

“Anguish”

John 12:27-36

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. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” ²⁹ The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” ³⁰ Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine. 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. 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?” 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.” (ESV)

I’m going to tell you a secret here. I know it’s going to come as a huge surprise to many of you, but I’m not always the easiest person to live with. Seriously. Especially between the hours of 6:00 and 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Why would those hours be so crucial to me? The answer is that over the past year or so I’ve become a news junkie. I record all my shows during the day and come home at 5:30 p.m. or so. We have dinner and then from 6:00 to 7:00 I just want it quiet. I just want to watch my news. I’m so caught up in all the things that are going on around us. A typical two or three minute session would look like this: “Dad?” “Fssst!” “Hey, Dad?” “Pupp!” “Dad?” “Zip it!” “Tommy?” “Ohhhhh, yes, Honey!” You can only zip it for so long! I’m so caught up because of watching all the things that are coming down in our country and especially the economic stuff. Whether you are for TARP I, TARP II, or whether you think it’s wrong, every person seems to be concerned about the amount of debt that our country is taking on. The other thing that’s interesting is to watch people rant about bailouts. The mortgage bailout—they might take money from “responsible people” and give it to people who are irresponsible—and people rant that someone would have to pay for someone else’s irresponsibility, especially with regard to mortgages. I was watching that last week and all of a sudden the thought came to me. “You know, it could be worse.” It could be worse than your being responsible for having to pay for someone else’s mortgage, someone else’s irresponsibility. What could be worse than that? Well, you could have to pay for all of their failings. Not just their financial failings, but all of their moral failings and all of their emotional failings, and every other imaginable thing that someone has done, and not just for the United States, but every person in the whole world. Imagine if you had to take on the failings and the debt of every single human being in the whole world. Would that not worry you? You’d be stuck with the news. If you understand or grapple with that, you can begin to understand what we’re talking about in today’s text.

Jesus opens up by saying, “My soul is troubled.” We’ve been talking about the life of Jesus. He comes onto the scene, begins His ministry, offends basically the religious people plot to kill Him. Last week we looked at the passage before this where the Jewish leadership had rejected Jesus, the Greeks had sought Him and Jesus took that as a sign and said, “Now my hour has come.”

This morning we’re going to see how that made Him feel, believe it or not. We’re going to look at three things. The first thing is the anguish of Jesus. The second thing is the crises of the cross. And the third thing is the promise of the Gospel. As we consider the anguish of Jesus, let’s look at the text again.

²⁷ “Now is my soul troubled. . . (ESV)

It’s helpful to understand that at least in the Gospel of John this was Jesus’ last public teaching. He talked a lot to His disciples after this, but this was His last word to the crowd. One of His last words to the crowd was, “My soul is troubled.” For you to read that in English, it’s sort of an understatement. In fact, it’s a tremendous understatement because the Greek word there is the word, “terasso.” You can’t blame the translators since it’s a hard word to translate because it means so many things and it covers a range of emotions. What terasso really means is something like “horror,” “anxiety,” “anguish,” “agony,” “to be frightened,” “to be fearful.” It’s hard to capture all those words in one word. Jesus said, “My soul is troubled.” But the difference is this. If your soul is just “troubled” in English, that means you’re a little bit worried. “Heh, it’s troubling.” If your soul is terasso that means you are shaking in your boots. That means you are incredibly fearful. That means that basically your whole life is one big anxiety attack. You are in bad shape. Jesus says, “My soul is terasso.” Why?

