

John 12:44-13:38
(Isaiah 55:6-11; Hebrews 4:12-16)
The Power of Words

Introduction

We saw, when I was last with you, that Jesus' public ministry ends with words of warning and of hope. John makes clear the difference between inadequate views of discipleship and what it means to be Jesus' true disciple. Hearing Jesus speak, seeing Jesus deeds, and even believing in Jesus, are essential but insufficient marks of discipleship. As illustration, John describes people who have delighted in Jesus' teaching, who have been amazed at his signs and wonders, and who have even, at one level, believed in him, and yet who are not willing to confess him as Lord because they are afraid of being rejected by their community. In contrast, he depicts the true disciple of Jesus as one who confesses Jesus as Lord no matter what the cost, one who seeks God's glory rather than the glory that comes from other people, and one who does not merely hear the word, but who seeks to do it.

This brings us to the final verses of chapter twelve, which emphasize the power of Jesus' words: when we hear him speak, we are hearing the Lord himself, when we see him act, we are seeing God at work. If we would know who God is, we must look at Jesus, and we will find that God is so very different than religion would make him. He seems to prefer the company of the broken, of the outcasts and sinners, to the company of the upright, of the religious who hold themselves and one another in high esteem. The consequence is that we are either judged or saved by the word that Jesus speaks. That word will rise up at the last day either to judge us or to exonerate us.

But what does that look like? What is word of the Father, acted and spoken by Jesus, for which all of us who have met him are ultimately accountable? Chapter thirteen dramatically illustrates what it means to receive God's Word and what it means to reject God's Word. And it includes a strong warning to those of us who

think that we are true disciples when we have not yet come to the breaking point of turning to Christ alone for life.

Body

1. Jesus is the supreme example of one who does God's Word (13:1f).

Jesus loved others, and so sacrificed himself.

2. Judas is the supreme example of one who rejects God's Word (13:2f).

Judas loved himself, and so sacrificed Jesus.

3. Peter is the supreme warning to all of us disciples in training (13:36f).

Peter thought he was like Jesus, but he was like Judas.

Conclusion

Only when we realize something of the depth of our brokenness and sin can we turn in repentance and faith, with desperate longing and overwhelming gratitude, to the Lord who holds out to us the Word of life, the promise that in Christ's death, we die and in his resurrection we are raised to new life,