

Crossings Community Church
Matt Powell
Series: John: The Way to Joy
January 24, 2016

John 12:27-36

It's so good to be here with you guys this morning. I was thinking back, and I know there are various personality types in here. I could almost point at some of you who I know better than others in the room and probably peg you on this journey.

Some of you, immediately when you finished up high school, you knew exactly what the rest of your life was going to look like. I mean, you had the plan. Whether that included the college and the degree and the major and so forth, you knew. Others of you, if it didn't include college, you knew the track you were going to go down and what all that was going to look like.

Others of you who may have been a little bit more like me, you *wanted* to know, and maybe you even *thought* you knew, but you ended up on some winding, crazy path. I remember feeling the pressure of, "Okay, high school is over." I felt like, "Okay, so I have to not only figure out what school I'm going to, what college I'm going to, but I also have to pick a major. That major is going to set me on track for what the rest of my life is going to look like."

I remember feeling that pressure. Then I remember getting to college, and all that pressure went away. Everything just sort of relaxed a little bit, and I enjoyed being in college for a little while. Then you get to the end of that, and it all came back again. It's like, "I'm about to graduate college. Life is going to change. I need to be completely and fully responsible. I have to figure out what I'm going to do, what this job thing, career, all that looks like."

There's a moment wherever it came for you where reality really begins to hit in a shocking kind of manner. It's not just a slow fade, but there's a point somewhere... Maybe you've forgotten if it was a really long time ago. I still remember just feeling a moment of shock when I realized, "This is all about to end, and I have to get some stuff figured out."

My path was all kinds of crazy meandering as I was trying to figure out. I thought I knew this, and I thought this was what God wanted and all of that before I really felt like I found that niche. But there was that moment of shock when, "Okay, this is all becoming real, and everything is about to change."

I think as we read the Gospels, we see Jesus in a lot of different lights, a lot of different perspectives. See, we know that as we read about Jesus, Jesus was fully God. The whole time he was walking through the ministry we're reading about in the gospel of John, he is fully God. At the same time, he is fully man.

If you sit down and you think about that too long, it just becomes more and more baffling. But there are moments in his ministry where it's like one is highlighted a little bit. It's like this tiny

snapshot where it's like, "He *is* fully human." You see it in a revealing kind of way, and I think that's the moment we begin with in our Scripture today.

It's a very human moment, and it's a moment where everything that has happened in his ministry in his life has come to a moment where he is looking ahead, and he is looking back. There's this reality that's setting in of all that's about to take place and how huge it is. I want to invite you to read with me in John, chapter 12. We'll pick up where we left off last week. That is, beginning in verse 27. We'll read these next nine verses here. This is John, chapter 12, beginning in verse 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. Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven: 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him.'

Jesus answered, 'This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.'"

We're not going to spend a lot of time on this section, but I want to give you a little bit of a footnote, because you read, and you study, and you wrestle with, "Is Jesus going to draw all people when we know all people, everyone, do not become followers of Jesus? What is he saying here?" I just want to remind you of the context of where we are. Right?

Remember there are Greeks and Jews who are gathered listening to him. If you remember last Sunday, we saw these Greeks had come, and they had found Philip. "Hey, we want to go see Jesus." He is speaking to this mixed group of ethnicities, and he was known as the King of the Jews.

The word *people* actually isn't there in the original language. It's *all*. I think what Jesus is saying is, "This isn't just about the Jews, but it's the Greeks too. It's you guys who are listening" (those who were gathered before him). It's all peoples of all nations, not meaning every individual but all kinds, all types. This wasn't only for the Jews. Verse 33:

"He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. So the crowd answered him, 'We have heard from the Law that the Christ [the Messiah] remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?'"

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. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.' When Jesus said these things, he departed and hid himself from them."

You can see there's so much there in these words. I want to remind you, because this has everything to do with this. This is the same moment, this is the same conversation, we were looking at last week. I want to take you up and remind you what's going on here. Back in verse

23 (which really began this monologue of Jesus answering, whether it was a spoken or a question he just knew), he says, ***"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."***

That's what began his monologue to these individuals. I think what's going on here... ***"The hour has come..."*** Obviously Jesus is saying, "Now is a vitally important, a crucial, time." When we get down there to where we picked up in verse 27 and he says, ***"Now is my soul troubled,"*** I think what it is is it's a highlighting of the humanity of Jesus.