What is it that would make Jesus so fearful? I mean, He's Jesus; He's God! What would make Him so terrified and so horrified that He would even say that publicly, "My soul is troubled." The answer is this. He had said earlier that "My hour has come." Jesus knew what that meant. When Jesus said, "The hour has come," He knew what that meant. And what that meant at the hands of men was just this: It meant crucifixion. It meant death. Any sane person, generally speaking, is afraid to die. "At the hands of men" meant to be arrested on trumped-up charges, to be betrayed, to be beaten, to be spat upon, to be mocked, to have your back flayed opened by a whip and a cat-of-nine-tails, and then to be stripped naked publicly, put onto a wooden cross and have your hands and feet nailed there. Would that trouble you? It better. Then they would pick up the cross and they would drop into a hole in the ground with a thud and then what you had to look forward to was a long, slow agonizing death by suffocation. Would that worry you if you knew that was coming? It would me. But get this—that was the easy part. That was the easy part because at the hands of men He looked to undergo crucifixion. At the hand of God He looked forward to bearing wrath. At God's hand, Jesus looked forward to drinking the full cup of God's wrath and God's judgment and God's anger and God's justice toward sinners. More than that, it was God's utter and complete punishment of sin upon Him. And it was bigger.

Remember when Jesus was on the cross and he was undergoing the wrath of God and bearing all of this justice and He cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" I've heard it taught a number of times, "In that moment is when God turned His back upon Jesus." I don't believe that. It just doesn't make sense. Think about your own kids, think about your own family. What scares your kids more? What makes them more upset? Imagine you're having a conflict. I'll be honest, I've lost my temper with my kids. It's much more frightening to them when I turn toward them with all of my anger than when I just say, "You know, we'll talk about it later." You see, the relationship between God the Father and God the Son was broken, but it wasn't because God turned away, it was because God turned upon. God turned upon His Son with all of His anger and with all of His venom, His justice, anything He could throw, He poured out onto Jesus. And Jesus knew that was coming. That's why Jesus was troubled.

So you're troubled, you know you're getting ready to withstand crucifixion and the wrath of God, what do you do? You pray. That's what Jesus did. Let's look at what he said.

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. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name." . . . (ESV)

This text is actually one of the kinds of texts that people write dissertations about. The question is what He actually says, "And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'?" But in Greek there's no punctuation so no one knows for sure if that's a question or if he's just being rhetorical or if he's actually praying. "What shall I say" and then does He skip? I tend to think He's praying because it would be consistent with what we see in the garden of Gethsemane, "Father, save me from this hour." What you see there among other things is that Jesus is human, but what's even more interesting is to see the response of God in that nanosecond between sentences. Jesus prays, "Father, save Me from this hour? No, rather for this purpose I have come."

Remember in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus was having such anxiety that in the Gospel of Luke it says He sweat drops of blood. And as He's sweating drops of blood, He cries out to His Father and says, "Father, if there's any way this cup can pass from Me, let it be so." He prays that three times. "Father, if there's any way to take this cup away . . ." Do you know what God's response to Jesus is to that prayer, to that request, to is beloved son? [sound of crickets chirping] In other words, God didn't respond. God didn't say anything. When Jesus prayed there were only the sounds of the night. There was nothing. God did not answer Him. So what does Jesus do? He says, "Not my will but your will be done." What should I pray? Whether it's a question or whether it's a statement it works the same way. Ultimately Jesus decides that He's going to submit to the will of the Father. "No, rather but for this reason I have come. Father, glorify Your name." Upon Jesus' submission to the will of the Father, that leads us directly into the next point, the "crises of the cross." Notice what happens next.

²⁸ Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." ²⁹ The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." ³⁰ Jesus answered, "This

voice has come for your sake, not mine. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. (ESV)

Jesus is the only one I can imagine getting an immediate, vocal answer from God. “Father, glorify your name.” He hears immediately, “I have glorified it and will glorify it again.” He glorified it in the life of Jesus Who lived a perfect life, and in the death and resurrection of Jesus. What’s interesting here is the crowd’s response. Some people say it sounded like thunder. Some others said it sounded like the voice of an angel. But apparently no one understood what was actually said, except maybe the apostles (because John wrote this down).

