

89. Seekers, scoffers, and the Savior

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Like many of you, I've seen and met many people who call themselves 'spiritual.' Their idea of being 'spiritual' has nothing to do with the biblical concept of spirituality, rather it is something they would make up as they go. It is their own hodgepodge religion to appease their spiritual hunger temporarily.

The worst part of this humanistic spiritual ignorance and confusion comes from the hard hearts of the people who do not care to know the truth of Jesus Christ. In other words, when it comes to the truth of God, people choose to be ignorant intentionally for the sake of their carnality, not because they have no way to learn the truth.

This morning we encounter Jesus who shows us not only the vulnerability of His 100% human nature, but He also displays the determination, purpose, and love for His Father in heaven as a 100% God. In the meanwhile, the people around Him, though they were clueless, could be divided into two groups: seekers and scoffers. It is still the same.

A. THE GENTILE SEEKERS

John 12:20-26 Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. 21 Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus. 23 But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. 24 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. 25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 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.

Following His entry to Jerusalem, our Lord Jesus cleansed the temple for the second time by throwing out the merchants and their belongings. Perhaps the Greek truth seekers heard what Jesus did in the temple and were encouraged by it, because the Jewish religious rulers were making the lives of the pilgrims just miserable with these over-charging merchants and their nit-picking rules and regulations.

I believe that these Greeks were not curious visitors or one-time investigators, rather they were God-fearing Gentile seekers who attended the Jewish Feasts to find the truth. We need to commend these Greek people for wanting to see Jesus, rather than wanting to seek miracles like the Jews. It is so much more important to know the Miracle Maker Jesus than miracles themselves even though they are wonderful. These Greeks came to Philip. Why? There can be many speculations regarding the reason. We don't know, but one thing we do know is that the name Philip is a Greek name.

Up to this time Jesus repeatedly said, "My time has not come." Now for the first time, Jesus declared, "*The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.*" Any first century Jews would remember the prophecy that was written in Daniel 7:13-14:

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. 14 Then to Him was given

dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.

They must have said, "My, my, my! It is finally here. He is the Messiah whom the prophet Daniel talked about. He is going to overthrow the Roman authority and conquer the whole world." But Jesus didn't mean that He would be glorified in the eyes of men. That already happened at the triumphal entry. The glorification that Jesus mentioned here was being glorified on the cross. Something the world could only see as disgraceful humiliation, Jesus saw as being glorified.

But when they heard what Jesus said in v24, I am sure that the crowd's hearts skipped several beats and their stomachs sank. That was NOT what they wanted to hear. He turned their dreams of conquest into a nightmare of a cross. A political and military revolution wouldn't have done anybody any good. Politics and military power do not keep anybody out of hell.

Because of our own sinful nature within us, we are bound to do wrong things no matter what. The majority of educators and psychologists of the world claim that people are good in nature. Contrary to their belief, we didn't have to be taught to do wrong, it is in our DNA. No matter what your opinion of yourself is, the Bible tells us plain and simple – we are sinners and we need Jesus Christ.

The only way to have a fruitful life in this world is to follow Jesus Christ in death, burial, and resurrection with an unselfish heart. In other words, Jesus is challenging us today to surrender our lives to Him. It is one thing for us to claim that we love God, it is a completely different thing to obey what He tells us to do in the Bible. Everyone in Christianity would love God, because He is absolutely lovable. But obeying His commands from the Bible goes against the grain of our sinful and selfish nature, thus we often disobey Him.

B. THE SAVIOR'S SOUL IS TROUBLED

John 12:27-28 "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."

We somehow think that going through what Jesus went through for us in His earthly ministry from His birth to the resurrection was a breeze to Him since He is God. If that is how we think, we are wrong, very wrong. Yes, He knew that He would overcome the death and rise from the dead; yes, He had the power to stop this journey to the cross anytime. But He chose to go through it, because He had something very important in His mind.

Jesus didn't die without feeling. He felt every single pain that there was and every bit of the curse of sin that it should have been for us. We realize that when we came to Jesus, all of our sins have been forgiven. Our Lord cancelled all the record of our transgressions and iniquities. But Jesus didn't have that luxury. He was not dying having His sins forgiven, rather He was bearing our sins upon Himself and He became totally guilty for us. He died as the vilest sinner of mankind that ever lived.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

There was no power in the universe that made Him go to the cross, nor was there any power in the universe that could stop Him from going to the cross other than His love for us so that He could glorify the Father in heaven.

