

John 12:36-50, "When the Light Goes Out"

1.8.23

Last Monday night, the whole country stopped when Damar Hamlin laid motionless and not breathing on the Cincinnati Bengals football field in Cincinnati, OH. Everyone on both teams gathered to pray.



Hamlin's heart had stopped beating. CPR was being administered and everyone was in shock.



Finally, his breathing was restored and he was taken to the hospital where Bills and Bengals fans gathered to pray...



and so has the entire country. Prayer has been restored in the country this week. Knees were taken, but not to display racial divide, but to pray for a 24-year-old young man. Now, I want to ask you, “Do you think Damar Hamlin thought for one second before he ran out of the tunnel in Cincinnati, that he might die later that night?” The answer would have to be no. Most 24-year-olds think it is impossible for them to die. But, for Hamlin, the bright lights of the stadium turned to darkness as he crashed to the turf. Everything changed. And for the nation of Israel, during Passion Week, the week that Jesus would ultimately be crucified, everything was getting ready to change, for the light was getting ready to go out on the nation. The light? That would be Jesus...the “Light of the world.” You see, the nation of Israel is getting ready to snuff out their own Messiah and once again, they will lie in darkness...just like they had for 400 years, prior to the coming of Jesus. What we’re going to see today is Israel’s last chance to hear from Jesus before the light goes out. That’s the title of the message: “When the Light Goes Out.”

John 12:36-50

³⁶ 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. ³⁷ Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, ³⁸ so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” ³⁹ Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, ⁴⁰ “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.” ⁴¹ Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. ⁴² Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. ⁴⁴ And Jesus cried out and said, “Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. ⁴⁵ And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. ⁴⁷ If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. ⁴⁸ The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. ⁴⁹ For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. ⁵⁰ And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.”

Church family, we all know how blessed we are to have such a kind and patient Heavenly Father. He’s long-suffering and His patience toward us is noted all through Scripture. He’s so patient! But, boy is that different from us. We’re so often not long suffering. We’re not patient. Honestly, so often, we’re easily offended. Easily angered. Easily hurt.

And do you know what happens when we get offended? Here’s the essence of what happens when we get offended: we feel that others don’t value us in the same way we value ourselves. We’re offended because we don’t think we’re being valued in the way we should. But, isn’t it true that if we simply see ourselves as sinners, saved by grace, deserving nothing...then we wouldn’t be so easily offended, now would we? Truth is: I find myself struggling with being easily offended.”

Think about this from God’s perspective. For God...we’re constantly offending Him with our sins and all of the excuses and justifications that come with our sin. We have great rationalizations as to why God should give us a pass. Oh, our Heavenly Father is offended in incalculable ways, in so many inconceivable ways, and yet, He’s patient. But, eventually His patience runs out. **I think about Noah** who preached for decades while he was building the ark...



Talk about patience... Noah worked on that ark every day for decades and as he did...



he preached repentance and the coming judgment. But, the people laughed at him. They thought he was nuts! And so, how many were saved? How many believed? Peter tells us:

1 Peter 3:20

²⁰ because²⁰ they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

God was so patient... He waited so patiently... Does that mean He's soft/weak/permissive? No. God is righteous and He's holy... and without question... in His holiness and righteousness, He will have to judge those who refuse His kindness and reject Him. The Apostle Paul tells us:

Romans 2:4

⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

God is patient giving humanity time to repent...to receive Jesus. But His patience doesn't last forever. Eventually, God runs out of patience. Let me show you that. You see, I'm speaking about God's patience to set-up our message today...right now in John 12...for Israel the lights are on...but, they were getting ready to go out...and the same is true for us here today...

2 Peter 3:1-9

This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, ² that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, ³ knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. ⁴ They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." ⁵ For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, ⁶ and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. ⁷ But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. ⁸ But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

And there you have it...that's right where we are in John 12. God's patience is running out, the time to repent is waning. For you see, the religious elites...the religious hierarchy of Israel have refused to believe in Jesus and His miracles. They are now intimidating the people by saying... "If you follow Jesus, we'll kick you out of the Temple and the synagogues." But fortunately, they hadn't gotten to all of the crowds. Remember...on Palm Sunday, (which we studied two weeks ago), they were praising Jesus...



"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." But, the Pharisees got on Twitter and Instagram spreading lies about Jesus...seeking to turn the crowds back to them. That was Sunday.

Now what John doesn't tell us in his gospel, we learn from Matthew's is that on Monday, Jesus would cleanse the Temple and then on Tuesday He would come back blast the Pharisees for their hypocrisy and lies. In fact, what we're seeing in John 12, also likely happened on Tuesday, because

Wednesday is often called the “Silent Day,” the day where Jesus rested and prepared for Thursday and the Last Supper and Gethsemane and then Friday’s crucifixion.

