

John 12-27-36
Christ's finest hour!

Prayer for illumination:

Sermon introduction:

During World War II Adolf Hitler threatened to subjugate every nation in Europe. But standing in his way was British prime minister Winston Churchill.

Long before he became prime minister in 1940, Churchill started warning against the Nazi threat. Unfortunately, nearly everyone ignored him as a paranoid and raving old man.

Including Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain of Great Britain. Chamberlain refused to stand against Hitler as more and more of Europe fell to the Nazis. By mid-1940, most of Europe was under Germany's thumb. But then something happened that changed the course of history. The leadership of England fell to the sixty-five-year-old Winston Churchill. It would be his finest hour.

In his first speech after becoming prime minister, he said,

"We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many long months of struggle and of suffering. You ask, what is our policy? I can say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy. You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory—victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival."

Everyone *finally* recognized that Churchill was the ideal man to lead the British Empire to victory. He had waited 65 years for this moment. This would be Churchill's finest hour.

This brings us to John 12:27-36. Jesus' hour has finally come. He had been preparing for over 30 years for this hour. It was finally time to do the main thing that he came to do. It was finally time for him to die. His death on the cross was his finest hour!!! Listen to the words of verses 23, 27.

John 12:23 (ESV) — 23 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

John 12:27 (ESV) — 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.

What is Christ's hour? Christ's hour was his most important moment. Christ's hour was his death on the cross.

Chapter 12 represents a significant shift in John's gospel. His public ministry to the Jews is essentially over. From now on John will focus on Christ's march to the cross—his finest hour.

Why was the cross Christ's finest hour? To answer this question, I would like us to consider three subjects.

The anticipation of the cross

The achievement of the cross

The application of the cross

First, the anticipation of the cross

What was Christ anticipating on the cross? Severe trouble!

John 12:27 (ESV) — 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.

The word “troubled” is a strong word. It is often translated as stirred up, horrified, agitated, or revulsed. Why was Christ so troubled? Christ was anticipating the horrors of the cross, now more than ever.

This may surprise some of us since Socrates was stoic as he drank his hemlock. Furthermore, church history is replete with stories of saints who faced torture and death with calm repose. So why is Jesus so troubled as he anticipates the coming cross?

Was he troubled as he anticipated the physical torments of the cross?

A bruised, lacerated, and bloody back pressing against the stake.

The nails driven through his hands and his feet.

The agony of constantly pulling himself up to catch his breath.

Or maybe the thought of dying slowly of suffocation as flies buzzed around his face.

Most scholars don't think the physical pain was the primary cause of his troubles, although the physical pain of death by crucifixion was excruciating (the word excruciating comes from the word crux, which is Latin for cross).

Why was his soul so troubled?

Because in a few hours he would experience the punishment that was due to billions of sinners. He would experience the punishment reserved for the pedophile, the rapist, the murderer, the drunk, the adulterer, the child beater, the proud, the arrogant, the war lords, the dictators, and the thieves.

But that was not the worst of it. The worst of his troubles was knowing that on the cross he would be separated from God the father. On the cross he would cry out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt 27:46).

R. C. Sproul writes, “This cry represents the most agonizing protest ever uttered on this planet. It burst forth in a moment of unparalleled pain. It is the scream of the damned—for us.”

He was forsaken because he was covered in the guilt and shame of billions of sinners. The thought of this was severely troubling.

What was Christ anticipating on the cross? Severe Trouble!

As a result, he prayed.

Look with me at John 12:27-28...

I'm going to read them in the NIV. I think it captures the meaning of the original a little better.

John 12:27 (NIV84) — 27 “Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.

Was Christ trying to back out of the cross? No! He was expressing his humanity. Then he quickly reminded himself of why he came to earth.

John 12:27–30 (NIV84) — 27 “Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. **28** Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

When we experience trials, we often pray for God to remove the trial. That is not what Jesus did. He prays for God to be glorified through his trial. Wow!!! Is this how we pray during trials? God answers his prayer. The father and the son were glorified in the death of Christ.

What was Christ anticipating? Severe Trouble!

Application:

How many of you are anticipating trouble?

When we do, we must remember that Jesus Christ was fully human. This is a great mystery (one of many).

Since he is fully human than he can sympathize with us when we face severe trials. He knows what it is like to experience intense anguish. He can help. As a result, we must cry to him in prayer. He knows our pain and he can help.

He is not a God who stands aloof when we suffer. He came to earth to suffer with us.