Some may wonder, "How did the bloody cross and crucifixion of Christ give glory to the Father in heaven?" An excellent question. Think with me. The greatest manifestation of the attributes of God in the history of the universe took place on the cross:

- Was ever the love of God for His people more clear?
- Was ever the wrath of God against sin more clear than at the cross when He judged His own Son to death?
- Was ever the grace of God more clear than when He substituted Jesus for you and me?
- Was ever the mercy of God more clear than on the basis of Christ's death He forgave you and me?
- Was ever the wisdom of God more clear than in such a master plan as that the cunning and devious satan had no idea what was coming?

Every attribute of God funneled into one at the cross in one event – Jesus' death.

In response to Jesus' prayer, the Father instantly replied in an audible voice for the third time in 400 years since the last prophecy by Malachi, the Italian prophet. God the Father spoke to His Son and gave Him a double assurance: the Son's past life and ministry had glorified the Father, and the Son's future suffering and death would glorify the Father.

It is significant that the Father spoke to the Son three times: at the beginning of the Son's ministry right after He was baptized by John the Baptizer in the Jordan River, according to Matthew 3; as the Son began His journey to Jerusalem, on the Mount of Transfiguration according to Matthew 17; and now as the Son entered the last days before the cross. Our Lord always gives the word of assurance to those who willingly suffer for His sake.

C. THE JEWISH SCOFFERS

John 12:29-34 Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him." 30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." 33 This He said, signifying by what death He would die. 34 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?"

One group said, "It was a thunder," while the others said, "Angel spoke." This is nothing new because people never do really hear the voice of God. God is not silent; rather people are deaf spiritually. No, let me rephrase that: People don't want to hear the Lord, because they don't want to be convicted by God.

If you are a born-again Christian and you don't know how to hear or recognize the voice of God, I will tell you a secret at no extra charge. Read and meditate the Word of God daily; memorize the verses from the Bible instead of some silly country song or rap music lyrics. You will realize that how much you can hear from the Lord through the Bible.

A word of caution when you think that you hear from the Lord – He never, never contradicts His Word the Bible. If whatever you thought that He spoke goes against the Word of God in context, you promptly ignore what you thought you heard. It might have come from the spicy enchiladas you had last night.

In v33, apostle John inserts his editorial comment regarding the crucifixion of Jesus. The people around Him thought He was coming to offer them a material kingdom with great wealth, but He offered them a spiritual kingdom. And so they didn't want Him and that was the turning point of their "Hosanna" to "crucify Him."

Listen, Jesus couldn't give them a kingdom until they became citizens of a kingdom. They couldn't enter a kingdom until they had become righteous. They couldn't become righteous until somebody who was without sin paid for their sins. He couldn't pay for their sin until He died. So Jesus had to die to pay for their sin, to make them righteous so that they could have the right to enter the kingdom.

"The ruler of this world" in v31 is none other than satan. Satan was motivated by self-will; Jesus, by the will of the Father. Satan's power brought destruction and death; Jesus' power imparted renewal and life. Though satan is still active, his action is only the desperation of futility and his time is limited. I like what I heard about satan: "When satan reminds you of your ugly past before you came to know Jesus as your Savior and Lord, remind him of his future in hell."

The verb used for 'lifted up' in v32 is 'hypsoo' in Greek which has a deliberate double meaning. It means both a literal and physical elevation on a cross and exaltation in rank and honor.

We have seen this phrase in chapter 3 and 8 in John already. We also see this in Isaiah 52:

Isaiah 52:13 Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.

"All peoples" in v32 does not imply that everybody will ultimately be saved like the Universalism people would like to believe. Rather, it means that Christ draws men to Himself for their salvation indiscriminately, without regard to nationality, race, or status. He said this in the presence of the Greek Gentiles so that they could realize that Jesus could be their Savior as well.

These Jewish people had been taught only the passages from the Old Testament which speak of the triumph of the Messiah. They were virtually unaware of the verses that speak of His suffering, such as Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53.

This crowd who greeted Jesus as a political conqueror with such enthusiasm didn't want to consider His sacrificial death. It didn't fit in with their idea of what a Messiah should be. So they rejected and crucified Him.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) We can have Jesus as the example to follow, but if we actually don't do what He tells us to do, we are not going to have any of our spiritual growth in Him.

2) We, believers and unbelievers alike, should not think that God's truth will go away or lower its standard if we ignore it long enough. His truth is eternal and immovable.

3) Seek the Lord for the guidance of your life through His Word, the Bible. You will never regret doing it.