Yes, by Monday, the false narratives of the Pharisees and chief priests are starting to have an effect, and as our Matthew taught us last week, the crowds began to question: “How can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up. The Law says that He is to live forever?’” They wanted a Messiah that would set up His kingdom right then and throw off the yoke of Rome!

Church, they couldn’t see Isaiah 53. They couldn’t see the “Suffering Servant,” that the Savior was going to have to die. And the sad truth is: (The Jews still can’t see this). They wanted a military leader...not someone talking about death and being “Lifted Up,” which is their vernacular for crucifixion. And so, Jesus is going to give the people one last chance to see the light before it goes out. You see, this will be the LAST TIME Jesus will be in public until He’s brought before Pilate, and the crowds will then shout “Crucify Him.” BTW, after His resurrection, He will only appear to believers...that’s it...only believers until He’s taken up to heaven after 40 days. Watch verse 36.

John 12:36

³⁶ 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.

Again, the Light is Jesus. He said that in chapter 12: “I am the light of the world,” and that’s the metaphor we’ve seen throughout John’s Gospel. Jesus is the Light that shines in the darkness...and that light is to help you SEE TO BELIEVE! By the way...the act of hiding was really a picture of the coming judgment upon Israel for all who have rejected Him. His public ministry is over. Verse 37...

John 12:37-38

³⁷ Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, ³⁸ so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

They still didn’t believe, which was prophesied 750 years earlier by the prophet Isaiah (see how the words are indented). And that phrase, “arm of the Lord” means: “God’s divine power...” Jesus literally revealed God’s divine power while He was here on the earth.

Church, do you want to know how the light goes out in a person’s life? It goes out for two reasons. #1 the willful unbelief of that person, which is called man’s responsibility. #2 God seals that unbelief as part of His divine sovereignty: **Man’s responsibility and God’s sovereignty working in concert.** Listen, man’s unbelief leads to what scholars call God’s “judicial blindness.” A blindness that God permits to come over the eyes of those who continue to willfully disbelieve. That’s verse 39.

John 12:39-40

³⁹ Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, ⁴⁰ “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.”

Verse 40, is again, (indented), and it comes from Isaiah, chapter 6. Remember when God spoke to Isaiah and Isaiah cried out: “Woe is me, I’m a man of unclean lips?” Watch the screens:

Isaiah 6:8-10

⁸ And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.” ⁹ And he said, “Go, and say to this people: “Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’ ¹⁰ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears

heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”

The people refused to believe and God sealed it. Church, this vision by Isaiah happened right before the Babylonian Captivity and Isaiah would warn and warn the people to repent, but they refused. They had hardened their hearts (step 1), which leads to step 2. God seals it. In essence God says, “That’s the way you want it. **I’ll seal the envelope.** You addressed it in your unbelief...I lick the back. It’s done!”

Remember, that’s what happened with Pharaoh. That’s what happened with Esau. Eventually God’s patience runs out and He says: “Enough,” and seals the deal! Now, watch verse 41

John 12:41

⁴¹ Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.

It’s interesting, and I never thought of this or saw this, but that’s referring to Jesus Christ Himself. Isaiah saw Jesus in His glory and Jesus was actually pronouncing judgment on the people of Israel by way of their forthcoming Babylonian Captivity. And church, that’s why I cry out as Isaiah did:

Isaiah 55:6-7

⁶“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; ⁷ let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

“Call upon Him while He is near...” For the people of Jesus’ day, they couldn’t have gotten any nearer to Jesus than they were...for three years they were walking with Him...touching Him...seeing Him in their towns and their villages performing miracle after miracle. So, why didn’t they believe? What was the problem? (Watch verse 42 and church, I’ll tell you...the problem is the same reason why most still won’t believe today.)

John 12:42-43

⁴² Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

These two verses describe our culture perhaps as good as any we could possibly read. This is our culture. This is what it looks like to be “woke,” “DEI,” to be “politically correct.” This is all about “the fear of man.” We’re scared to death to stand for truth and the teachings of Jesus **if it makes us look bad.**

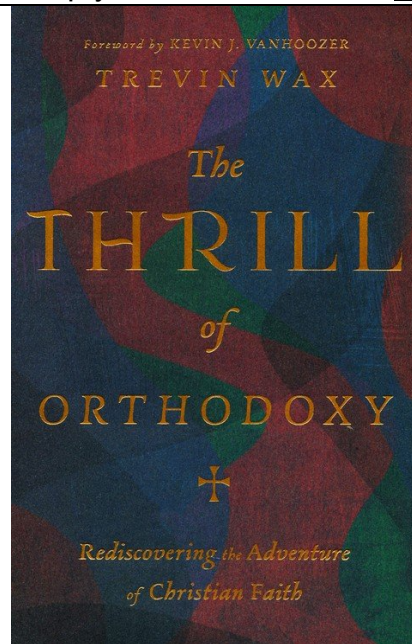
Let me set the scene: Jesus had just sent out the Apostles, two by two, to spread the Gospel to the Jews and He warned them that they would face trouble for speaking in His name. He said, “You will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake...but don’t be afraid...I’ll be with you...I’ll tell you what to say.” Watch verse 26...

