

Sent to Save

HN/SS 15/1/06am

Reading: Ezekiel 33:1-22, John 12:27f

Study Text: John 12:44-50

Sing Psalms: 98:1-4, 36:5-9, 119:105-110, 98:5-9

There is a town in the Snowy Mountains called Adaminaby. Do you know what is special about this town? It was down in the valley by the river. One day engineers started to build a big dam a long way further down the river. The people of the town could not see what was happening. But as the dam wall was built higher and higher their homes were in danger of being flooded. Normally the melting snows flowed down the river but now the river was dammed so the water was trapped behind the dam wall. One day soon or maybe in the middle of the night, swirling flood waters would suddenly surround their home. The people were in great danger of being drowned.

The people of that town were not all drowned. Do you know why? Yes, the engineer sent a man to tell them he was building a dam in the river and that their town would soon be flooded. He showed them a road going up the hill to a site where new houses had been built for them. He sent trucks and buses to transport them and their possessions up the hill to homes that would be safe from the rising waters of the dam.

But what if someone had ignored the message saying 'I cannot see any dam; I don't see any water coming up. Everything is going on as it always has in this town as far as I can see'. They would have drowned – and who would have been to blame?

The passage before us is the final public address given by Jesus in this gospel. He *cried out* wanting all around to hear his words, words that he had been given to speak by his Father. Jesus does not really introduce any new teaching in this passage. He is exhorting the people once again, even in this final hour to believe in him, to believe he is the Christ, the Son of God and that he has come to save them from sin and death.

The Light of the World

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it we read in the first chapter of this gospel. John presents Jesus as the light of the world. The world is in darkness because of sin. In the darkness men do not know where they are going. Those who walk in darkness walk in danger, danger from the world, the flesh and the devil. Sooner or later the way of the world leads to destruction. For some it is sooner as they engage in violence, or afflict their bodies with drugs or alcohol. Some love the darkness because their deeds are evil (3:19). 'Let us eat, drink and be merry' they say 'for tomorrow we die'. Well, die they do and then find themselves in eternal agony in hell.

Others realise they are in the darkness and try to find the light. They look to science or to religion in such an effort. Some try the way of the law just like these Jews that Jesus was addressing. They think that by doing their best to keep the law and living good lives they will find the light. But Jesus did not say 'do your best to find the light'. He did not say 'the light is

whatever you personally find it to be'! He said 'I am the light of the world'. He said *whoever believes in me should not abide/remain in darkness* (12:46).

Sent by the Father

Jesus is not just another prophet or wise teacher suddenly appearing in the world as some think. They start comparing Jesus to great teachers and leaders among men. They concede that his teaching in the 'sermon on the mount' is profound, and if we all heeded this the world would be a better place. Indeed his teaching is profound but Jesus did not simply say 'follow my teaching and live'. He said 'believe in me, believe that the Father sent me and you will live'. *He who believes in me believes not (only) in me but in him who sent me* (12:44).

The sun in the sky exists even when we cannot see it. But it shines into the darkness at the dawn of each new day. The Son of God has eternally existed but came into this world 'in the fullness of time'. He was sent by the Father to redeem human beings from sin and death. He came to save the world (12:47).

Those who want to set Jesus against his Father by contrasting the love of Jesus in the New Testament with the angry God of the Old Testament will find no support for their claim in this passage. Those who claim that Jesus is subordinate to the Father will find no support for their claim in this passage. As Jesus said previously *I and my Father are one* (10:30).

Jesus, the Word, was with God in the beginning. God the Father sent Him into the world to speak **His** words and do **His** works. Those who believe in Jesus believe in the Father also (12:44). You cannot believe in one without the other as the Jews were trying to do and as some try today. Jehovah's witnesses are far from being His witnesses because they do not believe in God the Son.

Jesus speaks of his Father as a person here and throughout this gospel so clearly they are two persons. But at the same time we see a profound unity, the same essence in God the Son and God the Father. Jesus speaks and acts in complete unity with the Father and in the full authority of the Father.

In this passage Jesus adds a new aspect with regard to his unity with the Father – he says *he who sees me sees him who sent me* (12:41). What did he mean by this? He said the same thing to Philip – *he who has seen me has seen the Father, so how can you say 'show us the Father'?* (14:9). Maybe this was not the first time this question was asked. What did these Jews think God was like? They knew that no one had ever seen God (1:18) and that anyone who did see God would surely die. Yet the Lord appeared to Abraham (Genesis 18:33) and in other theophanies.

When men make their own gods we find all manner of created things turned into gods – animals, snakes, birds and the like. Some picture God in some malformed or super human form. There seems to be no end of such creatures that can be created in this age of cinema and animation. Many picture a grey haired old man – maybe with wings – somewhere in the heavens. Such ideas do not come from the Bible and are abominable.

God is Spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth (4:25). Remember – God is Spirit. So *no man has seen or can see God* (II Timothy 6:16). Yet Jesus is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15), he is the brightness of the Father's glory, the express

image of his person (Hebrews 1:3). Jesus is the Word become flesh revealing the glory of God.

No man has seen God the Father but in Jesus they see his Son who is the exact representation of his being. Seeing Jesus they are effectively seeing the Father so wonderful and profound is the unity within the Godhead.

Jesus was not of course giving the go ahead to make images of Himself for use in worship. That would be in violation of the second commandment. Jesus was saying that those who truly see him will also see and know God the Father.

Self Condemnation

I did not come to judge the world but to save the world (12:47). Jesus came to save, not to judge. If these words bring comfort to unbelievers then it is a false and dangerous comfort. There is no universalism here. Jesus is not saying that every individual in the world will be saved. He is not saying that there will be no judgment. What then is he saying? Jesus said *the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day* (12:48). What did he mean?

Firstly let us remember that the kingdom of God is not like the kingdom of men. In the kingdom of men a man is innocent until proven guilty. It is not so in the kingdom of God. Before God all people are guilty because we are born in sin – we are condemned already (3:18). The wrath of God **remains** on him who does not believe the Son (3:36). All people are guilty and under sentence of death unless and until they believe in Jesus because Jesus is the one who came to *save the world* of sinful people.

Secondly remember that judgment precedes sentencing. When the verdict of guilty is declared it may be some time before the sentence is given. So it is that the word of Jesus, Jesus call to believe in him, is the test by which a person is declared innocent or guilty. Those who reject his call are declared guilty by their own failure to believe in the one who can save them. Sentencing will come and it will be unavoidable. It will come at the last day, the Day of Judgment.

Thirdly Jesus will come again and at his second coming he will judge. *He will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom* (II Timothy 4:1). Jesus told his disciples he will come again (14:3). He will sit on his throne judging the nations. This will be the time of sentencing To those who rejected his word while they were in this world he will say *depart from me you cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels* (Matthew 25:41).

Dear friends, the light is still shining but not for much longer. Now is the day of salvation. The gospel must be proclaimed to all nations. The last day is fast approaching. Are you living and walking in this glorious light of Jesus Christ. Do you believe in him, believe that he has given you eternal life? Are you praying for others and warning them, those who ignore this life giving word? *His command is everlasting life!*

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