover that was very close. By "things building up," I mean that large numbers of people were beginning to stream into the city from all parts of the Eastern world. There were Jews all around the Mediterranean area, and there were a great number of Jews far to the East of the Tigris and Euphrates valley. They knew that it was commanded to come to Jerusalem three times a year: Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Very great numbers of them came into Jerusalem on pilgrimages. When we get to another place I will give you some idea of what historians have recorded as to how many people came into Jerusalem at these times.

To me, this is of some importance, because it shows very clearly that the events that occurred in Jerusalem—I mean those events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus—were not done in a corner. They were done before very large numbers of people. A very effective witness was made because then those large numbers of people would go back to their home areas and report what they saw and what they heard. So it was very effectively communicated throughout the world at that time.

We see three important personages here, besides the main personage, Jesus: Martha, Mary, and Judas. Martha does not play a very large role in this chapter, but again she is mentioned, and again, she is doing her thing, she is serving. She is taking care of the physical things that have to be done anytime there is a meal. Anytime there is any kind of an event where a number of people are involved, somebody has to organize things and keep things going in the right direction. Martha seemed to be a natural for that, and here we find again, "and Martha served."

Lazarus is mentioned, but that is all. He will be mentioned again in just a little bit, but right at the beginning, he does not take a very important part in the operations that are taking place.

But Mary does. Mary is again kind of doing her thing. Remember we were talking the last time about Martha's practicality, and how she is always kind of looked down upon. It seems as though she is always standing in the shadow of her sister. Mary is the one

that appears to be the greater of the two, but I do not know whether she really is or not. Mary did do something that is quite significant, there is no doubt about it. You do not do something like she did and have it written up in the Bible if it was an insignificant thing. She did do something that was quite significant, and I think that in many cases, we have missed the point of what she did.

What we see here is a contrast between the practical person who showed her love through work. There is nothing wrong with that. But frequently, that kind of person is in the background, perhaps quite unnoticed. But she is there nonetheless, and she is important to the function of whatever is going on.

Mary is an example of extravagance, but it is a very special kind of extravagance. I think it is the kind of extravagance that all of us should strive to imitate, and that is why it is here. Certainly it was an extravagance in terms of money. I did some research into what commentators felt that the monetary amount of what she did was worth, and they estimate that it was worth about a half year's wages for a working man. So it was not an insignificant amount. There are very few of you who have ever given a half year's wages in a little bit of perfume or oil to pour on somebody's feet. I do not think that anybody in the whole church has ever done anything like that. That is one of the reasons why it is here, because it is an example of extravagance.

She took what was undoubtedly the most precious material possession that she had, and she poured it out on Christ.

I will remind you of a short story by O. Henry that you might have read a number of years ago when you were going to school. It seems as though when I was going to school it was always something that was on the required reading list. That was the story *The Gift of the Magi*. It was a story of a young couple. It was a day or so before Christmas, and each one of them wanted to buy the other something that would be really precious to them. For the wife, the most precious thing that she had was her hair; it was so long that it went all the way down and wrapped around her, almost like a robe. In order to buy a gift for her husband, who had a very precious watch, she went out and had her hair cut off to sell to the wig makers. She got enough money to buy him a silver watch fob. He had this watch and he did not have a fob for it, so she got him a watch fob. In the meantime, he took his most precious possession, which was his watch, and hocked it so that he could buy her two combs for her hair.

It was the thought behind the gift, and each one gave their most precious material possession to buy something extravagant for the other. It was not really a very practical or useful gift, but nonetheless, the intent to show love was there.

That is what Mary did. She gave her most precious possession.

What is it about Mary's extravagance that we need to learn? I feel that it is this: she understood the extent of devotion that is needed for one to have the right kind of relationship with Christ. We are going to have a hard time matching that kind of devotion. That is why it is here. She understood, better than her sister, who is practical—and certainly, every kind of organization needs its Marthas. Mary does not appear to be a very practical person. But on the other hand, everybody needs to have some of Mary's extravagant devotion as well, willing to give the most precious possession that one has for the object of its love.

The way that she most frequently expressed it in the Bible was that every possible moment that she had, had to be spent with Him. Somehow or another, she understood that He was not going to be with them very long, and that every moment with Him was precious beyond anything that she could possibly physically do, to make others be comfortable or whatever.

Another way of putting it is this way: she understood that the words "extravagance" and "waste" are irrelevant where Christian devotion to Christ is concerned. That is a real godly trait, because God acts the same way toward us. Was Jesus' death a waste? Was it extravagant? Here is the most precious Life that has ever lived, a life that certainly did not in any way deserve to be put to death. Here was the Creator, and yet God spent that life on you and me. He gave His most precious possession in order that others could share His Kingdom with Him.

There are some areas of life in which extravagance and waste are not even to be considered; they are irrelevant. That is what Mary shows. She knew where to give her all, even at what seemed to be inconsiderate to her physical sister. She knew where her devotion and loyalty lay. She is an outstanding example of that, and that is why there is what there is written about her. There is nothing wrong with Martha, but there is nothing wrong with Mary's example in this area as well.

So God is kind of balancing things out. All of us need to have the practicality of Martha, but we also need to have the emotional extravagance of a Mary as well, in regard to our devotion to Christ.

There is another aspect of Mary that is not so easily seen. She wiped His feet with her hair. To you and me, that is unusual for one to do that. I have never had anyone do that to do me, and if somebody did it to me, I would be so self-conscious I would probably turn three shades of pink or purple.

According to the social customs of the time, for a woman to be seen in public with her hair unbound was a sign of harlotry. What is significant here is her unselfconsciousness. In her extravagance of feeling towards Christ—here she was in a public place, apparently there were a lot of guests around—she let her hair down and wiped His feet with the symbol of harlotry. She did not care what people thought of her devotion to Him.

We need to ask ourselves how self-conscious we are about our showing publicly our devotion to Christ. We get self-conscious if we carry a Bible in a public place. We do not want to flaunt it, but on the other hand, we cover up the Bible with a box or a briefcase. Most of us are very self-conscious about making any kind of a public display of our Christianity. I am not saying that we should flaunt it; we should not. But she was unselfconscious to the point of allowing herself to be associated with, in the minds of people, with harlotry, in order to show her devotion to Christ. It just seems like a little thing, and it is something that we would pass over, but it is something that you and I can learn from.

The third character is Judas. Judas was in charge of the money. He had the box. Your Bible might say that he had the bag; that is not a good translation—he had the box, that is what the Greek means. Jesus put Judas in charge of the money, the treasury. I do not think that Jesus was careless about the appointment of responsibility. Perhaps this an assumption, but I think it is a fairly strong assumption, that He put the man in charge of the treasury that He felt was going to be the best at it. That shows me that Judas was a man of ability. You do not put a fumble-bum in charge of the money. You do not put somebody who is going to be careless and unconcerned in charge of the money. I think that it is an admission, without openly stating it, that of the apostles, he was one of the ones with the greatest natural ability.

There is no doubt that Judas became tempted. It says here that he was a thief, that he pilfered the money. He gave in to temptation in an area in which he was strong. There is a lesson there: it is very likely that we not only going to be tempted in areas in which we are weak, but we are also going to be tempted in areas of strength as well. Perhaps it is in areas of strength that we are going to find our greatest weakness because those are the areas that we are going to tend to be careless about.

If we are really careful about wanting to overcome, we are going to know ourselves well enough to know where our weaknesses are. But Satan is also smart enough to understand that we are going to be on guard in those areas, and he is probably going to tempt us in the areas of our strength. Satan is not dumb; in fact, that may be our

weakest link. It is an area that we become proud about our abilities, and pride goes before the fall, it precedes the fall. So maybe we are going to stumble and fall in areas of strength rather than in areas of weakness.

Another way of looking at this is that the area of strength would be an area that physically we would tend to pay a great deal of attention to. Let us take Judas and put him into a modern situation. Here he was in charge of the treasure, and he would have more money at his disposal than the others in the group would have. The others would be very careful in doling out whatever monies they had, and make sure that it went as far as it could possibly go. But if Judas was strong in the area of money, that is in the management of it and the making of money, then it is very possible that would prove to be a distraction to him, because that is the area that physically he would pay the most attention to. He might have been good at making money. The very thing that he was good at takes him away from the Kingdom of God because he spends so much time making or managing money.

There are plenty of parables to give that credence. The parable about the man who kept making more and more money, and he said I will keep building bigger and bigger barns, and Jesus said, "You fool!" He spent all his time making money. It was an area of strength that became his downfall, because it got all of his time. So we have to be careful of that pitfall as well, and be aware that we can be tempted because of pride in a strength, or we can be tempted because that very strength proves to be a distraction because we give so much time to it.

What happened with Judas is that he became a thief, and then he became a traitor for money's sake. Just the opposite of Mary. Mary gave up all that she had because of her devotion. Judas wanted more of what he already had because of his strength with money and the way he looked at it. So it is something that one has to be careful about.

There is another thing to learn from Judas, a very valuable lesson for you and me. It is good to pay some attention to Judas' reaction. He witnessed something that God thought so highly of that He included it in the Book. An outstanding example of the extravagance of love, of loyal devotion. Judas did not see it the same way God did, as a picture of loveliness. Judas saw it as something to be ridiculed and to be scorned. "Why didn't she give that to the poor?" he scolded.

What lesson is there? Our perspective is produced by what we are prepared to see. We see what we are prepared to see. A person's sight or perspective depends upon what is inside of them. If we really like a person, oftentimes in our sight, they can do no wrong. If we do not like a person, that person cannot do anything right. It is what is inside of us,

it is what we are prepared to see is what we see.

**Titus 1:15** To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.

We see what we are prepared to see. A warped mind perceives events in a warped way.

**I Corinthians 13:6-7** [Love] does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Judas shows us that we see what we are prepared to see. His warped mind could not perceive of anything good in what Mary did, just the opposite of what God saw in it.

In conclusion, we can say that there is a time to be extravagant in one's devotion to the ones that one loves, and especially in regard to Christ.

**John 12:9-11** Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.

Here we see again the defense of those entrenched in power. They were getting ready to ensure their own wealth and position. The two major groups, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, had different things that they wanted to defend. The Pharisees were primarily at this time the religious leaders, so they had to defend themselves on theological ground or lose the following that they had spiritually, religiously, theologically with the people. The Sadducees on the other hand had the political power. Most of the people on the Sanhedrin, which was the ruling group at the time, were Sadducees. They had the political power.

So we see one, namely Jesus, rising amongst the people, and He has theological strength and spiritual strength that is swaying people toward Him, thus threatening the Pharisees. On the other hand, we also see the people gathering around Him, and looking upon Him as a political and military leader, so the Sadducees begin to fear that their position is threatened because the people are rallying to the side of Jesus.

Here is a very interesting defense: You do not face the truth of the resurrection of Lazarus, you destroy the evidence. Is that not honest, is that not wise? It reminds you of Watergate, where the evidence was destroyed. You do not face up to truth; you destroy the evidence, so there are gaps in the tape. Here we have our own Watergate, they were going to plot to put the evidence—Lazarus—to death, because they could not deny the fact that was being buzzed around all through the community that indeed Lazarus was dead, and now he was alive. So you “erase the tape.”

People were just as crooked then as they are today. You destroy the evidence. Lazarus was an affront to their influence. It is really a crazy world.

We need to think, do we ever do anything similar? Are we humble enough to face up to the truth of our own errors? Let us take a lesson from the Sadducees and the Pharisees as they tried to deny truth, and they were going to do it with murderous intent. We would not go to murder, would we? I do not think that we would go to murder, but we would deny to ourselves and to others that something was true, so that we would not lose the respect of that group of people whose respect we want to have. In this case, it was the Romans for the Sadducees, and the Jewish people for the Pharisees.

**John 12:12-19** The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: “Hosanna! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ The King of Israel!” Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt.” His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him. Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness. For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, “You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!”

We have here the crowd of people and what they said. There is no doubt that most of them were pilgrims that were on their way to the keeping of Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. They were sightseers in part, much the same way that we are when we go to a Feast of Tabernacles. We go there for spiritual reasons, but we also go sightsee as well. We are interested in the things that are going on in the local

community, wherever it is that we are keeping the Feast. A number of you are excited about going to Thailand, and I am sure you are going to be interested in that procession that they are going to have down the river. That is what happened with these people.

