

Polarised by Truth

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 October 2023

Preacher: Wayne Sutton

[0 : 00] Super, thank you, Alice, and good morning. Good to see everybody this morning, and super, super to be able to be together on such a lovely morning, isn't it?

Oh man, what a relief. And to worship the Lord. So we won't stay here, I don't think, all day. I'll try not to preach that long, so you can get back out into the lovely weather and enjoy your afternoon. I want to thank you for the great fellowship in the gospel that we share together with you. We are so encouraged with what God is doing in our city. There's such a need, isn't there?

There is such a need. What a time to be an ambassador for Christ. Amen. What a time in the world, in our city, in our country.

I mean, every time is a great time to be an ambassador for Christ. But what a great time just to be able to live for the truth and stand for the truth and communicate the truth.

[1 : 01] And so we are just so, so thankful for you guys. We're thankful for all those that God is raising up in the city, some of the great churches and gatherings of believers that God has here in Edinburgh.

We see students come like you. See a lot of students come because of all the universities and colleges and stuff in Edinburgh. And we often see parents that come, and they want to check us out because they want to know what a Corubbers is.

What's a Corubbers? Don't ever come across a Corubbers before. What are you? We don't blame them. But one of the things that we do tell them is that their kids are going to be spoiled for choice. We've got to be thankful for that, really.

Spoiled for choice. Just a lot of really good works going on here. And so we thank God with you just for the joy and the privilege of just being able to be here for him at this particular point in time in our world's history and in our lives.

So, guys, this is our generation. Amen? This is our generation. It'll soon be passed. Life will soon be passed for us, and if God carries, there'll be other people sitting here in your seats.

[2 : 09] And so we've got one shot. We've got one shot. One life. Only one life will soon be passed. Only one done for Christ will last. So let's do it.

Okay, let's dive into John 12. So page 1080 in the Pew Bibles, as Alice said, or on your Bible. So you shouldn't be looking at me right now. You should be looking at something that is the Bible in your lap, I hope anyway, because this is God's word, not my word.

I'm just going to try and comment on it as best I can, get out of the way as best I can, and let's see what God has to say here. So John 12, verses 37 to 50, and we're going to be looking at this under the title that I've given it, Polarized by Truth, because I think if you look close, if you listen to the text, as Alice read it for us this morning, I think if you look close here, I think this is a huge part of what's going on here.

And listen, not just here, right? This is a particular historical account that has been preserved for us in God's word, by God's spirit.

It's a long time ago. And I think this is what's going on here. People being polarized by truth, but not just here. Actually, since the dawn of time, I think.

[3 : 40] If you think about it, right? The truth has been forcing people, I would say. The truth has been forcing people to choose something.

Fair? The truth, as God has revealed it, right from the beginning. This is kind of one of the things that truth does. Truth lands on us, guys, doesn't it?

Truth, not opinion, not people's opinion or thoughts or whatever. Truth. What did Jesus say? I am the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus, speaking to the Father in his prayer in John 17, says, your word is?

Come on, guys. Right? Truth, truth. So God is truth. His word is truth. Everything that emanates from God, actually, is truth. And that stuff lands on us, guys.

That stuff lands on us. It lands on the world. Don't ever be afraid to share it. Man, because it's powerful. You believe that? You got to look better than what you're looking like this morning, man.

[4 : 49] It's powerful. We believe that. The word of God is living, active, sharper than any two-edged sword. My goodness. And so I think ever since the beginning, this is what the truth does.

It polarizes. It polarizes. It forces us to choose. God says right in the beginning, don't eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or you'll die. And immediately, they had to choose, didn't they?

Would they do it? Would they believe it? Would they accept it? Would they receive it? Right from the very beginning, this is what truth does. Choose you this day whom you will serve, Joshua says. Right? And then you got to do it. You've got to do something with that. You got to do it. And you will. You will. You will. You'll do something with it. When you hear God's word, when you hear truth, when the world hears these things, they'll do something with it.

One way or the other, they'll do something with it. And so polarized by the truth. And then here comes now Jesus comes along. In John 5, 24, you've probably looked at this already, but he says, truly, truly.

