**THE MESSAGE NOBODY WANTED TO HEAR**

John 12:20-34

[Show slide with Jesus triumphal entry from last week]

We’re in John Ch 12. In last week’s lesson Jesus entered Jerusalem to the acclaim of the people. They shouted, “Hosanna!” “Save us now!” The crowd called Jesus “the King of Israel.” That’s a Messianic title right out of Psalm 118. It’s evident that many of the Jewish people believe that Jesus just might be their long-awaited Messiah. Throughout O.T. times from Abraham up until now there has been an expectancy on the part of the Jewish people of a Messiah, a promised Savior. V 11 tells us that “many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.” In v 19 the Pharisees surveying this scene say to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing [your strategy up to this point hasn’t worked]. Look, the world has gone after Him. [Jesus].”

[Question mark slide] GROUP EXERCISE. Discuss what is it about Jesus that makes the people flock to Him and to think that He’s their Messiah? Put yourself in their position. What has Jesus said or done up to this point, in the 3 ½ years of His ministry, to give the people hope that He’s the Messiah sent from God? LIST them and be prepared to share.

[keep question mark slide up and discuss group findings]

Ok, so on one hand we have all these things you’ve mentioned that point to Jesus as the Messiah, as the One who will save His people. And the people here in John Ch 12 appear to recognize that. BUT on the other hand Ch 1 of John’s Gospel says that “He [Jesus] came to His own [to the people of Israel], and His own people did not receive Him.” (Jn 1:11) And we know that by the end of this very same week, what we call Passion Week, that another large crowd of Jews, maybe many of the same people, will be yelling, “Crucify Him! Away with Him! Give us Barabbas!” And then Jesus will be delivered over to the Romans and be crucified. Two very different reactions to Jesus by the Jewish people in a matter of just a few days! Events are about to take place that will turn public opinion against Jesus. And these will give the Jewish leaders the opportunity they’ve been waiting for to kill Jesus.

[Show title slide]

In the passage we’re going to look at this morning beginning in v 20 we’re going to hear a message from Jesus that the people didn’t want to hear. And it will cause many of them to turn on Jesus. So let’s read…

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the feast [Passover] were some Greeks [Gentiles, non-Jews]. 21 So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee [one of Jesus’ 12 disciples], and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” 22 Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. **I** 23 And Jesus answered them [mixed audience – the Greeks, some Jews standing around and His disciples], “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.” **I** 27 “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name.” [when Jesus finishes praying something incredible happens…] Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” 29 The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” **I** 30 Jesus answered, “This voice has come for YOUR sake, not mine. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” 33 He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die [Jesus is speaking about His crucifixion where He will be lifted up on a Roman cross]. 34 So the crowd answered him, “We have heard from the Law [we’ve read our Bible] that the Christ [the Messiah] remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?”

So Jesus here talks about His own death. He explains how He must die. And just to let you know, the result is, v 36, “When Jesus had said these things, He departed and hid Himself from them. Though He had done so many signs before them (remember the list you shared earlier), they still did not believe in Him.”

So this message here that Jesus is teaching in v 23-32 turns the tide of public opinion against Him. This message is not one the people wanted to hear. It doesn’t fit their preconceived ideas about their Messiah.

[slide beginning with v 20] The passage begins, v 20, with a small group of Gentiles wanting to see Jesus. This confirms the statement made by the Pharisees in v 19 that “the world” is going after Jesus. So not just Jews, but Gentiles also are following Jesus. Jesus is NOT just a Jewish Messiah. He’s NOT Israel’s national Messiah. No, Jesus is the Messiah of the whole world. Here we have Gentile proselytes to Judaism who have come to Jerusalem for the Passover. The Temple provides a special court where Gentiles can go. SHOW layout. Jesus is probably in the court of Israel where these Gentile proselytes are not permitted to go. So they find one of Jesus’ disciples, Philip, and request to gain an audience with Jesus. Why does John include this detail in his gospel? I believe it’s here to show a contrast. While the Jewish leaders are plotting how to kill Jesus (John just told us that), Gentiles are beginning to desire His attention. Jesus’ message is a message of inclusion. “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.” (John 6:37) This is the very heart of the Gospel message – that “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Joel 2:32 which used in his message at Pentecost, Acts 2:21)