It's a moment we have in the Gospels that can remind us. I think those are so helpful for us that we can see Jesus was fully God, but he was also fully man. In this moment, he is saying, "My soul is troubled. My soul is troubled because of all that's happened, all that's about to happen." He is looking at the next six days, which will include the cross and the death, the punishment, all of the ridicule, the mocking. It is the Passion Week.

He says, "My soul is troubled." Then he says, ***"And what shall I say?"*** In other words, "So what am I going to do? I feel this. I feel the magnitude of it. So how am I going to respond? Do I say, ***'Father, save me from this hour?'***" Then he says, "No." ***"But for this purpose..."*** We ask, "What purpose?" He tells us. The next words are, ***"But for this purpose I have come... Father, glorify your name."***

If we were able to kind of get into the mind of Christ here for a moment, what he is really asking is, "Do I cry out for deliverance? Do I ask that amidst all of the difficulty, amidst everything that's going on, as I look ahead at the days that are approaching...? They're now real. This isn't just some 'somewhere out there' any longer. This is *now*. The hour has come. Do I cry out and say, 'Deliver me. Take it away?'"

His answer to that is, "No. I've done all of this, I'm doing all of this, for a purpose. All of this that I've already done and I've already walked through..." All *he* knew what was coming. He knew the pain, and he knew the suffering, and he knew the mocking that was about to take place. "All of this, I am journeying through for the glory of the Father. I don't say, 'Deliver me, and take me out of it.' I walk through it. I journey ahead in it for the glory of the Father."

I think I've picked on this song before because I... Maybe it's a soapbox. Contrary to one of the very popular Christian songs that are out there and have been played, I think Jesus at the cross did not think of me above all. He did not think of you above all. It says right here above all he thought of the glory of the Father. That's what drove him. It wasn't you, and it wasn't me.

See, we need to understand that, because it changes the way we think about salvation history because we're part of it. We're part of the glory of the Father. We fit into that, and I think as we continue wrestling with this this morning, we'll see that. Above all, the purpose that drove him through all of that was pursuing the glory of God. That's huge for us to see and for us to wrestle with.

Jesus came from the highest of highs (the right hand of the Father) to the lowest of lows, which is what we've read about all through John's gospel. He died the worst death imaginable (death on

a cross). He became a servant. All of that, above all, for the glory of God. Why is this helpful for us?

You see, some of us in here... We sit in two different camps (all of us). Some of us in here are going through the worst circumstances imaginable. You're going through a season of life that is so difficult, and you can... Whatever category that fits in, whether it's financial, it's health, it's marital, it's parental... Whatever it is, you're going through one of the worst circumstances you've ever gone through in your life.

We read this, and we see it. We say, first, what we're going through isn't even comparable to all Jesus went through in his suffering and his pain and his death on the cross. If he (because the Father called him to go through and walk through this) can go through it... In his human moment here, he can say, "My soul is troubled, but I am going to go through this for the glory of God."

He will receive glory in this that you and I then look at these circumstances we're in, and we see a God who calls us to journey through it. We say, "Yes, for his glory. Yes. Yes, I'm going to continue walking ahead on this path for God's glory." Others of you in here are like, "I'm not there right now," but you're going through just the daily battles of living life in our culture. I mean, we can all give examples of what that looks like, of just making it and doing this life well.

The daily struggles, the daily sin battles, we're engaged in... There are so many times where I even find myself at a point of frustration where I'm like, "What am I doing?" I just get so sick of dealing with the same struggle. I can think back to this moment and see how incomparable it is to all Jesus is about to go through and think, "I am not going to just throw my hands in the air and give up or throw my hands in the air and say, 'This all isn't worth it.'"