They had begun to hear noised about as they approached Jerusalem, about the events that were taking place. By the time that they were there, their interest in Lazarus and Jesus had just about reached a fever-pitch. We are dealing here roughly with two groups of people. There was a group of people that joined around Jesus in Bethany as He made His way into Jerusalem. There was a group of people who were coming out from the city as they began to hear about these things, and hear that He was coming into the city, and they went out to meet Him. There was the potential for a very great throng of people.

According to a Roman record, they counted the number of lambs that were slaughtered during a Passover. I do not know exactly what the date was, but it was sometime shortly after the time of Christ. They counted 256,000 lambs slain for that one Passover. From the book of Exodus, it tells us ten people to a lamb. Ten times 256,000 means that there were very close to 2,500,000 people keeping the Passover that one Passover season. The population of Jerusalem was nowhere near that size. It has been estimated at somewhere around a quarter of a million to 400,000 people at the time of Christ. That means that the population of Jerusalem swelled by about five or six times during the holy day seasons.

So what occurred was not done in a corner. There were people from all over the world, as you can confirm from Acts 2, the Parthians, and the Medes, and the Greeks, and the Romans as well. Jews from all of those parts of the world had come into the city. They witnessed the event, that is, the crucifixion of Christ, and then they took the news of that event back to their area, where it traveled about by word of mouth. So it was not done in a corner.

You can see that there is the potential here for there to be wall-to-wall people. Most of the people, not knowing a great deal about what is going on, but just hearing about it, were doing like good Los Angelinos do every time they see an accident on the freeway: we all slow down and gape at it, and we create traffic jams—gapers blocks. That is what they did, they had a big gapers block and there was not even a freeway. In fact, the only one riding was on a donkey, and He was making His way.

The quote, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” comes from Psalm 118:25-26. It is at the end of a five or six psalm period that is known as the Hallel, “Praise God” is what it means. It begins in Psalm 112 and runs through Psalm 118.

*Hosanna* means “save now.”

“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord” is their equivalent of the British “God save the King.” They were physically trying to force upon Him being a king, but it was going to be a king in their own image. The image they had construed was that He would be a national king, that He would kick the Romans out, and begin the establishment of a Jewish state that would be the head of all of the nations. It is certainly what any good Jew at that time would want, carnally, for that to occur. But it is not what Jesus had in mind.

With that kind of a throng, and with that kind of shouting going on, it was impossible for Him to speak. But He did something that He could do without speaking, to acknowledge the acclamation of the people, and at yet at the same time, correct them. Do you know what He did? It did not require Him to say a word.

**Deuteronomy 17:14-16** “When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, ‘I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,’ you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you, ‘You shall not return that way again.’

Why the prohibition against horses? It means rulership and war. The horse is a symbol, in this context, of war-making machinery. It is a symbol of tanks, and of guns, and of aircraft carriers and airplanes. The horse, along with the chariot, was the big offensive weapon of their day. The horses could either carry men or the horses could pull the chariots. The horse was a symbol of war-making, and if Jesus had ridden into the city on the back of a horse, it would have been the indication to the people that He was accepting their acclamation and He was ready to challenge the Romans with an army.

Instead, He rode on a donkey, which was prophesied back in Zechariah:

**Zechariah 9:9** “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you [Notice: your king is coming to you. That meant to the Jew of that day the Messiah.]; He is just and having salvation, lowly [Not like a king ready for war.] and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.

He was saying, “Yes, I am your king, but I am not coming to make war and throw the Romans and the Sadducees and the Pharisees out.” I can give you some scriptures that give you an example:

**Judges 10:4** Now he had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys; they also had thirty towns, which are called “Havoth Jair” to this day, which are in the land of Gilead.

**II Samuel 17:23** Now when Ahithophel saw that his advice was not followed, he saddled a donkey, and arose and went home to his house, to his city. Then he put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died; and he was buried in his father’s tomb.