Just a comment here because people often read their O.T. wrong – God’s desire has always been that thru His covenant nation of Israel, thru His people, thru Abraham’s descendants “all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Gen 12:3) God revealed Himself in a mighty way to Israel throughout their history. They in turn were to be His witnesses to the world, to be a light to the nations. There are a lot of passages in the O.T. I could go to show God’s will for the Gentile nations to turn to Him (i.e., various messages of the prophets) but let me read to you a passage from 1 Kings. This is Solomon’s prayer to God dedicating the Temple: “Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name's sake (for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.” (1 Kings 8:41-43)

Solomon knew the heart of God. The problem was that the Jews had no desire to be the conduit of God’s blessing. They had no interest in going beyond themselves. The Lord God, Yahweh, was THEIR God. They viewed the coming Messiah as THEIR Messiah. They should have been reading Isaiah: “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. (Isa 60:1-3) “The time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory.” (Isa 66:18) God’s plan has always been to include the Gentiles, to include us, to save the entire world. This isn’t just a N.T. concept. It’s a theme that runs throughout the Bible.

So here in our passage we see Gentiles coming to Jesus. This is a precursor to the acceptance of the gospel by the Gentiles and the growth of the early Christian church that would be largely outside of Israel. Yes, some Jews believe, but it will be mostly Gentiles who embrace the gospel.

[slide beginning with v 23] The term Jesus uses, “Son of Man” in v 23 is a reference to Himself. This is Jesus’ favorite term for Himself and it comes from Daniel 7:13 where it is specifically used for the Messiah. Jesus relates to us! He is the Son of God, yes, but He is also the Son of Man. He says, “The hour has come…” Several times in the past (2:4, 7:30, 8:20) we’re told “His hour had not yet come.” But now His hour HAS come. For what? To be glorified. He goes on to explain what that means. In v 24 Jesus uses an analogy of a seed of grain to show the necessity for the outer shell to die first in order for the life inside to spring forth. His message isn’t lost on the people and it’s disturbing for many who hear it – “There cannot be a kingdom (what they were expecting from their Messiah) unless I die first.” This isn’t a new message. Jesus has taught this before to His disciples, though they didn’t fully understand it. “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” (Luke 9:22). “For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.” (Luke 17:24-25) “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.” (Luke 18:31-33)

The disciples have heard Jesus say this before but this is the first time He’s saying it publicly. And it isn’t a popular message by any means. Their Messiah must be killed? Huh? Well if that wasn’t enough, Jesus follows this up by telling them, v 25-26, “not only must I die, but if you’re going to follow Me, if you’re going to be honored by God, then you must abandon your own life, your sin, your personal ambitions, self-righteousness, and die to self.”

So who in here is ready to die to self? That’s certainly not the message this world embraces, is it? Advertising is geared toward gratifying and pleasing ourselves. It’s all about us! We deserve this! But what Jesus says in essence is, “if you’re going to follow Me and obtain eternal life you must be willing to give up your own life.” No wonder the crowds turned away from Jesus. They didn’t want to hear that! They still don’t. “Give us the peace on earth good will toward men stuff. We don’t want that.”

[slide beginning with v 27] But Jesus knows why He came. He came to die, to be the perfect sacrifice for sin. In v 27 He says, “For this purpose, I have come to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.” Some people will say that later when Jesus is praying in the Garden of Gethsemane that He’s struggling about going to the cross. But that’s NOT the case at all. He knows that it’s necessary in order to accomplish His mission of redemption. He’s going to lay down His life voluntarily, of His own accord (John 10:17-18). Hebrews 12:2 makes this incredible statement: “Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him (the joy of spiritual harvest) endured the cross (the physical pain and agony that He felt), despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” Mission accomplished. Jesus knows why He has come and He, the Good Shepherd, is ready and willing to lay down His life for His sheep in just a few more days.