Rather, I'm going to push ahead, and I'm going to journey into it, because it's the life God called me to. It's the life he saved me into and all of it for his glory. It's perspective changing. It's worldview changing to begin to view and understand our lives in that way. You continue reading (verse 28). You see this heavenly response to Jesus' trouble. ***"Then a voice came from heaven: 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.'"***

If we just stop there and we see Jesus troubled... I wrote this down. I like the way Eugene Peterson amplifies those words of Jesus. He says, ***"Right now I am storm-tossed."*** "My soul is troubled." ***"...I am storm-tossed. And what am I going to say? 'Father, get me out of this'? No, this is why I came in the first place. I'll say, 'Father, put your glory on display.'"***

Then notice the words from heaven. The message is God says, "I have done it. I have glorified myself, and I'm going to continue receiving glory." I pray all of you in here have experienced this. If you haven't, then I encourage you as you walk with Jesus, you experience the joy of knowing that God is glorified in your obedience. You see, there's a joy in that. There's a unique joy of knowing that amidst my obedience, I am radiating the glory of God.

Then to hear what's going on right here, God is just saying, "I've already received the glory. I'm already receiving it." Some of you, wherever you are in those circumstances (whether it's the worst imaginable or it's just the daily battle of being a Christ follower), I think you need to hear,

"I'm receiving the glory. I'm doing it. I'm going to receive it. I'm already receiving it. You just keep being obedient to what I've called you to, and I'm receiving the glory."

This crowd of people here has gathered around, and they all heard it. I don't fully understand (I have a few hypotheses I won't bore you with this morning) how some of them hear thunder, and others hear a voice. I don't know what that is, but obviously something unmistakable is happening here, right?

"The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him.' Jesus answered, 'This voice has come for your sake, not mine.'" I think what matters here, regardless of how or why they didn't hear it, is that the voice of God spoke. There was a message given, and that message was, "When you do things for my glory, I receive the glory. When you live, when you do things, when you are obedient, when you display me, I receive the glory."

We have a lot of ground to cover today as we continue looking at this, but I don't want to move past that too quickly because I think there are some... Oftentimes, all of us find ourselves at a point in that journey where we feel so exhausted. It's this, "I'm doing *this*. I'm doing *this*." Maybe it's, "I'm sharing the gospel with all these people, these coworkers. I'm praying for them, but I'm just not seeing the fruit. I just feel exhausted by what I'm doing."

Or, "My parenting struggles and my marriage struggles or financially where we are... I know God has us here, but as I'm continuing to walk ahead faithfully and be obedient, I just feel exhausted." I want you to hear that when we live for his glory, he receives glory. That should be a word of encouragement for us. Regardless of how difficult...

See, if our perspectives are, as they should be, that we're only here for a short time, we've been saved and rescued to eternity with our Father in heaven... as we sit here today enduring whatever struggles he calls us to, when we live for his glory, his word back to us is, "I am receiving the glory." That should be able to push us ahead forward into whatever it is that's going on as we live these short days this side of his return. Let's keep reading.

"Jesus answered, 'This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.'" With every word that is spoken by Jesus, this is such an impregnated passage here. Every word really this Passion Week and the gospel and all he is going to do just continues to get bigger and bigger. The meaning just becomes fuller. He is unwrapping a layer of it really with every single word he says here.

It's like, "You think he means this much. Here's a little bit more. Oh, no, it doesn't stop there, but it even means more." He is just pulling back layer after layer. If we ask the question, "How is the Father going to be glorified?" that's what he answers right here. How is the Father going to be glorified amidst all this? He already said he was, but how does this work?

The answer is, ***"Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out."*** The answer is he will receive glory amidst the judgment and the victory. He will receive

the glory through the judgment and the victory. See, Jesus was that judgment. When Jesus came he became the judgment.

In coming to take on our punishment, the punishment you and I deserve, in order to prove God as righteous according to Romans 3:23 and following, he came on taking that punishment for the glory of God and, in that, proclaimed victory over Satan. It's the gospel. ***"Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out."***

That's so powerful. Satan can no longer have any eternal ramifications on our lives. Satan is defeated. Now don't misunderstand. He can rough us up. He can influence. He can even try to oppress us, but victory has been won. He has been defeated, and yet we're engaged in the battle. I know you're thinking, "What in the world? How does that work? Why would you engage in a battle when victory has already been assured?" Stick with me here.

Satan can no longer do anything of eternal significance for those who are in Christ Jesus, but the battle against him continues. Judgment is rendered, and victory is secured. You see, if you've taken any kind of big test, like a bar exam or the CPA exam, you've studied for for a long time, you probably remember some of these emotions.

