

# The Word Saves

Bible Background • John 12:27–50

Printed Text • John 12:44–50 | Devotional Reading • John 5:19–24

## Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will RECOGNIZE that Jesus is God, DESIRE a closer relationship with God through choosing to follow Christ, and SHARE with others the opportunity to come into the light of Christ.

## In Focus

Franklin hesitantly ascended the steps of the church. It had been a long time since he'd been in any church, but he couldn't stay away from DeShawn's funeral. He still couldn't believe that his friend had died so suddenly. He knew that DeShawn was in heaven, but that didn't help the ache in Franklin's heart.

The funeral started, and one by one, people shared how much DeShawn had meant to them. Franklin was touched when he heard the many testimonies of how DeShawn had shown God's love to others. His cousin said, "DeShawn lived his life in the certain hope that he had a place in heaven ready for him. But he also had hope that his mighty God could change this world too. That's why he fought so hard for change in our community." Finally, the preacher came up to give the message. "Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection and the life.' Those of us who have believed in Jesus Christ as our Savior know that we will see DeShawn again. We do not mourn as those who have no hope! We do have hope, and His name is Jesus."

Franklin thought about the preacher's words for several days afterwards. It had been a long time since he had hope of any kind. Maybe now was the time to gain new hope—the hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Because Jesus has conquered death, we have hope. What can we do to keep our hope vibrant in the face of impossible situations? Dr. Tiffany Garrett had been a physician for many years. She believed medicine was her calling and could not see herself doing anything else. In Tiffany's relationship with God, she viewed God's ways as truth and best. She often prayed, "God, let Your will be done in my life." However, as God began to reveal the light of His will, Dr. Garrett struggled with living out her prayer.

She wanted to obey what God was revealing to her through prayer, but she did not agree with God's plan. God was calling Tiffany to the mission field in Uganda. She would serve as a team member with the missionary team from her local church. She toiled within herself about what her parents, friends, colleagues, and everybody that knew her as a medical doctor would think. Dr. Garrett was divided in her heart about the decision. She could hear this Scripture in her head, "But all who reject me, and my message will be judged on the day of judgment by the truth I have spoken." Tiffany willingly surrendered. Twenty years later, Tiffany reminisced on her struggle to follow the direction God revealed to her. She reflected on all the miracles God performed in her personal life, the people who received salvation. That one decision to follow God's will for that season of her life. She reminisced about all the times she wondered if she had made the right decision.

Dr. Garrett concluded that trust, belief, and obedience to the Lord is never a mistake.

*What miracles or divine opportunities are you missing out on because you are rejecting the directions of the Lord? Who might come to know Jesus if you say YES?*

## Keep In Mind

"I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."

(John 12:46, KJV)

## Words You Should Know

**A. Abide** (John 12:46) meno (Gk.) – To stay, remain

**B. Believe** (v. 47) phulaxe (Gk.) – To guard or keep

## Say It Correctly

**Transfiguration.** trans-FIG-yur-AH-shun

## KJV

**John 12:44** Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.

45 And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.

46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

## NLT

**John 12:44** 44 Jesus shouted to the crowds, "If you trust me, you are trusting not only me, but also God who sent me.

45 For when you see me, you are seeing the one who sent me.

46 I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark.

47 I will not judge those who hear me but don't obey me, for I have come to save the world and not to judge it.

48 But all who reject me and my message will be judged on the day of judgment by the truth I have spoken.

49 I don't speak on my own authority. The Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and how to say it.

50 And I know his commands lead to eternal life; so I say whatever the Father tells me to say."

## The People, Places, and Times

**The Trinity.** One thing we know about God is that He is a God of relationship. In some ways God is a relationship. We can see this in God as Trinity. The Father relates to the Son. The Son relates to the Father. The Spirit relates to the Father and Son. They are a divine community so connected that they are one in essence. Although it is hard for our minds to comprehend, God is community and wants nothing less than for the people He created to dwell in community.

## Background

Jesus gives His farewell sermon to the Jewish people six days before the Passover. Jesus had returned to Bethany, where He had performed one of the greatest miracles: raising Lazarus from the death. The chief priests had deep-seated issues with Jesus and because of that miracle. Too many people had come to a believing faith in Jesus. The Pharisees plotted to kill Jesus (John 11:45–48).

Jesus laments over the unbelief in the land. The people had witnessed Jesus perform countless miracles, yet they persisted in unbelief. There were those who believed Jesus but would not confess their belief because of fear of the Pharisees; they loved the praises of men rather than God (John 12:42). Jesus mourns within Himself over the rejection of the words He has spoken and their ultimate rejection of God. He commends those that accept the light that He bears, and the redemption provided to them because they believe (John 12:44).

