

John 12:37-50 | Theology of Unbelief

Advent #4

Responsive Reading

Sermon Text.

John 12:37-50

Intro.

This is the last public message that Jesus gives. Between this message and His trial and crucifixion, He spends all of His time teaching His disciples in private.

This last public message is centered around two main words; ΠΙΣΤΕΥΩ and ΚΡΙΝΩ (faith/belief and judgement)

We saw in Jesus' last dialogue that His death would 'draw all men' to Him. In other words, what you come to believe about Him and His death on the cross becomes a determining point in your life.

What you believe about Christ makes the final judgement about who you are.

As James puts it, faith without works is dead. You can know what someone believes by what someone does.

John's Gospel is the deepest in Theology but also the simplest in interpretation. That's a benefit to us because what John is doing is giving us the most bang for our buck.

The most return on investment. He's getting down to the nuts and bolts and assembling the most important components of the Christian belief system.

What is a Believer? Everyone is a believer. Everyone believes something.

The term, believer, is synonymous with Christian. What does it mean to be this thing? What does it mean to identify as this person that is a Christian?

The term gets used to identify a broad range of people.

- it becomes a title for politicians to pander to for votes.
- it becomes a title for people to hold for social status.
- it becomes a title for nice people to do nice things, and if a person perceives that you aren't being nice then you might not be a Christian because the theory abounds, that Christians above all must be nice, and being nice means you are tolerant of all viewpoints.

-it becomes a title to identify people who might be easily dismissed, not culturally up-to-date or relevant with regard to current events.

Maybe their thoughts are arcane, therefore, the Christian becomes progressive, enabling them the ability to have more updated concepts available to their lifestyle.

-most people would probably make the assumption that a Christian is someone that goes to church regularly. Prays. Gives. Serves. Smiles. Shakes hands. Hugs. Works diligently. Avoids immorality. Doesn't say curse words. Doesn't speak poorly of others. Endures hardship.

In Paul's letter to Timothy about the Pastorate and how to lead the church he states that **'the church is the pillar and support of the Truth' 1 Tim. 3:15**

Belief with regards to mans nature.

Augustine on Free Will, Thomas Boston, The 4-fold Nature of Man

Pre-Fall Man	Post-Fall Man	Redeemed Man	Glorified Man
Able to sin	Able to sin	Able to sin	Able to not sin
Able to not sin	Unable to not sin	Able to not sin	Unable to sin

Despite the subjective impressions of life, being nice, or whether a person has the personality traits of gregariousness or introversion, whether a person is a political-conservative, or fails adopt new trends – the **most defining trait of a Christian** is that **they live by what is True.**

The term Christian in our age has become synonymous with many misconceptions.

Does love marks the life of a Christian? Yes it does.

John 13:34 'A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.'

Love marks a Christian life. Love identifies the life of a believer. BUT, there still must be a qualification to that. What does a believer love? What does a Christian love?

Everyone loves something. So what is distinctive about Christian love?

Jesus' Instruction to His disciples.

John 14:15 'If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.'

John 14:23 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode in Him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.'

Truth. Love. Obedience to God. All mark the life of a Christian believer.

But what I want to highlight in this message is what Jesus is qualifying in a final message, which is faith and judgment.

Based off of our faith will result certain judgments.

Judgments are decisions. Judgments are determinations. Judgements are directional. Judgments cause the navigation of a persons life.

Jesus in His final discourse is establishing what the judgments will be in a persons life based off their faith; particularly about

Jesus Christ is a Lord and Savior. If He is not both then He is not either.

Jesus is a Lord to show you your need for a Savior and He is a Savior to show you that He will be your Lord.

The term Lord/ΚΥΡΙΟΣ was a central confession of the early church

Jesus is Lord is a central confession of the early church.

Rom. 10:9 'that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord'

1 Cor. 12:3 'anyone speaking of the Spirit of God says that Jesus is Lord' – is 'only said by the Holy Spirit'

Phil 2:11 'every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God'

Who is the Lord of these people? Who is the Lord of these collective rulers?

The conspiracy of Caiaphas. Who ruled? Who was in charge?

Context.

Who: Jesus Christ, Jewish and Greek crowd.

What: Jesus' last public message.

Where: Temple in Jerusalem

When: Wednesday of Passover Week

Why: To give a final witness of His Messianic purpose and sound belief/saving faith

How:

Circle back to Jn 12:27-36

Love your life, lose it – Hate your life, gain it **Q:** What is it that you would hate about your life?

The sin of your life. That is another basic proof of being a Christian.

What is common to every person in this life is the battle of sin. Sin has an effect on every person's life and it ultimately, when rightly viewed, will lead you to hate this life. The longer you live the more sin you see and experience and the more you hope for eternity.

