

GOOD MORNING!

- **Thanksgiving History**
- **1621 Feast in America**
- **God sustained them in hard times**
- **1789, 1863, to the present**
- **Black Friday**
- *In the United States, Thanksgiving is historically a day to praise and thank God for our blessings and ask Him to heal the nation's wounds. It was also a national day of penitence to humbly repent for our sinfulness and selfishness.*
- **In the Bible, thanksgiving means devotion, sacrifice, praise, or an offering.**
Thanksgiving is to glorify God as an act of worship, giving thanks for all things as part of God's providence.
- **Thanksgiving is primarily about relationships: The true meaning of Thanksgiving focuses upon relationship. Thanksgiving is a relationship between God and man.**
Upon their arrival at New Plymouth, the Pilgrims composed The Mayflower Compact, which honored God. Thanksgiving begins with acknowledging God as faithful, earnestly giving Him thanks, in advance, for His abundant blessings.

- **We must remember what the holiday season is about. It's about the fact that the Son of God has been born into the humanity as our Savior. We must believe in Him intentionally and sincerely. The people of this world desperately need for us to live out loud for Him. As we begin to think about the Advent Season, we are going to look closely at what the Lord Jesus said about His own advent into this world—just as His earthly ministry was about to end.**

Quote:

God never turns away when we fail. Actually, He runs to us with grace, forgiveness and compassion beyond our comprehension. Amen!

Speaking of the grace of God, today's message is titled Jesus' Final Appeal ; The grace of our Lord and Savior is evident and clear in today's text. I begin with a question.

How can we not be moved by what Jesus had done for us?

TODAY'S TEXT IS John 12:44-50

PLEASE STAND AS WE SHOW HONOR TO OUR CREATOR FOR HIS PRECIOUS WORD.

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."

THIS IS THE WORD OF THE LORD!

Let's Pray.

This is the message based on our SHINE theme for this year, and it is titled JESUS' FINAL APPEAL.

As I continue to do each opportunity I am given to stand before you, please let me encourage you. Abide in Jesus. Abide in His Holy Word. Remain close to Him through prayer and petition. Dwell on Him, God's Word and listen. Be still and listen. Listening is not a strength for most of us, and when it comes to God, it is even more of a challenge. We live in a microwavable society. Patience is a challenge. I encourage you to seek the Holy Spirit's guidance and listen. The waiting may be a struggle. It may even be painful, but it is God's desire as pointed out by Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 8:25

But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Romans 12:12

Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

CONTEXT-

Here, in chapter 12, we find the last of Jesus' public teachings prior to His crucifixion. The chapters to come after Chapter 12 in the Book of John contain only private instructions that Christ gave in the hours before He was arrested. The Gospel of John is then followed by Jesus' arrest, sentencing, death, and resurrection.

In Chapter 11, Jesus has just resurrected Lazarus from death, after he was dead for four days. The response by local religious leaders to have Jesus killed was solidified.

In Chapter 12 Jesus is being treated to a celebratory dinner in Bethany where Mary anoints Jesus with an extremely expensive oil. This is essentially the same incident as described in the Gospel of Mark Chapter 14 and Matthew Chapter 26.

We know that Judas and a few others complain about the "waste" of the oil because of its value by societal standards. Essentially, the disciples are claiming it would be better to spend that money on the poor, instead of on Christ.

The raising of Lazarus generated much attention as we can imagine. Again, Jesus' critics responded to Jesus' miracle by plotting His death, they are even willing to murder Lazarus because his very existence threatens to them as many Jews are seeking to follow Jesus.

Part of the fear of the chief priests was that Jesus' popularity with the people might spark another rebellion against the Roman Empire which might cause the might of the Empire's military to fall on the Jewish people.