Furthermore, he is *the* model for dealing with severe trials. When he anticipates trials, he looks to his father in prayer. And he specifically asks God to be glorified through his trial.

What trials are you anticipating or what trials are you currently facing?

Financial trials?

Maybe you lost your job?

A difficult relationship?

A scary diagnosis?

Political uncertainty?

A difficult boss or child?

Crippling depression?

Look to Christ.

Don't ever forget this fact. Since Christ endured extreme anguish for you on the cross, you can know that he loves you. If he loves you, he will do everything necessary to help you glorify his father amid troubling times.

Not only did Christ anticipate the pain of the cross. But he also anticipated the achievement of the cross, which brings us to the next point.

First, the anticipation of the cross!

Second, the achievement of the cross.

What did the cross achieve? Several things. Let me mention a few from this text. What does the cross achieve?

The cross achieved victory!

John 12:31–33 (ESV) — 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.

In light of verse 33, the ruler of this world (Satan) will be cast out through the cross work of Christ. What does this mean?

A few NT texts shed light on Christ’s victory over Satan at the cross. |

Colossians 2:14–15 (ESV) — 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. **15** He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Hebrews 2:14–15 (ESV) — 14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, **15** and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

1 John 3:8 (ESV) — 8 Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

What do we make of these verses describing Christ’s victory over Satan at the cross? Especially when it seems like Satan is alive, and well, and very active.

Here is what we know from these texts.

When Christ died on the cross in our place, he destroyed Satan’s ability to accuse us.

Explain...

If Satan can’t accuse us, he can’t do much to us....

Furthermore, when Christ died on the cross in our place, he dealt Satan a mortal blow.

How? Think of the cross as a giant spear. That giant spear was plunged into Satan’s chest when Jesus died and rose from the grave. In other words, the cross dealt Satan a mortal blow. He will not recover. He knows his doom is sure. He is dying and there is satanic blood spurting everywhere. Because he is dying, he thrashes his tail around violently, wreaking havoc on the world.

When Christ returns, he will vanquish Satan once and for all, never to return.

Revelation 20:10 (ESV) — 10 and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

The cross of Christ is the basis or the grounds for his final triumph over Satan at the end of the age.

One scholar writes,

“Satan’s defeat has already been secured, and the clock is ticking on his ultimate demise. His present flurry of fury is actually a sign that he knows his time is short (Rev. 12:12).” (GTSB)

In the meantime, Satan has no power over the saints.

Illustration:

The date was June 6th, 1944. After crossing the choppy English Channel under overcast skies the first wave of infantry jumped out of their boats and waded to the French shore on a fifty-mile front. They ran up on the beaches of Normandy and opened fire on the German’s. Thousands of men died that die.

As a result of the victory on D-Day the allied forces won many other significant battles all across Europe making this a decisive day in WWII. Although this was one of the main turning points in the war, the war was not yet over but the final outcome became more and more clear.

The Germans finally signed an unconditional surrender to the allied forces on May 8th. The free world celebrated this day as VE day (Victory in Europe day). After five years, eight months, and 7 days the European phase of WWII was over.

What is the point? VE day was a result of the decisive battle won on D-Day, but there was still some mopping up to do. Little skirmishes erupted in Europe between these two days, people lost their lives, but the victory was in the hands of Allied forces and soon would be consummated on VE-Day.

Our victory was won by Christ on D-day (Calvary) and we live in between D-day and V-E day. VE day will happen when he returns. And he will return.

Application:

Because the cross achieved a mighty victory...

We don’t have to fear the devil!

Which is meaningful when you have witnessed exorcisms and spiritual warfare firsthand. He can’t do anything to the saints unless God allows it. John Piper famously says, “God uses Satan to sanctify the saints.” Explain....

Furthermore, we don’t have to fear his accusations!

In addition, we can pray for deliverance from the devil, for the saints, in Jesus name with confidence!

Finally, we know that someday, Satan will be totally vanquished!

The cross achieved victory! But that is not all...

The cross achieved salvation (for all types of people)!

John 12:31–33 (ESV) — 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.

I want to focus on verse 32. Jesus says, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

As we have already seen in John's gospel, the phrase "lifted up" is a reference to Christ being "lifted up" on the cross (John 3:14; 8:28). When he is "lifted up" on the cross, hanging there, bloody and bruised, absorbing the wrath of God, for all to see, he will draw all people to himself.