[5 : 57] So there you go. Right? There you go. Truly, truly. So what's he speaking? He's speaking the truth. He's telling us that. Truly, truly. Jesus said this often. It's the way he introduced a lot of the stuff that he said.

Because it was right. Truly, truly. I say to you, he says, the one who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and does not commit to judgment, but is passed out of death into life.

And you think, oh, my goodness. There you go. Oh, my goodness. There's a challenge. There's an offer. Choose.

Right? Choose. Choose. And now here we go in John 12. Here comes Jesus. And now he's on the cusp of the cross. Isn't he?

You know how John's gospel is written. John's gospel is very unique. There's four gospels. Three are called synoptics. They're very similar. They kind of spread Jesus' life out all the way through the whole gospel. John is different.

[6 : 54] John writes about the majority of Jesus' life in the first 11 chapters. And then he spends the whole last half of his gospel just on the last week of Jesus' life.

So John's saying something. He's focusing us in on this time frame now. From now until the end of your study here, you're going to more or less be in the last week of Jesus' life.

John's very different. And so he's honing in. He's poking us down. He's making us look. Man, he's just sticking our nose in the truth here of the final week of Jesus' life.

And now here he is. He's on the cusp of the cross. And he is pushing harder than ever. Isn't he? He's pushing harder than ever. He's about to die.

He's about to die. And man, you'll see this. You'll see this in this passage. And you'll see this to come. He's pushing harder than ever. For centuries, for centuries, the prophets had been saying, He's coming.

[7 : 53] He's coming. He's coming. Right? They've been foretelling this. They've been prophesying this. He's coming. He's coming. He's coming. And now, verse 46, Jesus says, I've come.

I'm here. I've come, he says, as light into the world, so that no one who believes in me will remain in darkness.

He's pulling together all that he said about who he is and what he's doing in the world, that he's come to rescue the world, restoration station.

Right? To restore the world. He's come to do that. He's the only one that can do that. God in human flesh. Emmanuel. God with us. Comes to do the very thing that we can't.

The one thing we're utterly incapable of doing, which is rescuing ourselves. All have sinned and fall. What? All have sinned and fall short, short of the glory of God.

[8 : 54] But the glory of God is what we've been created for. It's what God demands. It's what God will have. It's what he will have in his presence in heaven forever.

He will have us righteous. He will have us righteous. But we're not righteous. We don't possess that righteousness. Jesus possesses that righteousness. We need that righteousness. So Jesus comes

and he makes the great exchange.

He gives, he takes our sin. He dies on the cross for us and offers us his righteousness. Will you have it? Will you have it? What an offer, guys. What an offer. Maybe you've taken that offer this morning.

Maybe you haven't. Maybe you're just here hearing it for the first time. But you got to choose. You got to choose. You got to choose. And that's what Jesus says here. I've come so that no one who believes in me should remain in darkness.

Choose. Choose, he says, for goodness sake. Choose because nobody has to live in the dark. Nobody has to live in the dark. Only if you want to.

[9 : 55] Only if you choose to. But Jesus in his mercy and his grace calls us to life. Choose you to say who you will serve. I put life and death before you. What are you going to have? What do you want?

Guys, what do you want? And this is, this is Jesus' offer. And this is our message, isn't it? This is what we go to the world for. God puts it before us.

Life or death. Choose. You can have life. And so here we are this morning. And I think all of us, in one way or another, we're choosing what we're going to do with Jesus. Maybe for the first time.

I don't know. But we're here, aren't we? We're here. We're choosing. Probably the reason we're here is because we're choosing what we're going to do with Jesus. And I think that this is at the crux of our text here.

So let me give you four thoughts from the passage here. All right, four quick thoughts, I hope.

Number one here, be aware of the state of your heart. It just kind of stands to reason. Right?

[10 : 53] With all of this that Jesus is saying, all that we have heard, be aware of the state of your heart. Because it's not just as easy as, well, you know, I've heard it.

It's not just as easy as I've heard it. Is it, have I heard it? Not just have I listened to it. Have I heard it? Have I heard it? Isn't verse 37 a shocking statement?