**II Samuel 19:26** And he answered, “My lord, O king, my servant deceived me. For your servant said, ‘I will saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go to the king,’ because your servant is lame.

What it shows, and there are other verses, is that when a king was coming in peace, he rode a donkey. You will find that a donkey, an ass, was the common carrier of royalty. It did not mean that others could not ride on them, but it was the common carrier of royalty. It shows peaceful intentions.

So in that great throng in John 12, Jesus was incapable of speaking to them because they were persistently shouting (that is what the Greek says in John 12:13, it says “when they cried out,” it means persistent shouting), “God save the king.” So He made a statement that should have clarified His intention: He was their king, He acknowledged the acclamation, but He did not acknowledge their desire to throw off the Romans. Instead, He was coming with peaceful intentions.

Even the disciples did not get it:

**John 12:16** His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him.

By the end of this section, in John 12:19, we find the Jewish authorities were frustrated and helpless, because Jesus had completely turned the tables on them. They were at that point totally frustrated because they could not fight against two million people, and they knew it. "The whole world," they said, "has gone after Him."

So was not that a stroke of genius? Instead of creeping away, like an outlaw, He turned the tables on them and came right back into the city. Instead of creeping away and hiding, He challenged them right on their own ground. You see, He gave His life. He gave them witness that if He wanted to, they could not do a thing to Him. He just shoved it right down their throats.

So He gave His life. It is another indication that "You do not take My life from Me, I give it as the Good Shepherd." His wisdom and His courage are just impressive.

**John 12:20-26** Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus. But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

There is an indication that the Greeks here were proselytes to the Jewish religion. They came up to worship at the Feast. I am not really sure whether they were "Greek Greeks," I mean real Greeks, or whether they were Hellenistic Jews. In Acts 6, in the King James versions, it talks about the Grecian women being ignored in the daily service. They were not really Greeks, they were Hellenistic Jews. They were Jews with a Greek education.

In John 12:20, I am not real sure, but the commentaries feel that without a doubt, these were real Gentile Greeks. The reason they feel that way is on fairly solid ground because of what precedes it:

**John 12:19** The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, "You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!"

John included that little inset in order to show that there was, even then, a literal fulfillment of this unwilling prophecy of these people. Indeed, the world is going to eventually come to Christ. The Greeks, and the Russians, and the Germans, and all of those non-Hebrew people. Nonetheless, we can leave that just the way it is, because it is probably true.

**John 12:23** But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified."

I am not sure who He is answering, but apparently He is answering the Greeks. It is one of those strange situations where the question is not given, you have to assume the question. It is possible that the question had something to do with, "Are You going to take power? What are You going to do about this situation?" So Jesus' response is that "the hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified." He answered their question, but He certainly did not answer it in the way that I am sure that they expected. To Him, glorification had an entirely different meaning than they had in their mind. I am sure that what they must have had in mind, "Are You going to assume power on the strength of the acclamation of these two million people?" And He said, "The Son of Man is going to be glorified."

But He meant, put to death. His glorification was going to come through His death, and not through His ascension to power on a throne. That lead, once again, to what seems to be the heart and the core of His teaching.

Before we get to that, there is somewhat of a digression that I want to make. He said "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified." In Daniel 7, the Son of Man is mentioned. It is the context in which it is mentioned that I want to pick up on.

**Daniel 7:13-14** "I was watching in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom."

You can see why this came to Jesus' mind, the Son of Man being glorified. It is obvious in Daniel 7:13-14 that the Son of Man is glorified, that is, given honor, by being given dominion and a kingdom over which to rule, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. There is no greater glorification that could be given to an individual than that.

It is also obvious that the Son of Man refers to someone who is a God-being. The Jews did not deny that, indeed they understood it very well, that this was the Messiah being talked about. When Jesus mentioned that in John 12, it was something that was probably almost incomprehensible, or almost stupefying, to those people, because of the traditions that they held regarding the Son of Man, regarding the Messiah.