The day after the celebratory dinner, Jesus arrives into Jerusalem, and it is what we call today Palm Sunday. Jesus is cheered by a crowd that is shouting blessings as if he were a king. This occurs in fulfillment of prophecy. This also confirms the chief priests' fear that Jesus is becoming "too popular."(John 12:12-19)

Jesus is in Jerusalem for one of several festivals which moves many local Jewish men to come into the city as well as many Gentiles. Jesus explains once again that His impending death is part of God's plan and the fulfillment of His greater purpose. (John 12:20-26)

John's gospel goes on to explain how some people seem to be hardened and blinded to the truth. He gives several examples referencing the prophet Isaiah.

Finally, we read the last words of Jesus recorded in this chapter. They are not given any specific context.

John indicates that Jesus "cried out," using similar Greek words as Jesus' "calling out" to Lazarus in the tomb (John 11:43). This message today summarizes the idea that to reject Jesus Christ is to reject God.

Jesus' first coming was to live and die as a man, establishing the means by which mankind can be saved. Actual "judgment" for those who reject Him will come later, in the form of an eternal separation. As Jesus has pointed out before, His words and His will are identical to those of God the Father, and that is where the text begins today. This marks the end of

Jesus' public ministry, as included in the gospel of John.

Let's begin in our text in Chapter 12.

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.

Let's begin with the words of John. "Jesus cried out." This cannot be understated. It is clear from the emphasis and verb tense that this is an impassioned speech. Is it difficult to imagine the passion of Jesus' call. He knows that this is His last public speech, yet those in attendance do not. Jesus' is well aware of what is about to occur in the coming hours and days. His only speeches after this one will be to small groups in a close proximity. The weight of what Jesus is about to say can be detected because of how John portrays it. This cannot be overlooked. It is that important that those who can hear, hear.

In his impassioned declaration, He states that He was sent. We see also in verse 49 as He lets us know specifically that the one who sent Him was God the Father. Jesus came into this world in the most unique way. He was sent by God. No other person can boast of such an arrival. All others were born into this world, but as the first chapter of John's Gospel makes clear, Jesus existed eternally in Heaven before He was born upon this earth in

Bethlehem. He came into this world being sent by God the Father. In the Gospel of John Chapter 1 verses 1 and 14 that Jesus is the Word of God. Jesus is the Word and is speaking the Word of God. Jesus and God are one.

Jesus makes it clear that He was sent into this world as one who is united to the Father who sent Him. This was to demonstrate that those who believe in Him also believe in the Father. Jesus goes so far as to say that to see Him is to see the Father. The word that is here translated “see” means to *gaze upon in a contemplative and thoughtful way*. Basically, to gaze upon Jesus is to gaze upon the Father. To contemplate on Jesus is to do so upon God the Father.

Jesus declares that whoever believes in Him, believes not only in Jesus but also believes in God the Father who sent Jesus. Again, this is pointed out in verses 49 and 50. Those who see and hear Jesus are seeing and hearing God the Father. Jesus is acting as the representative of God the Father here. Essentially, the words Jesus is speaking are commanded to Him from God the Father. The words of Jesus are the words of God.

Application: When we read and meditate on the Word, do we see Jesus? Are you gazing on The Word who became flesh? Are you thoughtfully gazing on God the Father?

That is so powerful. As we read the Holy Word of God, we are not just reading a book. We are gazing and contemplating on Jesus Our Savior and by doing so, we are getting a close up look at God the Father. The Creator of the Universe and all life!

Let's gaze on other examples where Jesus said similar things about Himself.

John 5:22-24

For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,²³ that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

John 14: 8-11

⁸ Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

Matthew 17:5-8

⁵ He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified.⁷ But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear."⁸ And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

John 1: 18

⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

It is abundantly clear that those who claim to believe in God cannot know God without knowing Jesus. It is impossible to know the Father without knowing the Son. This brings to mind those that claim to believe in god (small "g") but not Jesus. The *only* way to have a relationship with God the Father is through His Son. To believe in Jesus the Son is to believe in God the Father. As Jesus stated in verse 45, to see Him is to see God the Father. All that can possibly be known about God the Father is only possible to be known through Jesus Christ the Son. For anyone to try to know God separately from Jesus does not understand. The two cannot be separated.