Look at this. Verse 37. Isn't this a shocking statement? John says, even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still what?

What's he say? They still would not believe in him. They still would not believe in him. Listen, is that not incredible?

That's not incredible. You read that. When, when, when, when, when, when, when almost everybody that I know says, what about believing? What's the catchphrase for believing?

[11 : 51] Almost everybody I know says this. Says what? Seeing is believing. Everybody I know says seeing is, I find this incredible. I find, I read this and I say, what?

Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their, Jesus had performed the signs. Nobody didn't tell him about them. They saw them. They saw them. And yet everybody I know says seeing is believing.

Isn't that interesting? Isn't that interesting? Because according to John, these people had seen everything you'd ever expect anyone would ever need to see in order to believe.

And yet they don't. So think about that. Think about that. Don't just hear it. Think about that for a minute. Because you know what? I think that is precisely because it's not primarily about evidence. It's not primarily about evidence. It's about our hearts. It's about the state of our hearts. Not primarily about evidence. Evidence is great.

[12 : 57] And it's all around us. It's all around us. It's not that God hasn't left us with any evidence. For goodness sake. Fair? Is that right? And we go on and on and on and on and on and on and on. About the evidence this morning.

There's plenty of evidence around us. But it's not primarily about the evidence. It actually is primarily the Bible tells us about the state of our hearts. Is that not fair? I'm not off beam here, am I? I think that's fair. Paul says in Romans 1, Paul says that we've got plenty of evidence. He says, in fact, since the creation of the world, God's invisible attributes, His eternal power, His divine nature, who God is essentially, have been clearly seen.

Everybody sees Him. Understood by what has been made so that we're without excuse. He says, listen, for even though they knew God, they knew that actually everything around them was His, comes from Him.

Even though they knew God, they knew that that was His. They didn't honor Him as God or give Him thanks. Instead, they became futile in their reasonings and their senseless hearts were

darkened.

[14:00] Listen, you get it? You get it? God's given us all we need just in creation, Paul says, to start the ball rolling and to cause us to seek Him and to seek Him and to seek Him.

And yet these guys have had even more than that, didn't they? They had Jesus. They had His life. They had His words. They had His works. And still they didn't believe. Listen, precisely because it's not evidence.

This isn't the problem. There's plenty of evidence. But that's not the problem. The problem is the state of our hearts, folks.

And the issue of sin. That's the problem. That's the problem. And we desperately need what the Bible says is the light of the gospel, of the glory of God to shine on us.

And when it does, boy, it does some work. And so it's not seeing is believing nearly as much as it is believing is seeing. Fair?

[15:05] Believing is seeing. I came to Christ when I was 19. Fresher at university. I was really presented with the gospel. I'd heard about Jesus before.

I was really presented with the gospel. When I was 19 years old, some guy came to me and, boy, he pressed it in. He pressed it in. And I came to Christ. And I would say that from the time I was 19 years old, I have never seen so clearly in my life.

Fair? Can anybody relate? I have never seen so clearly in my life. Because Jesus doesn't just open the eyes of the blind physically. Even more miraculously, he opens the eyes of the blind spiritually. Doesn't he? That's what he does. He opens our eyes spiritually. Spiritually. I wonder if that has been your experience. Things I never saw before I believed.

Things I never saw. I see my purpose clear. I see who I am clear. I see God clearer. I see the world clearer. And so listen.

[16:09] Be aware of the state of your heart. Be aware of the state of the heart. This is crucial. Proverbs 4.23 says, Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it spring the issues of life, or from it flows the springs of life.

Be aware of your heart. So I don't know where your heart's at this morning. Where's your heart at this morning? Where's your heart? I can't see it. Even if I had an x-ray machine, I couldn't see it. Your real heart. Who you are as a person. Where you're at with Jesus. Where you're at? Where you're at? In so many ways, where are you at? With Jesus. Be aware of the state of your heart. Okay? Then number two.

Be astounded by the ways of the Lord. Be astounded by the ways of the Lord. Be aware of the state of your heart. Be astounded by the ways of the Lord. Here's where it gets a little bit deeper in this section here.