Well, something incredible takes place right in the middle of Jesus’ message. There’s this voice from heaven (this has happened twice before, both times validating who Jesus is). This is the audible voice of God the Father. Right then and there God the Father answers God the Son. He assures Jesus, He confirms, validates that what Jesus is about to do (what He’s been teaching here in the Temple about going to the cross), DOES in fact glorify Him. Of course as expected the people standing around having heard this voice try to explain it away. It was a natural phenomenon, thunder. It was an angel.

(slide beginning with v 30) Jesus tells them that the message that came from this voice was for their benefit, not His. He already knows what He’s about to do will glorify God. Like I said before, Jesus knows why He came and He knows that His death on the cross will be a critical part of God’s perfect plan, that it’s within His sovereign will. And now this group of people standing around in the Temple know this as well. Or they should.

When Jesus spoke of His crucifixion previously in this passage He used an analogy. Jesus often spoke in parables. But now Jesus explicitly talks about His own death, His crucifixion, v 31-33. The cross will accomplish three things: (1) The world will be judged – “now is the judgment of this world.” Those that reject what Jesus death on the cross as full payment for their sins will be judged and receive their eternal punishment in hell. (2) Satan will be defeated – “the ruler of this world will be cast out.” Satan may bruise Jesus’ heel, may cause Him temporary physical pain and suffering. But what Jesus’ death on the cross will bruise Satan’s HEAD. It will destroy, defeat Satan. (3) Jesus will provide a way for all people to be saved, a way to God, the means to have eternal life – “when I am lifted up from the earth, [I] will draw all people to myself.”

Wow! So how did the crowd respond to this message from Jesus, a message complete with an audible validation from God the Father Himself? READ John 12:34. “Hold on a minute, Jesus! We know what the scriptures say. The Son of Man, the Messiah is to remain, to live forever.” They knew what the scriptures said. Daniel 7:18 talks about an everlasting kingdom. Isaiah 9:6 talks about the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. The whole Davidic Covenant talks about the Messiah’ throne will be established forever. So the people aren’t wrong. They’re correct in how they’ve been reading their Bibles. But the problem is that the people haven’t been reading their whole Bible. They’re focused on this eternal aspect of their Messiah. They fail to see another important aspect of the Messiah. They are ignoring the Isaiah 53 Suffering Servant passages. They are forgetting the Daniel 9:6 reference to their Messiah, the “anointed one” being “cut off” or killed. They refuse to recognize Zech 12:10 where the Messiah will be pierced and mourned over. People do this all the time with scripture. They tend to focus on the verses they like; the verses that make them feel good or reinforce their beliefs. But they ignore the verses that they don’t like or that they don’t understand or don’t fit their ideas. The result from doing this is a bad or weak theology. That’s why it’s important to read and study the whole Bible, even the hard passages.

Their last question “Who is this Son of Man?” is really the whole theme of John’s gospel isn’t it? Back in verse 13 they believed the answer to that question to be Jesus. Now, they’re not so sure. Now they’re confused. In fact v 36 tells us that now they do not believe in Him anymore.

Application. Let me ask you several questions. What do you think? Is Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Messiah, the Savior of the world? Is He your Savior? What about those requirements that He mentioned if you and I are going to follow Him and be honored by God? Are you willing to die to yourself? Are you willing to lose your life in order to gain eternal life? Tough questions.

As I was reading this passage I couldn’t help but think back to John the Baptist who had been imprisoned by Herod. He sent several of his disciples to Jesus (Matt 11:2-6) because he was having some doubts of his own about Jesus, a crisis of faith. They asked Jesus, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” What was Jesus’ response? “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up , and the poor have good news preached to them (Isa 29:18-19 and 35:5-6, 61:1).” There’s the proof that I’m the Messiah – what I do and what I say fulfills what the scriptures say the Messiah will do.” But then Jesus adds this statement, and it is appropriate for our lesson this morning – “Blessed is the one who is not offended by Me.” (Matt 11:6) Jesus’ message is the truth. But it’s going to offend many people. It’s going to turn a lot of people off because it’s not a socially popular message. But His message leads to eternal life. So how about you? Do you believe Jesus? Will you be willing to die to yourself and follow Him no matter the cost? Will you be faithful?

O Come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant – let’s sing.