

## Sermon- The First Sent One

Scripture: John 12:44-50

Sunday, May 26, 2019

Today we are in the last section of John chapter 12. This chapter began with Mary, Lazarus' sister anointing Jesus' feet, then Jesus making his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, then the Greeks coming to Jesus indicating to him that this ministry with the Jews was coming to a close and it was time to turn his eyes to the cross. But at this point in John even though Jesus is now Calvary oriented, there is some significant teaching interwoven into the Holy Week narrative here. Last Sunday we looked at the general problem of unbelief itself and the problem of a hardened heart.

In today's section Jesus reappears in person. And this time he is once again addressing a big crowd. We know it is a big crowd because our section begins with the words, "Jesus shouted to the crowds". We know Jesus here is not shouting because he is angry. He is shouting so as to be heard in a big group of people before things like loudspeakers could do the shouting for you. And what is he trying to share with the crowd? Well, he is describing the task he came to do specifically as the world's first missionary. This is what we are going to unpack today.

There are three main issues related to Jesus' identity and calling as a missionary in this section and they are arranged in an interesting way. Let me explain. Verse 44 and 45 focus on Jesus' relation to His Father. Verse 44 says, "if you trust me you are trusting the Father". Verse 45 says, "if you see me you see the Father". So essentially Jesus is saying, there is a oneness between him and his Father. He saying, they look alike and because they are one what you do to one you do to another. Kind of like when you want to convey something to a couple, you might talk to one person and that has the effect of communicating to both right? Now in our imperfect world, it may not always work as planned but you get the picture. So when Jesus presents himself to the crowd he talks

about his oneness with the Father. That oneness means that whatever characteristics you see in Jesus you can also see in the Father. Also whatever you do to one, it is like you are acting on both. When you trust the son, you are also trusting the Father.

In spite of the oneness however what Jesus says next tells you that His Father is a unique and separate person. In verse 44 Jesus declares that He was sent by his Father. Now remember someone who is doing the sending is higher in authority than the one who was sent right? So how can Jesus say he and his Father are look a likes of each other in verse 44? Well, if you look at all descriptions of Jesus talking about is Father you will notice two things. On the one hand you will see an equality between Jesus and His heavenly Father. On the other hand you will see that there is a very clear hierarchy. The Father is the Head of the Son. This is the dynamic that Christian marriage is trying to emulate. When the couple gets it right, it is a beautiful thing to watch. When they don't get it, it is like watching the secular world power struggles play out in close proximity. And it is not a beautiful thing Anyway that was just a bonus marriage tuning tip for you. Let's get back to the Trinity.

Now this relationship between the Father and Son is picked up again in verse 49 and 50. There it says, the Son gets his authority from the Father. In fact Jesus says, everything he says and even how he says it comes from His Heavenly Father. This fact that Jesus has been sent by the Father and everything that he does and says is from the Father is obviously a very important fact because you will see Jesus repeat this in multiple places even in John. Looking back at John 5:19 Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the **Father** doing. Whatever the **Father** does, the **Son** also does.

Now the significance of Jesus attributing every thought and action and his very authority to the Father is something that I believe is particularly difficult for the Western individualistic mindset. Because here in the West, we like to think of ourselves as

independent, self-sufficient individuals. We glorify what we consider “self-made” people. As if people can make themselves! In this culture we place so much of value on what we think individuals have achieved on their own. People take pride in their self-sufficiency. And in a world that focuses on self-sufficiency, self-promotion is also something that has become acceptable. But human self-centeredness is not a uniquely Western phenomenon. This was true to an extent even in Biblical Israel which was a much more community centric culture than what we have here. That is why Jesus says in John 5:43, *For I have come to you in my **Father's** name, and you have rejected me. Yet if others come in their own name, you gladly welcome them.* You see when people lift-up their own authority and function independent of God then they are quick to accept other people who project authority whose source is themselves. Even though Jesus had a lot of personal authority, he never let the focus be on his personal authority. Jesus wanted people to recognize not his own personal authority but the authority he had of the one who sent Him. Jesus is demonstrating another important principle for us. Jesus is showing the world how to use power. You see tell the world where your power comes from, you are also telling the world whom you are accountable to. In our world the best metaphor for this is an ambassador of a different country. You see in any nation, a foreign diplomat is a very powerful person. Because he is in that country representing the head of the nation he or she comes from. In fact because of that foreign diplomats are immune to the laws of the land. That is why they have special license plates on the cars they drive. They cannot be pulled up by the local cops. But they are accountable to the laws of the nation they come from. If they don't conduct themselves according to the highest standards, they become an embarrassment to the sending country and they are recalled. Now remember, if you are a Christ follower, that is what you are. The ambassador of the Kingdom of God in a foreign country. Your authority comes from the King of the Kingdom of God. But that is where your accountability comes from as well. It is this idea that is picked up again in verse 49 and 50. In verse 49 Jesus says, “*I don't*

*“speak on my own authority. The Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and how to say it.”* The amazing thing about Jesus’ revelation of Himself here is that in one stroke he reveals both the source of his power and his accountability. Remember this people, the first thing the first missionary tells the crowd is, on whose behalf he stands before them.