It is no wonder Jesus shouted this in verse 44. There is no other way to have a relationship with the Father but through Him. That's why Jesus came into this world—to serve as the Father's sent official spokesperson to us. God wants us to know Himself; and we can know and see Him only through Jesus..

v. 46 I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

This is foundation of our theme this year.

Matthew 5:14-16

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

John 1:4-5

⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

I make the analogy of the opera or a musical. Imagine attending the opera or a musical at a professional venue like the Mahaffey Theater or the Straz Center in Tampa. There the ushers will guide you to your seat as the show is about to begin because it is dark. Then after the show starts, there are only a few opportunities to be let in, and it is there and then that the ushers will guide you to your seat. That is because it is potentially treacherous to navigate without the guidance of the light. Well, Jesus is the light that shines for our feet. He is lighting our path. He is showing us the way so that we won't stumble or fall. He is the light that cannot be hidden. He guides us in the darkness of this fallen world.

Psalm 119:105

**Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.**

The world can be a treacherous place.

Follow the path God has set out for us. There are so many that are living in spiritual darkness apart from Jesus. Apart from Jesus, we can't know God the Father, and we can't know how to live in a way that pleases Him. Jesus was sent from the Father into this world so that we would no longer have to feel around blindly in the dark like at the theater. Jesus has demonstrated to us by His sinless life and perfect obedience to the Father's will that He is the light. Jesus clearly taught and continues to teach in His Word that He is the light of the world. We no longer have to "abide" in darkness. We can abide into the light.

John 8:12

¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Jesus Himself said that He is the light of the world and the light of life. Jesus is saying that only He is that light. There is no other, and we do not need to keep searching. Since we are talking about Thanksgiving this week, we should be extremely grateful that Jesus shouted at the end of His earthly ministry that *He* came as a light into this world! *He is crying out to all of humankind*. He is basically imploring all humanity to Look to Him, Jesus, the Son. The one who represents God the Father completely and is the light of the world. Calling us to walk in His light!

Application: What is the purpose behind your time in the Word? Is your time in the Word a means to be in the light for you? Is it your intention to be a light to others?

v. 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.

As we approach the Advent calendar we ought to look at this verse from the standpoint of Jesus' initial advent. This is what we celebrate on Christmas. However, the Bible explains to us that Jesus will come again into this world. It is then that Jesus will come to judge the world. This first time was not to judge the world, but to be the Savior of all humanity for those who would believe, have faith, trust Him and surrender to Him.

As the Son of God, Jesus did not need to be born as a fully human being in order to judge the world; however, He did need to be born in order to be our Savior. Jesus left heaven and all of its glory as the Father willed it to be in order to be conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary. He was born in Bethlehem as a baby as each of us have been. He was raised amid this dark and fallen world just as we have. One key difference is He grew up without committing any sin. Jesus walked the earth in perfect obedience to the Father's commandments. Lastly, He took all the wrath of God and guilt of human sin upon Himself as the perfect Lamb of God. He died on the horrible cross in our place. This was done out of His great love for us and the Father's great love for us. Such a great encouragement and reminder for each of us.

John 3:16-17

¹⁶ For God so loved the world,^[i] that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

As we investigate this text, we must never think that God the Father is only a wrath-filled God who is only after punishment for sin. We cannot be so narrow-minded to believe God is only interested in destroying sinners. While it is accurate to recognize that God does indeed punish sin. Make no mistake, He hates sin. However, God could not be a Holy God if He left sin unpunished.

Where our gratitude must come into frame is to know that God is also a merciful God. So much so, that He has placed all the wrath and punishment for our sins upon His own Son who is sinless and perfect. The fact that the Son of God was sent by God the Father into this world to pay the entire penalty for all of our sin past, present and future is proof that God Himself loves us and wants to save us from judgment in a manner that we cannot fully comprehend. I believe it is fair to say that. Again, it is not surprising when we see Jesus crying out in the beginning of our text. He is essentially shouting to the world! God loves you! He sent me! If you know me, you will know Him!