If we look at Daniel 7 in its context, we see the great beasts that are mentioned:

**Daniel 7:3-4** And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings.

And then came the bear, and then the leopard-like creature with its four wings, and then came the beast that was almost indescribable. The Jews understood that to be descriptive of Gentile powers that ruled over large portions of the earth like beasts of the field, like animals, whereas the Son of Man, who follows immediately after that in Daniel 7:13-14, is to them indicative of the change of the nature of governments, from one like beasts, like animals that rip and tear and destroy and attack, to someone who has the heart, the mind of a man. To them, that meant what we would call a really converted person.

You can see in Ezekiel 36 that God prophesied that there was going to come a time when He was going to give the people a new heart:

**Ezekiel 36:26** I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

When Jesus said that the Son of Man should be glorified, and then proceeded to tell them, in terms that were unmistakable, that the Son of Man, the Messiah—the one with the heart of flesh, the one who was truly converted, the one who was going to rule with power, and love, and kindness, and gentleness, and goodness, and meekness, and strength, and wisdom, and concern, with every good attribute—was going to die! That was stupefying. Yet, that is what He said.

It is here that we see a real division begin to take place. His crucifixion was assured, because these very people who are acclaiming Him to be king, in a matter of a couple of days were saying, “crucify Him!” because He did not fit their traditional thinking about the Messiah.

I bring this up because it needs to be impressed upon us what a powerful affect that tradition has upon us. It is something that I know that I, in myself, and I am sure that with you as well, do not realize how much traditional-thinking-things that we have learned from the time that we are born, are dominating our thoughts and making us think of Christianity in terms of the way the world thinks of Christianity.

Do we think it extravagant to do what Mary did? “Oh, such a waste.” Do we think that it is a waste, that if we should trust God to heal us, and He decides to let us die, that that is a waste? Think about that. If we begin to think that it is a waste, we will intervene and do our own thing to save our life. “Skin for skin,” Satan said, “a man will do anything to save his skin.” Because to us, that is wasteful.

God’s thinking is not traditional, I mean not according to traditional Christianity. He did not think it wasteful at all to give the life of the Creator. It was not extravagant to Him. It was something that needed to be done, it was the only solution to the problem. How can we share what I have created with My children, if they are all going to die because of sin? So He paid the greatest price that could possibly be paid, and it was not extravagant, because that life was worth more than all of the creation combined.

But to the Jew of that day, it was stupefying. It is the same way with us: we do not think it is stupefying until we are confronted with it, face-to-face, ourselves. Then, our loyalty and devotion begins to draw back.

**John 12:24** “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone.”

Do you get that? No fruit can be produced, He is saying, unless there is sacrifice, unless there is death. Even with a grain of wheat, that grain has to die in order that more kernels could be produced. That is the way that fruit is produced, by sacrifice, by going above and beyond. What He is saying in essence is that life comes through death, even as Christ’s death opened up the way for billions to have life. Without that death, there is no life for us. “He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternity.”

So in practical situations, the Christian has to kill his ego. He has to put to death his self-centeredness, the conformity to this world’s standards. That is why John says, “You have to come out of the world.” As long as we are conformed to this world’s standards—and this world was built on selfishness, self-centeredness—God says, “All

that is in the world is not of Him.” As long as we are in conformity to that, we are still seeking to save our life.

This is an awfully high standard. It is something that we have to grow to; it is the perfection of Jesus Christ. None of us is there yet.

If you kill your ego, something has to take its place. What is it? It is a life of self-sacrificial service. How do I know that? Because of this:

**John 12:26** If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me.

Jesus’ life is the pattern, He is the *archegos*. He is the pathfinder; He is the scout; He is the Captain of our salvation. He is the one who founded this way, and He expects us to go after Him. We are to imitate Him. In that way, we become a sweet-smelling aroma to God. It is something that He takes pleasure in—the utter and complete devotion of His children to Him. “If anyone serves Me,” he must follow.

**John 12:26** let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also.

Where is Christ? Right now, He is in heaven. He is in the Kingdom of God. If we follow Him, we will be there with Him.

**John 12:26** If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

If we want to look to the standards, if we want to know what to do, we have to look to the example of Jesus Christ. If we look at other people, though they can give us some kind of an example, any of us is just going to be a pale imitation of the reality that is Christ.

How did Christ ensure that there would be life? He died.