Cornelius Van Til, Professor of Systematic Theology and renowned for his Pre-suppositional approach to Apologetics – **there are basic proofs that demonstrate God's existence** and there are basic proofs that God has shown in the Bible that demonstrate whether a person is a Christian or not.

The denial of these basic proofs is the normative lifestyle of the non-Christian. The recognition of these basic proofs is the baseline lifestyle of the Christian.

What is going to command the direction of your life? In other words, what is the Lord of your life?

And that only makes sense. In order to have confidence that you are headed to a specific destination you need proofs along the way to help you navigate. If you are going to drive from here to NYC, you need proofs that would tell you that you are headed in the right direction. If you are driving, and the road is smooth, and the music and company is fun and unintrusive and encouraging but you begin to see whales spourting, and seahawks cheering you are very likely headed in the wrong direction despite the comforts of the drive. At that point you must turn around and course correct.

Just because a person is confident that is not total proof that they are correct. Plenty of people on confidently incorrect. Just this past week I was watching a kids basketball game. And this one kid was really having a great game. It was pretty impressive. He was dribbling between people, going coast to coast for a lay up. When the defense was packing it in he would pull up for a jump shot and make it. He was having a great game, but then all of a sudden he made a steal and started heading for the wrong basket and shot the ball on the wrong goal. – Just because a person is capable and confident does not ensure that they are correct.

When it comes to matters of eternal significance you really want to be correct.

What does it mean to be a believer?

A few of Jesus' qualifying factors of Christian belief.

Jesus gave us a number of qualifying factors in this last message that we went through over the past couple weeks but to just draw us back in; **the glorification of God with our life, a focus on the work of Christ ('this hour'), 'hating this life and gaining it for eternity', hearing 'His voice', that voice causing you to 'walk in the Light'**

1. A believer believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Son of Man.

Hypostatic Union. Truly God and truly Man. The Incarnation.

At the **Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD. The Hypostatic Union.**

Athanasian Creed. 'He is God from the essence of the Father, begotten before time; and He is human from the essence of His mother, born in time; completely God, and completely human,

with a rational soul and human flesh; equal to the Father as regards to divinity, less than the Father as regards to humanity. Although He is God and human, yet Christ is not two, but one. He is one, however not by His divinity being turned into flesh, but by God's taking humanity to Himself. He is one, certainly not by the blending of His essence, but by the unity of His person. For just as one human is both rational soul and flesh, so too the one Christ is both God and human."

The importance of church councils and church creeds.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became the Son of Man.

A believer has an accurate view of who Christ is. They understand Christ's nature. They understand Christ's character. Christ's mission. Christ's purpose. Christ's promises.

v. 34 'Who is this Son of Man?' – A Christian believer has a concern and devotion to the identify of Christ and they do not compromise that.

2. A believer walks in the Light. Jesus Christ is the Light.

Walking in the Light can be understood metaphorically. It is an expression that Jesus continues to use to show that there is nothing concealed. There are no hidden motives. There are no alternative agendas.

v. 35 'for a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes.'

People who compromise the basics of the Christian faith always do so on the basis of immorality.

Light represents living a right life before God. Darkness represents living an immoral life.

A sound Christian believer does not change the truth of God. Does not avoid the Light of Christ. Instead is transformed by this Light.

v. 36 'While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light'

Sons of Light. Adoption into a family. Adoption is a critical component of the Christian believer.

Faith in Christ is given as a gift from God.

Eph. 2:9 'it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God' – Faith is a gift from God.

Faith, which is belief, a Believer, is a gift that is given from God. Yet, it is demonstrated in an opposing effect through those who walk in darkness.

John 3:19 'this is the verdict: The Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.'

3. A believer believes what Jesus has spoken.

v. 50 'the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.'

in v. 30 'this voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes'

What sake has it come for? v. 31-32

The voice has come for two specific purposes; 1. the judgment is upon the world and the ruler of the world will be cast out and 2. that this commandment of being 'lifted up' will draw all men to myself.

4. A believer believes what God has spoken.

That belief leads to eternal life. It also leads to obedience.

This kind of life is a life 'walking in the Light' – this kind of life is one that gives God glory. This is the very life that Jesus lived.

Jn 5:19 'the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.'

The life a n

5. A believer sees the Oneness of God and Christ.

6. A believer 'hears and sees' the message of Christ.

Hearing and seeing are metaphorical terms. It is necessary to hear and necessary to see to be 'converted'

Turn to Deut. 4.

Deut. 4:26-36 God's Action; His voice, His arm, His will -

v. 40 'so that they would

Is. 6:9-10 : Listening, Looking, Understanding – Incapable because of their heart

Is. 53:1

Ethopian Eunich in Acts.

'How can I know unless I am taught?'

The Christian might pursue Truth but they still need to be taught.