Because John says, watch this. He goes back to Isaiah, the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. Right? John is trying to pull together what is happening here in the last week of Jesus' life. The culmination of his ministry.

[17:13] John is making a comment on this. And he wants us to see what's going on. Why this polarization of truth? Why is this nation who are God's people?

Nation of Israel. Right? I won't get all political here this morning. But pray for them. Pray for the Palestinians. Pray for that whole deal over there. But historically, God's people. It was Abraham that God chose.

And through Abraham's descendant, he was going to bring hope for the world to Christ. And now here he comes. He's their Messiah. I meet Jews all the time. And I tell them, thank you for your Messiah. Oh, they're all excited.

Oh, right. I said, I know your Messiah. I know him. I'm a Christian, but I know your Messiah. He's your Messiah. And John's trying to make, he's trying to help us to see. So what's going on here with this polarization?

Why, by and large, is the entire nation rejecting him? Because he's about to go to, they're kind of, they're ushering him in, in John 12, the beginning, right?

[18:12] On Palm Sunday, and saying, Hosanna in the highest, and everything's wonderful. But he's not going to deliver them like they think he's going to deliver them at this point from Rome.

He's going to deliver them even more significantly from their sin. But they're not ready for that. And so those same people who are shouting Hosanna in a few days' time are going to be shouting crucify him.

What's going on? John's trying to help us make sense of this. And so he dips back into Isaiah because Isaiah saw this coming. Verse 38. He saw this coming 700 plus years before Jesus ever arrives.

Jesus, Isaiah, sees Israel's rejection of their Messiah. He knows it's coming. Lord, who's believed our report? John quotes that.

He quotes that. Lord, who's believed our report? He says. In other words, Lord, we're telling them. [19:13] We're telling them. But they're not believing it, Lord. They're not believing it, Lord. And Isaiah's talking about, in the first instance, he's talking about Israel in his own day because they're about to go into exile because they're not listening to God.

And so he's going to take him into exile. And so this is true for Isaiah's day, but he's also true for John's day and for Jesus' day, isn't it? Because Isaiah was a prophet.

So he wasn't only speaking about his own time. He was projecting. He was seeing. God was allowing him to see into the future and to see what would happen in Jesus' day. And they're not believing it.

Even though God had given them every chance to believe it. Jesus says in Matthew 23, 37, Jesus says, Jerusalem, Jerusalem. Who kills the prophets. And stones those who've been sent to her. Sent to her for what? For good news. For salvation. For fullness of life. And you're stoning them. You're killing them. How often Jesus says, I wanted to gather your children together like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.

[20:18] But you were unwilling. This is deep stuff here. A lot of debate goes on about this. But I think it's pretty clear. God wants us saved.

We've got the problem. You were unwilling, he says. Not evidence. Hardness of heart. Hardness of heart. And Isaiah says that he sees it and he weeps.

And man, he weeps. And yet even more staggering than that. Verses 39 to 40. Even more staggering than that. Isaiah not only sees Israel's rejection of her Messiah. But he sees God's eternal plan of redemption being facilitated by that rejection.

Oh my goodness. This is deep. This is God stuff. This is God stuff now. He not only sees Israel's rejection. But he sees God's plan of redemption being facilitated by that rejection.

Do you see it? Because even though Jesus pleaded with his people to believe. Just read the gospels. Even though he's pleaded with his people.

[21:22] To believe. Jesus says. He still had to go to the cross and die. Now figure that one out.

He wants the nation to receive him and to believe in him. But he had to go to the cross and die.

Wait a minute. Wow. How does that work? How does that work? It's the very reason he came.

We know that. He came to die. He predicted his own death. But he's offering himself to the nation. And so almost beyond our ability to conceive. God takes Israel's rejection.

God takes Israel's rejection. God knows it's coming because he told Isaiah. Right? Who told Isaiah to say what he said? What were the prophets? They were the prophets that spoke whose word? God's word. God's word. God's word. God told Isaiah. So God knows it's coming. He knows it's coming. And he takes that rejection.

[22:19] And the genuine offer that was made to Israel that they rejected. He takes them and he essentially locks them into that. Okay?

