

## LISTEN TO THE VOICE OUT OF HEAVEN

### JOHN 12:17-30

**John 12:17-30** <sup>17</sup> So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify *about Him*. <sup>18</sup> For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign. <sup>19</sup> So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him." <sup>20</sup> Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; <sup>21</sup> these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and *began to* ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." <sup>22</sup> Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus. <sup>23</sup> And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> "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. <sup>25</sup> "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. <sup>26</sup> "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him. <sup>27</sup> "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. <sup>28</sup> "Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." <sup>29</sup> So the crowd *of people* who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him." <sup>30</sup> Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes.

So, in our previous study we saw Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, fulfilling the prophecy concerning himself.

**John 12:14-15** <sup>14</sup> Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, <sup>15</sup> "FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY'S COLT."

Where John says, as it is written, he is referencing the prophet Zechariah who wrote of the Messiah some five hundred years before Jesus Christ was born.

<sup>NAU</sup> **Zechariah 9:9** Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

It is in this context where those following Jesus were shouting, "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel." (**John 12:13**)

In this sense they were testifying about this King. And now as we come to our text today, they continue to declare that this King is doing mighty deeds through the power of God.

**John 12:17-18** <sup>17</sup> So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify *about Him*. <sup>18</sup> For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign.

The word testify in our text is a word that means to bear witness. And part of what they bore witness to was the miracle that Jesus performed by raising Lazarus from the dead. Some of these people were actual eye witnesses. And because of their enthusiasm over this miracle, their excitement spilled over to others who were now, for the first time, hearing of the resurrection of Lazarus.

Who wouldn't be excited about such an event? Well, we know of at least one group that was not.

**John 12:19** <sup>19</sup> So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him."

Word had gotten back to the leaders of Israel that this miracle worker was coming to town and that Jews from everywhere were flocking to get a glimpse of this King. The Pharisees felt threatened, not just from a religious standpoint, but also from a political standpoint, which is where their real power lies.

From the very beginning of Christ's ministry there was tension between Jesus and the Pharisees precisely because the "world", that is all of Judea, was responding to the coming of this one sent from God. We see this reflected in the voice of one (John the Baptist) crying in the wilderness who proclaimed this coming one.

**Matthew 3:5-9** <sup>5</sup> Then Jerusalem was going out to him [John the Baptist], and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; <sup>6</sup> and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins. <sup>7</sup> But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup> "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; <sup>9</sup> and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.

This was not a formula for winning friends and influencing people. But John spoke the truth to a group of people who were responsible before God to shepherd His people. But instead, they were leading the people astray and Jesus would continue John's rebuke of these leaders during the entire time of his ministry.

**Matthew 23:15** <sup>15</sup> "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

**Matthew 23:29-33** <sup>29</sup> "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, <sup>30</sup> and say, 'If we had been *living* in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in *shedding* the blood of the prophets.' <sup>31</sup> "So you testify

against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. <sup>32</sup> "Fill up, then, the measure of *the guilt* of your fathers. <sup>33</sup> "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?"

And so, there is no love-loss between the Pharisees and Jesus, and our text in John bears witness to this. This hatred of Jesus from the Pharisees will play out over the coming days. But as we come back to our text, we see that some of those who heard of the raising of Lazarus from the dead included a group of Greeks who are identified as those who came to worship at the feast.

This is another way of identifying Gentile converts to Judaism as the feast in question was the Jewish Passover, in which they came to participate. They are also referred to as Hellenistic Jews (Acts 6:1).

These particular people wanted an audience with Jesus according to our text.

**John 12:20-22** <sup>20</sup> Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; <sup>21</sup> these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and *began to* ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." <sup>22</sup> Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus.

Of course, the reason they came to Philip is because they must have known that he was one of Christ's 12 chosen disciples. Philip then confers with Andrew to see if this could be arranged. Keep in mind, Andrew and Philip were from the same area of Bethsaida and so were possibly long-time friends and confidantes.

And so, both Philip and Andrew approach Jesus to see if he would be willing to meet with these Greek proselytes. One would think that Jesus would answer their request with a yes or a no, but instead Jesus simply responds by identifying the work the Father called him to do and that this work is now in its final stage.

**John 12:23** <sup>23</sup> And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

Up to this point in the ministry of Christ we are told by the Lord that his time had not yet come.

**John 7:3-6** <sup>3</sup> Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. <sup>4</sup> "For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be *known* publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." <sup>5</sup> For not even His brothers were believing in Him. <sup>6</sup> So Jesus said to them, "My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune.

What is interesting about this portion of our text in John 12 is that our Lord's response seems to be dismissive of Philip and Andrew, and yet it is quite revealing that the very request of Gentiles seeking Jesus, seems to trigger the very thing that would illicit the response, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

Is there a connection? Keep in mind that Jesus had consistently taught that he came for the lost house of Israel.