The enduring doctrine of Sola Scripture is sometimes confused as Solo Scriptura. Scripture stands as a single proof, a single guiding book, but it is not a work done in singular isolation.

The separation of time and space of its 40 authors, yet its perspicuity of purpose, bears greater and greater witness to the Divine Oversight of the recording of Scripture.

Sound Christian teaching builds confession in Christ.

Spurgeon was once asked what was the proof that a ministry/a preacher was called to the ministry. He said 'the sure sign of calling to Christian ministry is that those who hear the minister preach will begin to profess Christ.'

7. A believer confesses Christ.

Believers do not go around confessing the Apostle John. Despite the fact that he wrote this letter. They confess who he wrote about, Christ.

8. A believer confesses Christ despite circumstances.

Those who profess Christ become more like Christ.

The salvation that accompanies confession leads to the sanctification that accompanies transgressions.

Overcoming transgressions leads to sanctification.

Q: What did Christ overcome on the cross? Sin. **Q:** Whose sin? Those who put their faith in Him.

A believer comes from the word ΠΙΣΤΕΥΩ/pisteuo (I believe). We see that it does not mean simple mental acquisition.

'even the demons believe/ΠΙΣΤΕΥΩ' James

Q: What is the distinction between a Demons understanding of Theology and a believers understanding of Theology? There shouldn't be any difference. Demons have a great understanding of Theology.

Demons know who God is and they rebel.

Demons know who Christ is and they hate Him.

Demons know the work of the Holy Spirit and they work in opposition to it.

Demons have crystal clear Theological understanding. Demons have a high level of understanding and intelligence, they have a no comprehension of obedience.

The distinction between demons and Believers is that believers obey. Believers walk in the Light.

Obedience is the response to who our Lord is and that leads to Jesus next point.

Jn 8.

False believers seek the **approval of men**.

Q: Who approves you? Who is it that justifies you? Who vindicates you? Who defends you when you need defense? Who is it, what is it, that will clear your name? Where does your help come from?

1 Th. 2:4 'we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel, so we speak, not to please men, but to please God who tests our hearts'

Q: Who is it that should be directing the motives of what we do? God. God's will. God's commands. God's prescription and description.

Q: Why would we be swayed by what men think? Easy. When we do this we seek the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

Q: On your day of reckoning – who will provide rationale for all of who you are and all what you have done?

Will it be your friends? Will it be the abundant social approval that you? Will that bring about your acceptance?

9. A believer does not seek the approval of men.

Gal. 1:10 'am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God?' – that region of churches was established on seeking the approval of God, NOT man,.

Q: Are we going to change the message of the Gospel, the Truth that saves, so that we can **garner more approval from man?** Would we be willing to changes a little doctrine here and a little concealing of truth there, **in order to gain more affections of men and women?**

Q: Would it be acceptable to God, if we make a few amendments to His message given they aren't exactly platable in our age?

Rev. 22:18-19 'if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city'

I have spoke to a few older pastors who have chosen in their older age to compromise certain truths of God from Scripture.

They do this for a variety of reasons they will give but ultimately they do this to pander to the approval of man.

They get jaded from putting up with the criticisms. They get tired of dealing with the persecution that comes from standing for the Truth.

So they begin to make subtle adjustments. They begin to make small compromises.

Why do these compromises and these subtle adjustment seem like such a readily available option? Because the person lacks faith.

The person does not genuinely believe that God is Sovereign. They do not genuinely believe that His word is authoritative and sufficient. And they begin to demonstrate what they actually worship – **the approval of man.**

Should the parent approve of the child to act how they would like and the child find it expedient to conceal from the parent that which they know would be disapproved?

Should we allow a sly and deceptive culture just to afford the approval of men?

Q: Should the moral fortitude of our age decline, in order to ensure, the persistence of man's comfortable estate?

Flattery is the means of man's approval. Men who use flattery are always using deception in other areas.

When the anti-Christ comes we see that he wins over the kingdom of man through the mass approval of man.

Dan. 11:21 'He shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.'

Ps. 5:9 'there is not truth in their mouth, they flatter with their tongue.'

Pr. 28:23 'He who rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with his tongue'

Pr. 29:5 'A man who flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his steps'

Flattery yields deceit. Deceit is at the heart of the approval of man. It is what inhibits these people from coming to Christ and walking in the light.

2 Cor. 10:18 'it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one who the Lord commends.'

Q: How can we be confident that they Lord commends us? Christ tells us, 'if you confess me before men I will confess you before my Father'

The approval of men is what Satan uses to deceive mass populations.

The populace desire to seek approval.

Rom. 1:32 'they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but **give approval** to those who practice them.'

Why do they give approval? It is so that there can be a common acceptance of what is wrong.