If that's your response, I'm going to use that response, God says. He locks them into it judicially. Or as Isaiah puts it, he blinds their eyes. He hardens their hearts. Not before they heard the message and rejected it.

After they heard the message and rejected it. He blinds their eyes. He hardens their hearts so that they can either see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn. And I would heal them.

In other words, having made their choice polarized by the truth. Having made their choice, Israel's hardness becomes the very vehicle God uses to accomplish his eternal plan of redemption.

John 1.12 tells us Jesus came to his own, but what? His own did not receive him. Did not receive him. And so God in his manifold wisdom and grace turns his own people's rejection of their Messiah into the fulfillment of salvation blessing for the world.

[23:26] Oh my goodness. Listen, ponder that one over lunch and be astounded by the ways of the Lord. Be aware of the state of your heart. Be astounded by the ways of the Lord. Number three here. Be consumed with the praise of your maker.

John makes this, he makes this, look at this verse 42. He makes this strategic comment. This strategic, this tragic comment in verse 42. Where some of the leaders of the people who actually have come to faith in Jesus.

He says that. They've actually come. It wasn't just the people. Some of the leaders actually came to faith. Nicodemus may very well have been one of them. Pharisees. Some of these guys came to faith.

They all did. By and large, the nation as a whole rejected him. Called upon Rome. Rome put him on the cross and he died. And we know that in God's eternal plan and purpose, that's what was going to happen.

But some of the leaders also believed. That must have been quite a joy to see. Some of the leaders coming to faith in Jesus. And yet what a tragic revelation here.

[24 : 32] That some of these leaders that came to faith in Jesus kept their faith under a bushel.

They hid it because, John says, they loved the approval of men more than the approval of God.

Wow. Wow. They didn't talk about their faith. That it saved them for all eternity. The greatest gift any human being could ever receive.

They hid it under a bushel. Because they were afraid of people. They loved the praise of men rather than the praise of God.

Ouch. Amen? Ouch. Can you feel it? Can you feel it? They didn't talk about their faith as freely as they should have.

Ouch. I feel it. I so often feel that. I mean, the voice sometimes is unbearable for me to try to deal with when I have an opportunity.

[25 : 39] I'm with somebody else. And the door's right there. Are you with me? I'm standing at a bus stop or I'm sitting in there.

My wife and I are going to fly to San Francisco in a few months. We're going to be on an airplane for like 14 hours. Just pray. Pray for the guy next to me. Right?

Pray for me. That that would be a moment that I would take and I wouldn't love the praise of men more than I love the praise of God. Listen, how sad is this?

That we would prefer the glory of men to the glory of God. What? What? What? And you tell me you've never done that. You tell me you've never done that.

Listen, that's why we need grace. Amen? That's why we need grace. Thank God for his grace, for his forgiveness, for transforming work of his spirit that eventually brings us to a place where all of us will be fools for Jesus.

[26 : 39] That's what Paul said he was. Just fools for Christ. Somebody once said, everybody, somebody's fool. Who's fool you? Right?

Wow. How sad that is. And yet how true it is in our experience every day. People, as William Barclay puts it, people who are seeking to carry out the impossible, trying to be secret disciples. I like that. People who are trying to carry out the impossible, trying to be secret disciples. He says secret discipleship is a contradiction in terms because either the secrecy kills the discipleship or the discipleship kills the secrecy.

You get it? Come on, guys. Come on. You get it? Wow. Wow. Wow. And he's not talking about persecuted believers here in closed countries.

That's not what he's talking about. All right. That's not what he's talking about. He's specifically talking about believers who love the praise of men more than the praise of God. And how convicting that is because I know exactly how that feels.

[27 : 46] Guys, we have the truth. God's given us the truth. And the truth will set men free. Nothing else. The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

Will you share it? Will you share it? It's a sad comments being made here in John 12 about these leaders. A sad let's not be like them. But we'll need grace.

We'll need strength. We'll need prayer. Let's pray for one another in this. Barclay goes on to say, No doubt these men thought themselves wise and prudent, these leaders. But their wisdom did not extend to remembering that while the opinion of men might matter for a few years in which they lived upon this earth, the judgment of God mattered for all eternity.