Matthew 10:26-39

²⁶ “So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. ²⁸ And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? ³⁰ And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³¹ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³² Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. ³³ So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ³⁴ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

³⁴ “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶ And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household. ³⁷ Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Church, Jesus calls us to total surrender...not some compartmentalized faith on Sundays. Jesus is not your “get out of jail free card.” He’s not the spare tire in the trunk of your life...He is to be your life! And to have Him...you must give up your total life to Him! I’ve been reading this book:



“The Thrill of Orthodoxy,” by Trevin Wax, “Rediscovering the Adventure of Christian Faith.” I want to show you a quote from it:

“What’s missing in our lives is any sense of Christianity as a mission that requires obedience to a King, a rollicking adventure that brings us face to face with opposition, as we proclaim something bigger and more satisfying than personal preference. Christianity’s call to costly obedience may not appear on the surface as heroic or radical—we may experience seasons of stress as we struggle to raise our kids, clock in and out of an unfulfilling job, and do our best to serve the believers in a church filled with problems—but we must remember that the pathway of repentance and faith imbues even the smallest acts of self-sacrifice with eternal significance.” Trevin Wax, *The Thrill of Orthodoxy-Rediscovering the Adventure of Christian Faith*

You see, the Pharisees and religious leaders wanted no self-sacrifice...no repentance and that’s why they’re the “models” Jesus uses of “un-saving faith.” Yes, I know, verse 42 says some: “believed,” but that belief came up short. Why? Because of the **fear of their peers**. They wouldn’t confess Jesus with their mouths, (you have to believe and confess). You see, the Pharisees were all about the THREE P’s:

- Position**
 - Power**
 - Prosperity**
-

They wouldn't believe because of the praise of man. Their belief came up short. F.F. Bruce in his commentary on the Gospel of John says it this way:

“In various places throughout his gospel, John speaks of believing in Jesus or believing in His name in a sense that falls short of full commitment. An early instance is in John 2, where the ‘signs’ which He performed during an earlier Passover visit in Jerusalem caused many to believe in His name, but He saw that their belief was superficial and not to be depended on... [John] wishes his readers to understand clearly that the belief which brings with it birthright as a child of God is the belief which shows itself in public and is an irrevocable commitment to Jesus, acknowledging Him as Messiah and Son of God.” F.F. Bruce, *Gospel of John Commentary*

I kind of see it like this. Did you hear what Elon Musk said about going to Hell? (It's chilling.):



Sad, isn't it. What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul. What will Elon's billions do in Hell for him? Nothing! Oh, I know, some would argue, he's doing some good things with Twitter and free speech... exposing the lies, the bias and fraud...but, it won't get him into heaven and it appears he knows it. I pray for Elon.

Now watch this last section... I want to read verses 44-50 together...because many scholars believe this is a summary of what Jesus was saying to the crowds...I want you to feel this...it's the last words that Jesus would speak in His public ministry. This is it...the light is getting ready to go out.

John 12:44-50

44 And Jesus cried out and said, “Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. 45 And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. 46 I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. 47 If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. 48 The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. 49 For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.”

“As the Father has told me...” And that's the point: Jesus came from God and He's going back there and He was saying: “You better believe what I'm telling you or you are going to be judged.” Just like those in Noah's day, who died banging on the ark as it floated away. It was too late: God shut the door!

So, how is a person saved? One word: Humility. The thing that the Pharisees didn't have...but, the thing that you must have in order to be saved. You must humble yourself. You give up your life to

gain it. You give it to Jesus...the One who gave you life in the first place. You have to acknowledge your spiritual bankruptcy. Blessed are the poor in spirit. The way to Jesus is on our knees.

If you're here today and you've never surrendered to Jesus, don't harden your heart. Because you never know when God is going to lick the back of the envelope and say, "Have your way. It's over...and the lights go out."

Darkness...I hate darkness...I always have...ever since I was boy. It scares me...and let me tell you something, not being saved ought to scare you worse. It OUGHT TO SCARE YOU TO DEATH! Oh, I pray you will give your life to Jesus and be saved. It's not too late...the lights are still on...