I remember finishing up my dissertation. You get to the end of this magnus opus you've poured your lifeblood into, and you get to a deadline, and you email it off. You turn it in, right? You feel like for a brief moment, because of all the work you've put into it up to then, that's pretty good...the first time you send it in. You feel pretty confident about it.

Then it's not one professor, but it's a squad of professors who then shoot holes in it, and you get it back. The first time you get it back, you didn't really know what to expect, and you feel a little defeated. Okay? It's a little bit of a shock. You get it back. You have to do all these rewrites and all this stuff.

Then you send it in again. You're not as surprised the next time when you get the new wave of things to fix and change and all your mistakes. Then you fix all of those, and then by the third or fourth time, you expect, "I'm not really finished. I'm just going to email it off, and they're going to tell me all the things I need to do." I would have felt like the most unqualified, ignorant person in the entire institution if I didn't know all of my peers were going through the same thing.

You send it in, and then it's attacked and sent back. You send it in. You know something has gotten deep into your psyche when you dream about it. I remember having dreams of waking up in a panic of one of those deadlines. "I have a rewrite, and it's due. It's due! I didn't do the rewrite. All of this work is now wasted because I didn't get it sent in on time." That kind of panic wakes you up in the middle of the night.

I remember the moment finally getting the email from my primary professor that said, "It is finished." Right? They didn't use those words, but, "It's done. It's complete. It's all over." I remember looking at it and just reading it over and over again. I was just reading it over and over again, because it didn't hit. I didn't believe it to be true. It couldn't be true.

Surely I had to do another rewrite and send in more and do this over and over again, so much so that even after that (I received the email), I still had those dreams. I still remember having those panics of, "I missed the deadline. I didn't do the rewrite," and all of that. Yet I had been told, "It's all over. It's complete." It was so hard for that to get from reading words in black and white to really something that got so deep into my psyche and into my heart that I no longer woke up with these nightmares.

I think a lot of us are entrapped in that kind of Christianity. "You have to be good enough, and you have to battle. You have to win the battle of putting your sin to death. If you don't, then you've failed Jesus." You wake up in a panic, and you live your life panicking, "I just messed up again. I need to try harder. If I can just try harder, then maybe I can win the battle."

You see, what Jesus is saying here is the battle has been won. It's complete. See, that needs to travel this morning that long and winding path from our heads and from black and white words on this page down to our hearts that we are not engaging in a battle that we're called to win. We're called to engage in a battle that has already been won for us. That changes the way we think. That changes the way we live. That changes the way we walk as followers of Jesus for God's glory, because of his grace.

You and I who sit here today as followers of Jesus, we've placed our faith in him, we've been given the grace through the bloodshed of the cross. We sit here today as those who sit in completed judgment. We sit here today as those who are, yes, called to a fight but one in which the victory has already been secured.

To bring last Sunday into this, as we're called to put to death our flesh (Remember, that was the invitation Jesus gave this group of people gathered together. They were kind of saying, "We want to be part of whatever you're doing."), Jesus comes out, and instead of saying, "Hey, we need an army, and we need this much money because we're going to overthrow the government," he says, "You come, and you die. In your dying, you find life."

As we come to Jesus and we're called to put our flesh to death, that's not a "work hard enough and perform better" mission. That's a mission of walking in the grace which has already been given to us through the bloodshed of Jesus, the completed judgment of Jesus, and the victory over Satan.

Walking in that grace, not try hard enough, not perform better. You see, if we're walking through our lives and we're saying, "Okay, I know I'm called to put my flesh to death and what I'm fighting every day is the guilt. I need to work harder, and I need to do better," then we're engaged in the wrong fight.

You see, if we're journeying through this what we *should* be saying is, "Here I am. I have this flesh, this sin in my life, and I need to put it to death, but rather than working harder, I know the grace God has given me has already empowered me, because of the secured judgment and victory of Christ. I'm already over this. I just need to walk in the grace of knowing him deeply. That's where I find the victory over that."

Some of you are thinking, "That's all semantics. It's all the same." Jesus came to punctuate the righteousness of an almighty God. In order for God to be righteous, the punishment of death had to happen. Jesus came, and he lived, and he died, and he proved amidst all of the other things and proclaimed, "God is righteous," because the punishment that was deserved for the sin condition was fulfilled in Jesus.