Wow. Wow. Now, finally, verses 44 to 50. Last point here. Verses 44 to 50. This last section. Be receptive to the invitation of the Savior. And maybe this is for you this morning.

Maybe it's just a reminder for you this morning. I don't know. But this last section, John includes this last section here in verses 44 to 50 with Jesus crying out.

[28 : 52] It's not often he does this. He reasons. He talks. He illustrates. Not often he's crying. But this is it. He's on the cusp of the cross. He doesn't have much time left.

It's the last week of his life before he dies for the sins of the world. And he's crying out. He's crying out. Believe.

Believe. Believe. What is he crying? Read this section that Alice read for us here. Read it again. What is he saying? He's saying believe. Please. He's saying believe.

He's pleading with them. Man, he's pushing hard, isn't he? Man, he's pushing hard. Believe. Believe in me and the one who sent me. He says, because if you've seen me, you've seen him.

One of the clearest references to the deity of Christ anywhere in the Gospels. If you've seen me, you've seen him. I don't know how you get around that one. Right? You've seen me, you've seen him. Believe, he says.

[29 : 47] Believe. I am the Father of one. John 10, 30. And he says, I've come as light into the world so that nobody has to walk in darkness.

Listen, nobody. Nobody has to walk in darkness. None of your neighbors. Are you guys hearing this? Are you hearing this? None of your neighbors.

None of your colleagues. None of your family has to walk in darkness. Nobody does. Nobody does. Only if they choose to. And I'm not going to convert them.

But by the power of the Holy Spirit and a clear gospel message, I hope I can convince them. The Spirit of God will convert them. He'll do that work. He'll convict them.

I don't have to convict them. Sometimes we get, you know, we get with somebody in Boyward. We need to convict them. I was like that with my brother when I first got saved. And I'm bound around the neck almost, you know. But God's given me the gospel to convince them.

[30 : 53] Light. I've come as light so that nobody has to walk in the dark. I've not come as judge into the world. He says in verse 47, I've come to save it, not to judge the world. The judgment will come later. Read the end of verse 48.

The judgment will come later. But today's the day of salvation. Amen. Guys, out there in this world, your patch. Today's the day of salvation. These are the last words in John's gospel from Jesus to the public.

After this, he goes private. These are his last words to the public. His last words. And man, he's pushing hard. This is hugely significant. And so here's the question. Just where are you with Jesus? Where are you with Jesus? Where are you as a human? You believe? Do you believe? If you don't, here's the opportunity. I put death before you and life.

What do you like? You know, this isn't hamburgers and hot dogs. Right? Death and life. There you go. Forever. Eternal death. Eternal life. What do you like?

[31 : 56] What do you like? What would you like on that? What kind of sauce you want on that? Right? There's your choice. What do you want? What do you want? This is what Jesus says to every human being.

We're his ambassadors. We're to go and spread the word. Part of it's happening right here, right now. Where are you at with Jesus? Where's your heart right now? Where's your heart before God? In verse 50, God's commandment, he says, is eternal life. Isn't that interesting? His commandment is eternal life. He's commanding you. His commandment is eternal life. So could I just ask you, are you obeying the commandment?

Are you obeying the commandment? Come to Jesus for life. He doesn't say, are you perfect? He doesn't say, are you good? He doesn't say, are you nice? He says, have you come? Have you come to be forgiven and restored and accepted by God's grace through the righteousness of Christ?

Have you come? God, I'm going to be right here. I'm going to be right here. I'm going to be right here. I'm going to be right here. I'm going to be right here. Let me pray. And we'll finish up here this morning. Lord, thank you for your word. Thank you for, I don't know what Jesus would have been like as he was crying out.

[33 : 05] What would that have looked like? What would that have sounded like to hear Jesus crying out these things? Crying him out, pleading. And so we plead. We plead with men and women. We know we can't make the choice for them, but we can give them the choice.

We can let them know. We can share the gospel. Pray, Lord, for all of us this morning here that we'll receive it. And we'll share it as we should for your glory.
Give us grace in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.