When I tell you that this is the key to marital success, I mean it. This is the key to the abundant life. Six different times, Jesus said this. It is important. This is what produces the abundant life. This is what produces peace.

**John 12:27-34** “Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? [It is a question.] But for this purpose I came to this hour.

Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, saying, “I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.” Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to Him.” Jesus answered and said, “This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” This He said, signifying by what death He would die. The people answered Him, “We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”

It is interesting that John that does not tell us of the events that occurred in Gethsemane. That is not his intent. In Gethsemane we find in Matthew and Luke, and especially in the book of Luke, Jesus going through the agony of confronting death, confronting a painful death. Not just death, but a *very* painful death. But it is John’s intent to show Jesus at His very best, if I can put it that way. To show Him as the undaunted leader of the people of God.

So we do not see here Jesus wrestling with His humanity, but He does show us enough to know that He did not want to die at 33 or 33 ½. Jesus had the normal human feelings; He wanted to maintain His life. He did not want to go through pain. He did not want to feel the lash of a whip. He did not want to be disgraced before people, maybe in being stripped naked and hung before these people. He did not want to have to undergo all that He was going to have to go through.

But you see, He overcame it. This is the *agape* love that He submitted, all the way to death. That by faith, and by the strength and power of the Spirit of God, He forced His will to submit to the will of God. He gave Himself in sacrifice.

And so the statement, “Father, save Me from this hour.” He is acknowledging that it is going to be difficult, but He knows this: that even as God had brought Him to the place that He was right then, God would also provide for Him all the way to the end. He had faith in that, that He would be safely brought out of it. “But for this purpose I came to this hour.”

In John 12:28, He identifies His glorification with God’s glorification. Back in John 12:23, “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.” He would be glorified in death. He connects that in verse 28—the glorification of the Son would also be the glorification of the Father. They are inseparable in that way; They are of one mind. Then

He says in John 12:28, “I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.”

How did He glorify it? The most recent way God’s name was glorified was in the resurrection of Lazarus—and another resurrection was coming, that is, the resurrection of Christ, and the Father would be glorified again. That is what He is referring to there. The glorification of the Father by the resurrection of Lazarus, and the second time would be another glorification through the resurrection of Jesus.

The glorification would come because people would be led to recognize the wisdom, and the love, and the mercy of the Father, in permitting, in giving, the life, the death, of Jesus Christ. People would come to recognize it. It does not mean that people would recognize it immediately, but each in his own order would come to recognize that this is the door, the means, through which we can share in the inheritance of Jesus Christ. And then what would God be known as? He would be known as the lover of men—“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.” Is that not who you glorify? The ones you love.

He is really continuing to expound on the way you produce life is to die. That is the way you produce glorification. That is what Philippians 2:5-9 are showing. Because Jesus gave His life in self-sacrifice, God has exalted Him with a name greater than any name.

In John 12:30, after the voice thundered out, Jesus said “This was more for your sake than for mine.” But we see a division: some people heard it as thunder, but other people heard a voice. Is that not interesting? It indicates that there were some there who were in tune with Him, and they heard it as a voice. The ones who were completely carnal heard it as thunder. Think about that. There are those who have ears but do not hear.

Incidentally, this is the third time that a voice spoke to Him from heaven. In every case, it was a significant event: His baptism, the transfiguration, and now here, just before His death. It is reinforcement from God, “Don’t worry, Son, I’m still with You.”

We need to ask ourselves, do we hear the voice of God, through His Word? Do we hear it? Do we still believe that He is with us? Is His voice there, to give us encouragement in the trials that we go through, that “I will never leave you nor forsake you?” That “I’ve brought you this far, and I’ll continue right on working right up to the end.”

**John 12:31** Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

Adam and Eve submitted to Satan, and were defeated. But Jesus is confident that He will conquer Satan. Satan is as good as defeated is what He is saying, because He will not submit. Even in the most excruciating pain, He would not submit to Satan. He went through every painful torture that Satan could devise at that period of time, and He would not submit. By that, He became victorious, and we have a King.

He really was getting ready for battle, was He not? But it was not battle against the Romans. It was a battle against the prince of the power of the air who was controlling the Romans. Jesus was going right to the top.