**Matthew 10:5-7** <sup>5</sup> These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: "*Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans;* <sup>6</sup> but *rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* <sup>7</sup> *And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'*

When speaking to the Canaanite woman who sought healing for her daughter, we read this:

**Matthew 15:21-28** <sup>21</sup> Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup> And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and *began* to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed." <sup>23</sup> But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, "Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us." <sup>24</sup> But *He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* <sup>25</sup> But she came and *began* to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" <sup>26</sup> And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." <sup>27</sup> But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." <sup>28</sup> Then Jesus said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once.

It is true that Christ came for those associated with the house of Israel. But it is equally true that he came to fulfill the promise to Abraham, the father of Israel, that in his seed all the nations would be blessed. Of course, that seed turned out to be the very one who would redeem a people from every tribe, tongue and nation.

**Galatians 3:16** <sup>16</sup> Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as *referring* to many, but *rather* to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.

Christ is that seed and that seed came for both Jew and Gentile.

**Romans 4:14-16** <sup>14</sup> For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; <sup>15</sup> for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation. <sup>16</sup> For this reason *it is* by faith, in order that *it may be* in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

All the descendants of Abraham are "*those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is father of us all.*"

This is what Jesus meant when he addressed his sheep to include sheep who are not of the fold of the nation of Israel.

**John 10:14-16** <sup>14</sup> "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, <sup>15</sup> even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down

My life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock *with* one shepherd.

These "other sheep" would necessarily include those who are of the faith of Abraham, found in the Gentiles. Thus, both Jew and Gentile will share in the blessings of Abraham resulting in one flock with one shepherd.

<sup>NAU</sup> **Ephesians 2:13** But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,

And now, as Christ's ministry of reconciling a people to himself is about to come to fruition, he responds to the request of the Gentiles to see him, by stating that his hour has come. Does this mean that the request of these Hellenistic Jews resulted in a denial of access to Christ? The text doesn't answer the question directly.

But the inference of these Gentile seekers of Jesus, asking for a personal audience with our Lord, would seem to lend to the idea that those who seek him will find him.

**John 6:37** <sup>37</sup> "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

So, our text in John 12 doesn't tell us that Jesus did not meet with the Gentiles, only that this was an indication that the time for Christ saving a people for himself was now at hand. In this way, both Jew and Greek would come under the heading of Israel as Paul would point out to the Galatians.

**Galatians 6:15-16** <sup>15</sup> For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. <sup>16</sup> And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

So, back to our text.

**John 12:23** "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

At this point Jesus will define what it means for the Son of Man to be glorified as he continues:

**John 12:24** <sup>24</sup> "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.

What does Jesus mean by this? Jesus is addressing a harvest of wheat. In this scenario every farmer would fully understand that for their crop to begin to come alive they must first plant a seed that is dead. This is the message Paul shared with the Corinthians.

<sup>NAU</sup> **1 Corinthians 15:36** You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies;

Jesus is inferring that the grain of wheat is his body which must be placed into the ground as that which dies, but in the process of planting it then comes to life and bears much fruit. This is why Jesus is referred to as the first fruits of the dead.

**1 Corinthians 15:20-21** <sup>20</sup> But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. <sup>21</sup> For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead.

And so, when Jesus uses this parable of the grain of wheat, he is addressing his own death, but then gives the hope of the fruit of his death found in his resurrection. This is partly what it means for the Son of Man to be glorified.

In this way, after the seed is placed in the ground, it produces much fruit. That fruit includes you and me in Christ.

**1 Corinthians 15:22-23** <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,

So, what of this death and resurrection of Christ? What must be done in light of this truth as it relates to the child of God?

**John 12:25-26** <sup>25</sup> "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. <sup>26</sup> "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

Jesus distinguishes between those who embrace this eternal life found in the Messiah, and those who don't. He does this by differentiating between loving the world and its fruit and loving God above all. Loving the world, and one's life in the world, has only one reward and that is death.

<sup>NAU</sup> **Matthew 10:39** "He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

The phrase, "has found his life," in the context of Matthew 10:39, is a reference to the original seeking of one's life found outside of God. Remember, what the serpent told the woman.

**Genesis 3:2-6** <sup>2</sup> The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; <sup>3</sup> but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" <sup>4</sup> The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! <sup>5</sup> "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." <sup>6</sup> When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

The issue in this entire exchange between the woman and the serpent has to do with man's life given by God, and the parameters in which this life is to be lived, according to God's word.

The woman was seeking to find her life outside of God's will and word. In the pursuit of finding, what she realized was the loss of her life. The good news for Adam and the woman, post rebellion, is that God sought them out in both judgment and salvation. God would give them eyes to see, both their need for salvation and the solution to their sin found in the seed of the woman, Jesus Christ.

But with Christ's life now given to us through his death and resurrection our Lord expects us to follow him, which is what we see in our text.

**John 12:26** <sup>26</sup> "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

There's a lot going on here but let's begin with the imagery of sheep following the Shepherd that is inferred in this verse, that Jesus addressed earlier in this gospel.