Sadly, the truth is that not every person will receive the Father's gracious gift of salvation. Not everyone will seek to walk in the light that Jesus provides. Not everyone will believe in God the Father by believing in Jesus, the Son. Despite the outcry of Jesus, many people ignored Him then, and many people will continue to ignore Jesus today.

Application: Jesus cried out to all who would listen, what will be your approach going forward knowing this message is a matter of eternal life and death?

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.

I want to be clear after these two (2) verses that this verse is abundantly clear. We will all be judged by what we do especially after we have been introduced to Jesus Himself. In verse 48, Jesus says that the one who rejects Him and does not receive His words will be judged. Jesus' words will judge people on the last day. He points out that this statement is from the Father. Those are the words of God, the Father who gave those words to Jesus to speak.

The Bible does warn us that judgment will come. The wrath of a holy God *will be* poured out. We must realize that as believers in Our Savior Jesus Christ that judgement will not be because people have sinned. Yes! No one is judged to be unfit for heaven because they were sinners in the sin itself. All mankind are sinners. Not one is sinless. Judgment will take place because Jesus came to earth and spoke the words that God the Father specifically gave Him to speak. Those that rejected the words of Jesus from His Father and

did not receive them will be judged on the last day by those very words. Remember in verse 44, Jesus cried out! He makes His Final Appeal to those around Him. He is giving them the words that the Father gave Him to speak. He is proclaiming that if they do not receive His words and reject them, that ultimately, that rejection of those words will be the charge and the judgement against them.

This is why He is crying out!! To save!! To move many to avoid judgement. Irony is in the judgment Jesus receives from those who persecute Him and sentence Him to death.

As Christians, we do not need to be fearful of judgment and condemnation because we are in Jesus.

Romans 8:1-2

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

We'll be judged but not condemned. We'll be judged as righteous and standing in the righteousness of Jesus.

Matthew 24: 35

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Jesus' statement is being validated to us because we still hear His words today. On the last day every word that Jesus ever spoke will stand as well as all the words the Holy Spirit gave to the prophets of the Old Testament up to the apostles of the New Testament era to speak as Jesus' spokesmen. All people will be judged for what they knew of what He said, and what they did or did not do with it. As it says in John 3:19-21;

John 3:19-21

¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

We see that Jesus points out to Jewish leaders who were rejecting Him that one critical reason He came into this world was to have every man and women make a decision.

John 5: 37-40

³⁷ And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, ³⁸ and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. ³⁹ You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

All people must either receive His words and believe on Him, or not receive His words and reject Him. And what they do with what He has said will determine their eternal destiny.

That is heavy, but true.

John 15:22

²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

Jesus told His disciples, there is no excuse any longer. Again, the light of the world cried out. As a believer, I am beyond thrilled that Jesus made His Final Appeal. I am among those who heard and believed!

Application: Will you take this message to heart? Will you be willing to pray for strength and opportunities to share the Gospel message going forward?

V. 50 And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.

Jesus came to declare that the command of God leads to life everlasting. For those of us who have heard, believed, and received His truth in His Word, everlasting life awaits.

Jesus fulfilled the mission God set out for Him perfectly including the words that the Father commanded Him to speak. Jesus was clear, bold and did not hide when He spoke that His words lead to eternal life.

John 6:37-40

³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

John 8:51

⁵¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.”

Jesus came to speak the words God the Father gave Him. He was instructed to do so to represent God, the Father. Jesus came to shine as a light in the dark world. He came to save and not to condemn or judge. He came to put all people in a position to make a decision knowing they will all be judge by the words He spoke. Jesus cried out to the crowd, and He did so in obedience to the Heavenly Father so that we might believe on Him and be saved.

Let's remember Jesus' Final Appeal as we look to the Advent Season. Let's receive these words personally. Let's be certain to listen and to hear His words, and to believe what He says about Himself, and faithfully share Him with others.

Quote: Jesus Christ knows the worst about you. Nonetheless, He is the one who loves you the most. - A.W. Tozer

May the Lord bless you all abundantly, above and beyond your imagination!