Jesus knows God will glorify Him. I think the best way to read that is just that after the fact, the disciples could look back on all the events and say, “You know what? God promised that He was going to glorify Jesus, and look at that. He’s done it.” Jesus just keeps going to speak of the urgency of what’s actually happening in this hour. What’s the urgency that’s happening in this hour? It’s the crises of the cross. Look at verse 31.

³¹ Now is the judgment of this world . . . (ESV)

That word “judgment” in Greek is the word “crisis.” Now is the crisis of the world. Now is the judgment of the world. What does He mean by that? It means two things. One part of it means something that is incredibly bad news. The other side of it is incredibly good news. Let’s do the bad news first (I always like to leave on a high note). What’s the bad news? “Now is the judgment of this world.” Up to this point Jesus had been saying over and over, “I didn’t come to judge the world. I came to save the world. I came to heal.” But right now, when He’s facing the cross, He says, “Now is the judgment of the world.” What is the judgment of the world? It’s a few things. The first thing in the judgment of the world is that it’s guilty. For the people that were there that would crucify Jesus, they were guilty. They were trying to accuse Jesus of being guilty, of being a blasphemer or being guilty of being a charlatan, or whatever it was. In the process of them accusing Him, they actually showed themselves to be guilty. They showed themselves to be guilty of His crucifixion and crucifying the Son of God. For us it’s the same thing and it’s even a little bigger because the judgment that the cross renders to you and to me is this: you’re guilty. When you look at the cross, what you see is two things. On one hand you see all of your sin. The cross exists because you are sinful and broken and can’t help yourself, but you’re even guilty of another thing. You and I are actually guilty of the crucifixion itself. The crucifixion of Jesus is on our back. Why? Because were it not for our sins, He wouldn’t have had to go to the cross. So not only are we guilty of your sins but we’re actually guilty of Jesus’ crucifixion. In Acts when Peter preached his sermon he said, “You crucified the Lord of glory. You did it.” That’s bad news. So the judgment that the cross gives is that you and I are guilty of not only sin but you and I are actually guilty of crucifying the Son of God. Bad news.

Here’s the good news. It’s that the crucifixion of the Son of God is the very thing that enables God to forgive us of those same sins, that washes away all of our sins. In other words, the very thing what would condemn us is the thing that would free us. The cross and all of its glory is it shows you your sin and renders a judgment. “Tommy Allen is guilty.” In the same breath it renders another judgment that’s bigger and better. It says, “Tommy Allen is innocent.” And Tommy Allen is innocent not because of anything he did, not because of any good works he did, but he is innocent because Jesus willingly went to the cross to bear his sins. That’s the judgment of this world. So you can either take the negative judgment or you can take the positive judgment. The choice is yours.

The next thing that Jesus says is, “That’s not all.” He says, “Now will the ruler of this world be cast out.” So the cross means not only forgiveness of sins but the cross means the defeat of evil, particularly the defeat of the evil one. You have to realize when Jesus was being crucified and in the whole ministry of Jesus that people were trying to take Him down. You have to think the devil and all of his minions were having a party, that they had finally won by killing Jesus. Yet the killing of Jesus would be their final undoing. It’s the classic scene if you ever watched the movie, “The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe” or read the book (hopefully you read the book first). Remember when Edmund sins? He eats the Turkish delight and the white witch demands justice for that. Aslan says, “You will have your payment.” And Aslan is the one who shows up to her stone table of judgment. They mock him and cut off his whiskers and shave his mane, and the white witch kills him. Then she is horrified when she goes back to find that Aslan has raised from the dead and the stone table is cracked. In other words, she can’t bring judgment on anyone anymore because the thing that she brought judgment upon is gone. At the

cross that's exactly what happens. Judgment is wrought. Satan has no more claim against you and he has not more claim against the world, and in fact he is cast down. The crisis of the cross not only delivers us but it also crushes evil and that leads to the last thing: the promise of the Gospel. What is the promise of the Gospel? Jesus says,

³² *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.* (ESV)