He said, "If I am lifted up from the earth." The *if* is not a question. To a Hebrew at that time, speaking Aramaic, it had the same significance in that context as our word *when*. "When I am lifted up," although the word there in the Greek really is *if*. There was no doubt that He was going to go through it.

**John 12:33-34** This He said, signifying by what death He would die. The people answered Him, "We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?"

In verse 34, the division in the people begins to become apparent. The question is, "What do you mean, the Son of Man be put to death?" The reply is a scornful question, and it came about as the result of their ignorance of God's purpose. Their tradition held that the Messiah would be a conquering king and that he would kick the Romans out. But they misinterpreted the scriptures, and applied the things that pertain to the second coming to His first coming, and their ignorance on that point led them to scorn. Because He did not fit the parameters of their tradition, they began to reject Him and a division was taking place.

**John 12:35** Then Jesus said to them, "A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going."

It is an appeal from Him to recognize Him—take advantage of the truth while you have it with you. We need to understand that, too. Life is not constant. We are not guaranteed that we are going to live a definite period of time. We can die in a moment.

I will tell you a story of a young man that I had experience with. He was 26 years old

when I met him, and from the time that I met him until the time that he died was only a matter of a few months. He was an intelligent young man, he had a pretty good job. He was not real settled in his life yet, but he was nonetheless a possessor of a pretty good bit of leadership. He was leading all of the Chicago singles. Almost everybody in the Chicago area who was single kind of looked to him for leadership. So he was in charge, a coordinator of all of the singles in the Chicago area.

But he had a problem. He would kind of become detached every once in a while and forget what he was doing. He would do this sometimes when he was driving. So he had frequent accidents. They were not the kind of accidents that were real dangerous, fender-bender types. He recognized the problem, and he told one of our elders. He was in the choir. On Sunday, the choir had a practice, and he told the elder who was counseling with him, "I'm going to fast about this problem. I'm becoming more and more distracted, and my mind is wandering about what I'm doing. So I'm going to take off work tomorrow and stay home and fast, it's getting that serious."

But sometime between the time that he talked with that elder and the next morning, he changed his mind. Maybe he became distracted and forgot about it, I do not know. But he went to work that day. He had about eight or ten railroad crossings to go over to get to his job. The Amtrak commuter train, coming out of Michigan City going into the Chicago loop, going about 60 or 70 miles per hour, ran into him broadside. He never knew what hit him. He must have died instantly. When they found him, the car was wrapped all around the engine of the train, and he was just sitting there serenely as anything, the collision probably broke his neck and he died immediately. His body was not mutilated in any way.

As you can see, I have never forgotten that. He delayed to do something spiritual, something that would have kept him in contact with God, and maybe somehow, would have given him the strength to begin to really attack and overcome this problem of distraction that he had, letting his mind wander onto things and forget what he was doing at the moment. He paid with his life.

That is what Jesus is talking about here. Nobody has a guarantee of how long they are going to live. Things will not stay the way that they are forever. It does not mean that we have to become frantic in our search for God, in our approach to Him, but it does mean that we cannot let time slip by and not do something about what we have. Jesus said, "You have to walk while you have the light, because in the darkness, you can't do very much."

All kinds of things can take place. The economics of a country can change;

governments can change; war can occur; earthquakes, hurricanes and tornadoes can occur. You can get hit by an automobile, even now sitting in your own house if one comes crashing through the living room, which happens every once in a while. Strange things can occur. So it is an appeal to people to take advantage of the time while they have it.

**John 12:36** “While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.

Do you know what the sons of Light are? They are people who show the same characteristics as the Light. Who is the Light? Jesus was the Light, He was the Light of the world. So a son would be somebody in His image. He says, “If you want to become sons of Light, while you have Light, believe in the Light.”

Does not our whole Christian life come down to that one thing? In whom do we choose to believe? Do we really believe God, or do we believe tradition? Do we believe the words of the Bible, or do we believe what this world says? It all comes down to that.

Jesus said, take advantage of the time while you have it, and believe Him so that you can become sons of Light, that is, people with the same characteristics as He has.