If wrong is commonly accepted then ultimately no one has to wrong and tolerance of what is wrong becomes justified and that is what rules the age instead of what God has established as right.

There is a 'peculiar description of errorists, who corrupt and deceive men by their false and pernicious sentiments, as well as by their other evil examples. Of all sinners, corrupters of the sentiments (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness etc.) and practice of others are the most criminal, and stand condemned to the severest marks of God's everlasting displeasure.'

Selfishness: The Essence of Moral Depravity, by Nathaniel Emmons, 1700-1800's

Those who love the approval of men always move in large groups because large groups are required to approve their large errors.

Q: How will you be able to be confident that you are going to be ok? How will you be able to find peace?

Q: If you have insurmountable enemies, where would you be able to stand in the day of reckoning?

In the OT, many people in Israel, many kings in Israel, thought their defense would come from world alliances. Building alliances with other nations. Finding the approval of man. Reducing the truth of God's commands. Removing the regulative style of their governance and worship. That proved foolish.

The approval of man is a trap. It is a trap that ensnares many people because their heart loves this world.

People do not seek the approval of man by accident, they seek it on purpose.

People seek the approval of man because ultimately they have the internal spirit that worships mankind. **666, The mark of the beast.** 6, the number of man. The trinitarian view of Satan. The anti-Christ, the Beast, the Dragon.

Each establishing themselves as the figurehead of man's approval.

And this is who Christ is casting out.

v. 31 'Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. If I am lifted up from the earth, this will draw all men to Myself.'

10. A believer works for the approval of God.

Work for the bread that endures. Jn 6

Jn 6:27 'do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life'

Jn 12:50 'this is His commandment, eternal life'

Jn 12:25 'he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.'

Jn 6:29 'this is the work of God that you believe in Him'

Notitia. Fiducia. Assensus.

Jesus has been addressing this throughout the past 3 years.

'You can't believe' 'You won't believe' 'You reject God because you reject Me' 'You do not love God because you do not love Me' – There's no way around it. You have to deal with Jesus.

You have two main criminals in the world – those who deny Jesus and those who change the image of Jesus – each do this for the approval of man.

Rom. 13:3 'do what is good and you will receive approval'

Q: But what about a society where right and wrong are inverted? How does that work in a society whose moral compass is set on due South?

We are standing on the precipice of building a bridge of reform or total destruction of American society.

It was some time ago, but was listening to a conference, I don't remember specifically what it was about, but there was a panel of men who are pastors and they were asked a question; What is wrong with soc

The Noetic Effects of Sin.

The mental effects of sin starts in the expression of unbelief. The mental effects of false belief are expressed in a secondary way in that it changes a true understanding of God.

But sin always has an effect on thinking.

We live in an age that elevates what is practical. We live in an age where we make our policies around what works. But often neglect what Glorifies God.

All unbelief in God is rooted in sin. 'anything not done in faith is sin.' Romans.

11. A believer does not remain in darkness.

Ps. 1, Jn 1, Jn 3, Jn 10, Jn 12

12. A believer has a firm understanding of God's judgment.

Jn 5

13. A believer finds rest in God's judgment.

God's judgments are true.

The judgmental nature of the Gospel message is a blessing to the believer and a curse to the unbeliever.

Some people are just never able to get over the mental obstacle of needing to be approved by the people of this world.

Consensus. Confirmity. Confirmation. Validation.

14. A believer recognizes Jesus Christ is their only means of salvation.

15. A believer has a profound recognition of their need for salvation.

The curse of no-law preaching and teaching.

16. A believer finds confidence in the promise of Eternal life.

17. A believer finds confidence in God's commandments.

In the freedom that we are given in being saved by Christ, its response is that we are saved to obey.

Knowing God's commandments and obeying God's commandments are a demonstration of loving God's commandments and this is the chief proof of being a believer.

We are judged by Christ's words.

Jn 12:48 'the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day'

As we close out this 12th chapter and we close out our look at the Gospel of John of this year, we finish with Jesus' final public statement.

Jesus' final public statement is a judgement that gives proof of genuine belief. Saving Faith.

Small Groups/Kids

1. What are key traits that Jesus outlines of Believers?

2. How is God's work of salvation in the OT similar to Jesus' remarks here? Ref. Deut. 4:26-40, Is. 6, Is. 53
3. What distinctions are there between the approval of man and the approval of God?
4. What causes eyes to be dim and ears to be dull?
5. What is the purpose of hearing God's voice, what purpose does it serve? Deut. 4:36

John 12:37-50 | What is a Believer?

"This is the final public statement of Jesus. This takes place mid-week of the Passover and Jesus addressing two main points; faith and judgment. In Jesus' final public address, He outlines what it means to be a believer in a series of statements. This message makes a clear distinction of those who follow Christ and those who do not and that the commandment of God between the two is eternal life.'