The second part of this text, by the way, I'll be talking about tonight, but for now this is what I'll close with. Notice that Jesus says, "And I, when I." He's being emphatic here. In other words, "I'm the only one who can do it." He says, "When I am lifted up I will draw all people to Myself." Verse 33 tells us what He meant by that "lifting up." It says He would point out what kind of death He was going to die. But the word "lifting up" there is actually an interesting word because the word in Greek can mean one of two things that are almost complete opposites. On one hand it can mean "lifting up" as in lifting up to hang someone from the neck, to crucify them, to kill them. You can lift someone up that way. The other thing it can mean is to lift up as in "highly exalt." Remember, Jesus has been talking about His cross being glorious, not humiliating. That's where you see the glory of God. Jesus says, "When I am lifted up I will draw all people to Myself." The next thing I want you to notice is what He doesn't say. He doesn't say, "When I am lifted up everyone will come to Me." He doesn't say, "When I am lifted up everyone is just going to stream into me." He doesn't say that, at least not here. What Jesus says is, "When I am lifted up I will draw all people to Myself." If you read the Gospel of John, John makes it clear over and over again that the only way you have a relationship with Jesus is not that you necessarily were so wise and so smart and figured it out and thought it was the right thing to do, but rather because God drew you in, that God pulls you in, God opens your eyes. Jesus says, "I will draw all people unto Myself." When He says, "I will draw all people unto myself" does He mean all people without exception? He can't mean that because the whole context of this is judgment and the whole context of it is putting your faith in Jesus to forgive your sins. So, what does He mean when He says, "I will draw all people"? It's not all people without exception, but rather probably all people without distinction. The whole context is that the Jewish leadership has rejected Him and now the Gentiles are seeking Him. When Jesus says, "I will draw all people," what He's talking about is, "I'll draw all people from every tongue, tribe, and nation." It's not every person without exception but, "I will draw all people who I want and with whom I wish to have a relationship from all different types of people." How do you know then? If Jesus has to draw you, how do you know if He's drawing you? How do you know if He's pulling you in? The answer lies in the movie "Kung Fu Panda."

I watched "Kung Fu Panda" the other night with the girls. I imagine sometimes they don't like me to pause and say, "That's it! Stop it right there!" The movie is about a big fat kung fu panda. If you've not seen it, I would recommend it to you. This panda is sort of an obese, sloppy loser and he gets tagged to be the dragon warrior. He's going to save this town in China from the villain Tie Lung. He trains and it's really funny to watch, but the real key to defeating the villain, and the key to the secret of the universe is in the dragon scroll. There is a scroll and it's high and lifted up and whoever obtains the dragon scroll and whoever can open and read it will see what they need to defeat evil and for them to have a happy and prosperous life. Po, the panda, at one point gets the dragon scroll. He opens it up and there's nothing there. Actually, there is something there. There's a mirror. As he opens the dragon scroll, he's horrified, he's shocked. On the other hand he says, "That's me! I'm the Dragon Warrior." So he sees how unworthy he is and realizes how worthy he is. Then when the villain finally comes along and the villain takes the dragon scroll away from him, the villain opens it up and Po says, "What do you see?" The villain says, "I don't see anything. I don't see the point."

What's that have to do with Jesus drawing you in? Here's how you know if Jesus is drawing you in. When you look at the cross like Po looked at the Dragon Scroll, at the same time you feel incredible guilty, but at the same time you feel incredibly joyful. At the one and same time you realize that He is there because of me on one hand and on the other hand you feel incredibly happy and relieved because you've realized that now you are completely and utterly forgiven. When you look at the cross, you see that Jesus is drawing you in. I beg you—do not resist Him. Come, trust in Jesus. If you look at the cross and say, "I don't really see anything: Jewish guy, out of work carpenter, got on the wrong side of the law—no big deal," I beg you to keep looking. Keep looking until you see what I see. Think about that.