Before we move on I want to address another aspect here. This issue of Jesus’ “sent identity” is found in the beginning and end of our passage for today, first in verses 44, 45 and then in verses 49, 50. In case you are wondering why this topic is broken up like this, I want to point out that in Hebrew writing and especially Hebrew poetic forms, the ideas are placed in what is called as a chiasmic structure. So an idea is introduced and then another related idea is introduced and then the first idea is reintroduced forming an sandwich. Now it is important to recognize “idea sandwiches” in the Bible because those who study literary structures in the Bible tell us that the center idea in the sandwich is the focal thought. When we ask for a “chicken sandwich” we are describing what we expect to find in the center of the sandwich right? So when you see an “idea sandwich” in the Bible, look for what is in the center, because the thought is what the author is trying to highlight for you.

So what do we have in the center of our sandwich today? Well we have two aspects of Jesus’ mission from his Father. The first idea is what he will do. In verse 46 he says *“I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark.”* Jesus is saying, his mission is to bring illumination to the minds of those who trust in Jesus. You see illumination is a very big deal. Why? Because Satan is the master of confusion. Satan rules the world by lies and deception. And if you cannot recognize the deception you will fall for it. But those who put their trust in Jesus will be given the gift of an illuminated mind. And an illuminated mind cannot be deceived easily. In our country the gun lobby deceives people by making them fearful of guess what, other people’s guns! So they make everybody buy guns. The more guns in

circulation, the more shooting incidences. The more shooting incidences, more the fear and more guns are bought. The gun lobby is not trying to solve the problem of gun violence. They are trying to sell more guns by deceiving people. But if you put your trust in Jesus Christ, your mind will be illuminated and you cannot be influenced by lies, fear and deception. Jesus said, he has come to be a light in this dark world so that those who put their trust in Him will no longer remain in darkness.

But there is another ingredient in the center of the sandwich. This second ingredient is what Jesus says he will not do as a missionary. Jesus says <sup>47</sup>*I will not judge those who hear me but don't obey me, for I have come to save the world and not to judge it.*

This is an amazing and intriguing verse because earlier in the Gospel of John in verse 5 and verse 22 we have this *"In addition, the **Father** judges no one. Instead, he has given the Son absolute authority to judge,"* So we have this strange situation. The Father has the authority to judge. But instead of using his authority, he passes the authority to judge the world to the Son. Now the Son has the "absolute authority" to judge. But remember the Son also says he does what he sees his father doing. So in imitating his Father then he also decides not to judge. Then the problem is, we know that there is something called judgment day where everyone will be judged. So if the Father is not doing the judging and Son is also not doing the judging then who is going to do the judging on Judgment Day, right?

This is what Jesus says in verse 48 *But all who reject me and my message will be judged on the day of judgment by the truth I have spoken.* What does that mean? You see what Jesus is saying is that a person is finally judged by the Truth that cannot be distorted on Judgement Day. You see when the tape of each person's life is played before God, Jesus' Words will also be heard. When a person's life is seen against Jesus words, all the lies and deception of a lifetime will be exposed on its own. On that day no one will be able to bluff there way. Jesus is saying, on Judgment day, a person will be judged just by an

objective standard. And in that way, it is not either the Father or the Son who will be doing the judging. The individual will judge themselves and they will not be able to bluff the standard of truth. Kind of like if you want to see if a stick is bent, you simply place it against a perfectly straight rod and the stick will reveal its own bentness. On that Day you don't need a person who declare the tick bent. The Words that Jesus has spoken will also reveal the bentness of the world.

What Jesus was sent on earth to do was something quite different. He was not sent to judge people but to move people to put their trust in him so that when that day of judgment comes, Jesus himself will give them cover because the individual has already confessed to their own crookedness and put their trust in Jesus to transform their crookedness. Jesus is saying, you don't need a person to judge whether the stick is bent. But you do need Christ to take a bent stick and transform it and straighten it out. Jesus, the first missionary said, I have come not to judge the world but to save it.

So this is the message of the first missionary or sent one to the world. Remember, Jesus wants us to pay attention to him because of one reason and one reason alone. That he was sent by him heavenly Father. Because of that, Jesus operates with the power of the heavenly Father, and according to the instructions of his Heavenly Father down to the last details including the content and even style of his message to the world. And Jesus' message to the world is this. He came to save the world and not judge it. So if you put your trust in him, he will save you from condemnation at Judgment Day. He will also illuminate your mind so that when you live in this world you will not be fooled by Satan's schemes. In fact you will be able to illuminate not just your own mind but the mind of others around you by becoming a light as well.

What does this mean for us today? What it means for us is this. Four things.

Firstly, make sure you have really put your **trust** in Jesus Christ. This is the starting point. But it is also the thing that we have reflect on, on a daily basis. Are we trusting Jesus

Christ every day and in every challenge? If we do our part Jesus Christ will do his part and give us an illuminated mind and an eternally saved soul.

Secondly, remember, we have to imitate Jesus just as Jesus imitates his Father. So just as Jesus was sent by his Father so also we are not just saved people, we are **sent** people. And what do sent people do? We go and tell people the words we hear from Jesus and communicate those words in a style that Jesus wants us to communicate in.

Thirdly, when we are in the midst of the people we are sent to, and we can see that they are messed up at many levels we have to be careful **not to judge** people. Not judging people means, not condemning people in our hearts no matter how justified we think it is. If both the heavenly Father and the Son have the absolute authority to judge and refrain from doing it, then who are we to judge anyone. What we should do however as we imitate Christ is to communicate truth and let the truth speak for itself.

Finally, remember as sent people, your sending only has value when you are aware and tell people know who sent you, and where your authority and accountability comes from. If you are sent, make sure you present your credentials to the people you are sent to because remember you are not going on your own authority.

Put your trust in Jesus friends and then go as “sent people” into the darkness of this world. Let us pray.