**John 10:27-28** <sup>27</sup> "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; <sup>28</sup> and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

Jesus tells us here that one thing necessarily follows the next. In this case, Christ's sheep are able hear his voice precisely because they are first known by Christ. This verse is juxtaposed with the previous verses that identify those who are not his sheep and therefore are unable to hear the shepherd.

**John 10:24-26** <sup>24</sup> The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." <sup>25</sup> Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. <sup>26</sup> "But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep.

If we belong to Christ, who has chosen us before the foundations of the world, then we must also realize that we were chosen for a reason.

**Ephesians 1:4** <sup>4</sup> just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

To be holy and blameless before Christ carries with it the responsibility to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. The apostle Paul would further put this new life in Christ into perspective in such a way as to drive home the point that as the sheep of Christ we are not given the option to follow or not follow our shepherd.

**Ephesians 2:8-10** <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; <sup>9</sup> not as a result of works, so that no one may

boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Those works are defined in a broad sense by Christ's command to not only follow but to serve the Lord.

**John 12:26** <sup>26</sup> "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me.

In this way, Jesus is making it clear to his disciples in John's gospel that they have been set apart by the Father so as to follow the Son. But following doesn't mean we just tag along for the ride. It is following so as to serve God with the gifts God has given us in Christ to be used in the power of the Spirit.

**Romans 12:4-6** <sup>4</sup> For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. <sup>6</sup> Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*:

And then Paul goes on to list some of those gifts. But these gifts are given so that each person is used in the body of Christ to edify one another so that they may grow in relation to their salvation, who in turn follow the great Shepherd of their faith to His glory.

But it's important to remember, it was the Son of God who was sent by the Father to redeem a people for Himself. Only the sheep of Christ are capable of following their shepherd.

**John 6:44** <sup>44</sup> "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

But as Jesus soberly reflects on his mission at hand, as the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified, he is brought back to the present reality of how that mission is to be worked out.

**John 12:27** <sup>27</sup> "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.

Jesus knew that there was a purpose in all that he was doing in this earth as he was sent into this world by the Father to accomplish His will. And what was His will?

**John 6:37-39** <sup>37</sup> "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. <sup>38</sup> "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. <sup>39</sup> "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

Jesus Christ didn't come into this world to make salvation possible with the hope that someone might have enough faith to embrace the work that he did on the cross. In other words, Jesus doesn't make people savable. His mission from the

Father was to save effectually and completely. This is made clear when the angel appeared to Mary, who was to be the mother of Christ.

**Matthew 1:21** <sup>21</sup> "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

Jesus Christ came into this world to accomplish the Father's will to redeem those people given to Him. These are the same people Paul identifies as those chosen in Christ before the foundations of the world. (Eph.1:4)

As glorious as it was to accomplish the Father's will in saving His people from their sins, Jesus still became troubled in his soul, knowing full well that he was not only to die on a cross in a few days, but that he was to die as a substitute for the sins of his people, suffering the wrath of God in the process.

**2 Corinthians 5:21 - 6:1** <sup>21</sup> He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

This was Christ's mission of atonement that could only be accomplished through the shedding of His blood on the cross. This was foreshadowed through the Levitical sacrificial system God gave to Israel.

<sup>NAU</sup> **Leviticus 17:11** 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.'

And as we continue in our text in John, we see Jesus move from teaching his disciples about his mission, to immediately, in the same breath, approaching the Father in prayer so as to gain help in accomplishing this mission on His behalf. We see this in our English text with four words. <sup>28</sup> "Father, glorify Your name."  
**John 12:28**

Then we read: Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." **John 12:28**

It is as if the Father was in the room waiting for His Son to reach out to him, as the answer to our Lord's prayer is met immediately by the Father's comforting words. By the way, our Lord is that close to us and hears our prayers and supplications as well as our praise. It's not a long-distance call. And there's no static on the line.

**Matthew 6:7-8** <sup>7</sup> "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. <sup>8</sup> "So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

When hearing the Father's response, not only Jesus, but those in his presence knew that this audible voice was from above.

**John 12:29** <sup>29</sup> So the crowd *of people* who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him."

But Jesus knew why the Father allowed these people to hear His response to the prayer of the Son of Man.

**John 12:30** <sup>30</sup> Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes.

Everything that Jesus did was for the sake of others. He came into this world for the sake of the Father who gave Him a people to redeem. His atoning sacrifice was for others; all that the Father gave to Him. And now, his mission is acknowledged by the Father, for the sake of those who were there. This is similar to the way Jesus wanted the resurrection to be viewed in light of him raising Lazarus from the dead.

**John 11:39-45** <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been *dead* four days." <sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" <sup>41</sup> So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "*Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.* <sup>42</sup> *"I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me."* <sup>43</sup> When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." <sup>44</sup> The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." <sup>45</sup> Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him.

Our Lord Jesus continues to make intercession for our sakes. And we'll end here today with comforting words found on the other side of the cross, as our risen Savior rules and reigns in the presence of the Father on our behalf.

**Hebrews 7:25** <sup>25</sup> Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 8:34** Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died- more than that, who was raised- who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Hebrews 9:24** For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.