



SERMON TITLE: The Comfort of God's Judgment

DATE: May 24, 2020

SCRIPTURE: John 12:35-50

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"These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ" (John 20:31). This is how John concludes his own biography of Jesus. He wanted the young, the old, the sick, the well, the despairing, the hopeful, the skeptics, the faithful, and whoever reads his account of Jesus to believe and trust him more fully. But what did John want them to believe? He wanted them to believe that Jesus alone brought eternal life into the present, broken world. And for all who enter this eternal life with God right now, we—like John—are exiles. For all who enter a relationship with Jesus, we will very likely be marginalized and dismissed because we follow him. So, what does it mean to believe? And how do we mature in believing? What does it mean to remain faithful to God when the pressure is on? These are the things that John will help us explore by showing us the glory and beauty of Jesus.

The Big Idea of John 12:37-50 — *Anyone and everyone can receive eternal life by believing that Jesus was sent by the Father to save them from judgment.*

The passage breaks down into two parts:

- (1) John's commentary on Jesus' final invitation to Israel (12:37-43).

When Israel would not believe, judgment came, and they could not believe. This was true of Israel in Isaiah's day and in Jesus' day.

- (2) John's summary of Jesus' gracious invitation to us (12:44-50)

John's summary includes two warnings to those who reject Jesus.

- (1) If you do not believe in Jesus, you cannot know God (12:44-46). ...you remain in the dark.
- (2) If you do not believe in Jesus, you remain under judgment (12:47-50). ...you remain under a death sentence.

The Big Idea Restated: *When you believe that Jesus was sent by a loving God to save you from judgment you receive eternal life.* (cf John 3:16-19; 5:24).

This Gospel truth is both a call to unbelievers and a comfort to believers.

- (1) The Call to Unbelievers (cf John 3:16-19; 5:24; 6:47).

(2) The Comfort for Believers — If you have put your faith in Jesus, your judgment day is in the past. The world's judgment is in the future. Your future judgment is in the past. You have already heard the verdict of the Last Day—*Not guilty by reason of Jesus!*

Heidelberg Catechism, question #52 — *How does Christ's return to judge the living and the dead comfort you?*
Answer: *In all my distress and persecution, with uplifted head, I confidently await the very judge who has already offered himself to the judgment of God in my place and removed the whole curse from me.*

How does this Gospel comfort speak into what you are going through right now?

Discussion Starters — Begin by having someone read John 12:35-50.

- Have you ever had a conversation with someone who has said something like, "I believe that God is a God of love, not judgment?" —or— "I believe in Jesus, but not the God of the Old Testament." Tell that story and how you answered.
- Have you personally struggled with reconciling how a loving God can be a judging God? If so, share about that struggle and how you ended up.

- Ask: Who can explain in their words, this idea that when Israel “would not believe, judgment came, and they could not believe? How do we see this in verses 37-38 and 39-40?
- Look at John’s summary of the message that Jesus preached over the course of his three-year public ministry (vv44-50). Explain from text the statement—“If you do not believe in Jesus, you cannot know God.” Where do we see this in the text? (see vv44-46)
- Explain from the text the statement—“If you do not believe in Jesus, you remain under God’s judgment.” (see vv47-50).
- What is the “word” that Jesus talks about here that will be the judge on the Last Day?
- How does that “word” relate to the “commandment” that the Father gave to Jesus—the commandment which is eternal life?
- How does the fact that, if you’ve trusted in Christ for salvation, your future judgment is in the past, comfort you now in the present? Like right now, in the middle of the things you are dealing with week by week?