

The Power of the Cross
John 12:27-50

By Dave Urbanski

In our Sunday study exploring the remaining verses of John chapter 12, we experienced Jesus explaining to the people why he must die on the cross.

While being fully divine as the Son of God, Jesus also is fully human — and he feels deeply the emotion that any human being would feel knowing death is coming soon: "Now is my soul troubled," he shares in verse 27. "And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour."

Amid his mental and emotional suffering — and soon to be physical suffering — Jesus nevertheless knows his death on the cross will eternally save those who believe in him, and he continues his path toward it lovingly and willingly. "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." (verse 32)

Similarly, Pastor Scott explained that when we experience suffering in this life through pains, difficulty, and trials, those times are opportunities for us to glorify God — to focus on him so that others also may be drawn to God's love when they see how we respond to suffering.

Pastor Scott also shared with us that power of Jesus dying on the cross removes the PENALTY of our sin, as Jesus paid that cost by dying on it, and it also diminishes the POWER of sin in our lives as the Holy Spirit enables us who believe in Jesus to overcome the PRESENCE of sin as we actively, daily wrestle with it.

The response of the people to Jesus' declarations about himself are exactly how people respond to Jesus to this very day: Some believe and some do not. And John in his Gospel deals with a crucial theological truth as he points back to the prophet Isaiah's words: "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them."

Pastor Scott said many indeed wonder why God would do that, especially since Jesus already said he "will draw all people to myself." One explanation, he said, is the idea of the Lord giving all people the free will to believe or not believe — and then after a while of continued, persistent unbelief he simply will give that unbeliever the desire of his or her heart. Really, why would someone who doesn't want God or seek him want to spend a second with the Lord after life on earth is over?

Belief in Jesus always comes with a cost, and sometimes we aren't willing to bear a cost day to day — for example — because of what others might think of us. It was no different during Jesus' earthly ministry. We all know that Nicodemus believed in Jesus, but his belief he kept secret. In

the same way, John notes in verses 42 and 42 that "many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God."

Whose approval or admiration do you care more about right now? The world's or the Lord's? Depending on your answer, it may be time for a heart check.

Let us this very day heed Jesus' loud cry as he concludes his public ministry in verses 44 through 50: "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness."