

~Other Speakers S-Z: David Servant:

Jesus lived about 33 years on the earth, yet almost half of John's Gospel focuses on His final week. In John's thinking, that week was the most significant week of Christ's life and of human history. It began with Jesus and His disciples coming out of their wilderness hideaway to make their way towards Jerusalem. They would have been journeying with tens of thousands of other Jews who were streaming there for the Passover, a perfect cover. Two miles outside of Jerusalem, they stopped and enjoyed a meal in the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus (whom had recently been resurrected).

When we compare the specific details of Mary's anointing of Jesus with similar incidents mentioned in all three Synoptic Gospels involving unnamed women, we must conclude that they are not all the same incident (Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:37-39). John's account highlights Judas' hypocritical and deceptive complaint. Jesus' reply to him---"The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have Me (12:8)---could only be considered to be words of an incredible egotist, unless Jesus were not God in the flesh. It is, of course, impossible for God to be proud, as He could never think more highly of Himself than He should.

Judas was a perfect example of a person who outwardly appeared righteous but who was inwardly corrupt. If we didn't know the whole story, some might say, "Now that Judas, he's the kind of man we'd like to have as our pastor. He's a person of convictions, and isn't afraid to challenge even the denomination's top man in his concern for social justice!" Things aren't always as they appear to be. Judas was a lover of money, and for that reason he betrayed Jesus.

Did you notice two more of Jesus' "hour statements" in today's reading (12:23, 27)? In one of them, Jesus revealed that the ultimate purpose of His life was to die, saying, "For this purpose I came to this hour" (12:27). He compared His death to the planting of a dead grain, from which a new plant grows and produces more grains. Jesus' death, burial and resurrection would result in the spiritual rebirth of many people. Moreover, His death and resurrection would serve as an object lesson for all who desire eternal life. They, too, must die, dying to their love of the world (12:25). John later wrote in his first epistle: "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

Jesus' sacrificial death would also result in "the ruler of this world" being "cast out" (12:31). Obviously, Satan has been given permission by God to rule over all human rebels. He is a subordinate instrument of God's wrath against them. By virtue of Jesus' atoning sacrifice, however, God's wrath was propitiated, and thus Satan's dominion is broken over everyone who repents and believes. Satan will ultimately be fully "cast out" from the earth when it suits God's purpose. That, too, will be due to Jesus' atonement on the cross, whereby God can righteously pardon sinners.

We read previously Jesus' statement that no one could come to Him unless the Father drew him (6:44). We read today His promise to draw all people to Himself if He would be lifted up on the cross (12:32). Obviously, if people are being drawn then they are not being forced, and they can obviously resist His drawing.

Just as Paul, in his letter to the Romans, indicated that God had hardened the hearts of the Jews, so John reiterates the same idea in 12:39-40 quoting Isaiah. By themselves, these few verses could lead someone to believe that God didn't want those Jews whom He hardened to be saved. Yet there are 31,215 other verses in the Bible to balance our understanding, and some are found in this very chapter! God is not arbitrarily hardening some hearts and softening others. Jesus came to "save the world" (12:47), and the same sun that melts wax, hardens clay. By His act of drawing all, God softens some and hardens others.