"All people" means all types of people. Which means that he will draw not just the Jews, but the Greeks, male, female, young, old, rich, and poor, Asian, African, Moroccan, and Germans, white trash, and yuppies, red necks, and politicians. He died for all types of people, which is a constant theme in John's gospel (John 4:42; 10:16; 11:51; etc....).

According to Charles Spurgeon, Jesus Christ is the great magnet. His bloody death at calvary will efficaciously draw/pull billions of sinners to himself.

Illustration:

Many years ago, two prominent scholars made contrary claims.

One was the president of Harvard University, the other was a graduate of Yale University and the president of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles—his name was R. A. Torrey.

President R. A. Torrey, said, "Preach any Christ but a crucified Christ, and you will not draw men for long."

The other president, Charles Eliot, said that it was okay for ancient man to believe in a divine, atoning Christ, but modern man had outgrown that idea.

He then pronounced,

"Let no man fear that reverence and love for Jesus will diminish as time goes on. The pathos and heroism of his life and death will be vastly heightened when he is relieved of all supernatural attributes and power."

In other words, "when he is relieved of all his deity."

With the rise of modernism, it looked very much as if Charles Eliot was right. Many people in the 30-40s abandoned the divine crucified Messiah for a man-made version.

But today Torrey's words ring true many years later.

Today, all around us the mainline churches, with their sub-divine, none sin bearing Jesus, are dying. Most are already in the grave. They are selling buildings and consolidating debt as fast as possible. Why a none sin-bearing Jesus, who does not absorb the father's wrath does not draw anyone.

On the other hand, according to time Keller's superb book "The meaning of God" evangelical Christianity—with its cross bearing, sin absorbing, wrath propitiating savior—is currently the fastest growing religion in the world.

Cite this from Keller...

Why? The Christ who hung on a cross for sinners promises to draw all men to himself. He will build his church. And he will not bless compromise. When the gospel is watered down, it loses its drawing power.

Application:

What does this mean for us?

We must proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in all its guilt destroying wrath absorbing detail. And when we do, some will be angry, but others will be drawn to Christ. In other words, we must expect persecution, but we must also expect success. God said he would draw all types of people to himself.

He only draws with the true gospel, so we must preach the true gospel.

Furthermore, the Greek word for “draw” (elko) is used for dragging of a heavy object. Jesus taught this truth in negative form earlier in John’s Gospel when he said, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:44).

This means that God has the power to draw anyone to himself. This gives us confidence to preach the cross and let God do his efficacious drawing work.

Yes, God can draw anyone he wants, but he only draws with one type of message. The message of a bloody cross.

What is our job? We must confidentially proclaim the gospel of the bloody and bruised Christ and pray for God’s spirit to draw.

Who is that one person that God has placed in your life that needs to hear the message of the cross? No one is beyond God’s drawing power. No one!

Unfortunately, some in our passage were not being drawn. Which brings us to the last point.

First, the agony of the cross

Second, the achievement of the cross

Third, the application of the cross.

Who is the cross applied to? Those who believe!

John 12:34 (ESV) — 34 So the crowd answered him, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?”

The people have some inkling here that Jesus is predicting his death on the cross. But they mistakenly believe that the OT (i.e., the law) teaches that the Messiah or son of man will never die. They have not read the OT carefully enough.

Lets keep reading...

John 12:35–36 (ESV) — 35 So Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. **36** While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.

Verse 36 is the key...

Jesus says, “While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.”

Who receives all the blessings of Jesus finest hour?

Who benefits from his death and resurrection?

Who is saved from the power of the devil?

Only those who believe in the light. Of course, the light is Jesus Christ himself. He is the light of the world.

Application:

Do you believe in the light?

That is all one must do.

We simply believe, and we are rescued from Satan's vice grip.

We don't have to earn the benefits of Christ death (explain), we simply believe and receive. What a scandal!

If all we have to do is believe, then why not keep on sinning. That is not how grace works (explain the chemistry of grace).

Jesus ends this passage by pleading with the Jews to believe.

He is pleading with you to believe.

He invites you to come out of the darkness of sin and death and to come into his glorious gospel light.

Conclusion:

The cross was Christ's finest hour.

Why? His cross destroyed the work of Satan, secured salvation for all types of people, now draws sinners to himself, all while glorifying his heavenly father.

The cross was Christ's finest hour, and the cross secures your finest hour—receiving a glorified, forgiven, adopted, shameless resurrection body in the new creation.

How will you respond to Christ's finest hour?

Lets pray....