You see, there are two paths for you and I to live. We live a life destined for death, or we live a life alive in Christ. Living a life that says, "I have to be good enough, I have to try hard enough, I have to perform well enough to find victory over my sin," is a life that leads to death because you can't perform well enough. You can't try hard enough.

A life that says, "By grace he saved me, and in that same grace that saved me, I can walk in that grace to live a life that's obedient, putting to death the flesh by knowing him intimately, walking in communion with him," that's a life that leads to eternal significance. Those are so different. It's so much more than semantics or word play. It is truly worldview.

With judgment complete and victory secured, our striving must be directed toward walking as light in his empowered grace. That's a huge statement, isn't it? One more time. With judgment complete and victory secured, our striving must be directed toward walking as light in his empowered grace. Remember the end of this passage we read together.

"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. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." Sons of light are light. "...that you may become sons of light.' When Jesus had said these things, he departed..."

Here, let me break it down before I share one other story with you. I'll simplify this a little bit into these four statements. If judgment is complete in Jesus by his grace, as our Scripture says, if the battle has been won in Jesus by his grace, as the Scripture says, then our call is to walk in his enabling and empowering grace. As we walk in his empowering grace, we radiate the glory of God. The call isn't, "Try harder. Perform better." The call is, "Come in me deeper."

A few years back, I was training and did a few triathlons. I grew up swimming around in pools, and I was never in danger. I mean, I was a great, comfortable swimmer, but the difference between being able to be a good, comfortable swimmer and really knowing how to technically swim is huge. They're very different.

I remember the first time I got out there and started trying to do laps. It was actually a *lap*. I was running hard. I mean, I was in just great cardiovascular shape. I was strong. I got there, started at one end of the pool, and I beat that water silly. I got all the way to the other end, and I stopped, put my hand on it, and had to catch my breath for a little while.

I caught my breath, and then I tried as hard as I could to get back to the other side where I started. Then next to me there would be this guy... I was in twice the shape he was. He out-aged me probably by 40 years, and he was just gliding back and forth, just gliding back and forth like

it was nothing! It was so frustrating for me, because I looked at that, and I said, "I know I'm in shape. I can do this." I'd get there, and I'd just try harder every time I worked out there.

This lasted for a little while because I had this triathlon date I was training for. I'd get there, and I'd just try harder. "I have to be able to just... It has to be because I'm not pushing hard enough." Finally I had a couple of friends help me and, of course, a few YouTube videos. I discovered really when you begin to learn how to swim correctly, it's really very smooth.

As I began to figure out the technique of how smooth it is, it became relaxing. I began to swim laps back and forth, and it was almost meditative. I mean, I was forgetting what I was doing. The repetition of the breath... It felt so slow and so smooth, yet I was going faster than I had ever gone before.

My mentality was (as with many things when you're involved in sports), "Work harder. Push harder. You have to be stronger. Do it faster." That's what I was trying to do in the pool, but the truth was, I was fighting the wrong fight. It was more about doing it right, and with a right technique, I began to fly. It felt so much easier to fly, for me anyway.

A lot of us are living Christianity that way. "I have to try harder. I have to work harder. I'm going to put this sin of lust to death by all of these things I'm going to do. I'm going to try harder, and I can find victory over it." You will never find victory over it.

"Oh, it's pride and selfishness that are plaguing my marriage right now. If I just work hard enough and if I memorize the right things to say when she says *this*, then maybe I will be able to overcome the selfishness that plagues our marriage." No, you will never be able to perform well enough or work hard enough.

The call is to come deeper in Jesus. Discover and find his grace. Walk in his presence. As we begin to do that, we walk in the victory that has already been accomplished in the cross of Christ. As we close, my encouragement to you is, instead of thinking, "Work harder; perform better," focus on giving yourself completely to Christ Jesus.

Give yourself completely to him, spending more time in his presence, focusing on making all of you about all of him. That's the place where you'll begin to feel the joy and the blessing of walking in the victory that has already been secured.

I want to invite you to bow your head and close your eyes. As we respond this morning and as we sing and just continue in worship, I just want to invite you to respond to what the Holy Spirit is doing in your heart this morning. If it's the freedom and the encouragement of those realities that it's not a, "Try harder; perform better," then I encourage you to just worship him today in thanksgiving of the grace which he has poured over you, the victory that's been secured, the judgment that's complete.