### At-A-Glance

1. Believing and Seeing Jesus (John 12:44–45)
2. Jesus Is Light in Darkness (v. 46)
3. Jesus the Rejected Savior (vv. 47–48)
4. Jesus Speaks as the Father Speaks (vv. 49–50)

## In Depth

### 1. Believing and Seeing Jesus (John 12:44–45)

Jesus had been the miracle worker in the eyes of the people. He did not work miracles behind closed doors or in an obscure fashion. Jesus worked miracles where everyone could see Him. In His farewell address to the Jewish people, Jesus laments over their unbelief in Him and who sent Him. Jesus desperately desired for the people to believe on the God that sent Him.

Jesus mourned over their blindness to see Him and ultimately see the Father who sent Him. Unbelief is regarded in Scripture as sin. It hinders salvation, deliverance, and the working of miracles in the lives of individuals but most importantly the lives of believers (John 8:24). The sin of unbelief severs the community of believers from God.

Jesus was broken hearted because the people He was sent to save could not believe and see the goodness of God though it dwelt among them. Jesus could have demonstrated the power of God so much more and performed more miracles if only the people could see and believe. The Jewish people believed the prophecies that foretold of the coming of the Messiah and believed God would keep His

word, but when God fulfilled the word of prophecy, the Jews were blinded to the excellence of Christ although He dwelt among them.

*How much have you limited God's power from working in your life because you could not see or believe in Him?*

## **2. Jesus Is Light in Darkness (v. 46)**

Darkness is the absence of light and truth in the world. It can be embedded in the lives of people as an environment where sin festers and Satan has access to steal, kill, and destroy. God sent Jesus into the world to free mankind from the bondage of sin. Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12). Jesus came so that people would not have to succumb to the darkness of this world. When Jesus is accepted as light, darkness must yield its grip so that we can live in freedom and live abundantly.

Jesus is the only source that provides light in dark circumstances. Jesus is the only way to God who is also light (1 John 1:5). Those who truly desire light will believe Jesus is the light of the world and will no longer live in darkness. Believing on Jesus means to accept Jesus as the Son of God and the Father who sent Him. Accepting Jesus as the light ensures power over the darkness of the world, and grants us fellowship with God the Father. Receiving Jesus as the light of the world means the power and blessing of salvation can be realized.

*In what areas of your life does darkness permeate and the light of Christ need to dwell?*

## **3. Jesus the Rejected Savior (vv. 47–48)**

Jesus has been called the rejected cornerstone (Psalm 118:22). Jesus understood that His purpose for being sent into the world was to redeem humanity back to God. Jesus reminded the Jewish people that even if they rejected His words and staggered in unbelief, He did not judge them (John 12:47). Jesus affirms that He came to be salvation for the world. Jesus lamented over the rejection of the people not receiving the word of God, because the word of God was salvation.

Jesus needed those who rejected Him and His words to understand that there was a cost. Rejecting Jesus as Savior has the penalty of death. The judgment would come on the last day should rejection be their final decision. The penalty of death could be avoided by accepting Him.

*Do you have a loved one that is rejecting Jesus as the Savior? What steps can you take to help them see and believe Jesus?*

## **4. Jesus Speaks as the Father Speaks (vv. 49-50)**

Throughout Jesus' ministry He reminds everyone that His purpose is only aligned to what the Father speaks and desires (John 5:19; 6:38). Every word that Jesus spoke came directly from God the Father. Every action Jesus performed is what the Father commanded.

God sent Jesus with a message to preach forgiveness of sin, the Gospel of salvation, and eternal life. Jesus spoke exactly what the Father said without deviation or flaw. Jesus proclaimed the Father's desire for everlasting life (John 12:50). Jesus came to fulfill His purpose of salvation from sin despite the rejection and persecution.

*How has God commanded you share the Gospel of salvation? Have you followed the command?*

## Search the Scriptures

1. Why was it important that when people believe on Jesus and His words, they believe God (John 12:44)?
2. Why did Jesus emphasize salvation and not judgment although they rejected Him (v. 47)?

## Discuss the Meaning

1. John 12 was ultimately Christ's message of salvation and His fulfilling the command to be a sin offering for humanity. Jesus lamented over the rejection of God's words through Him, yet Jesus focused on the assignment to preach everlasting life. What relevance does Jesus' commitment to the Gospel of salvation have on our own evangelism?
2. Reflect on your life before salvation, do you remember how desperately you needed a Savior? Reminisce on your salvation experience and the impact salvation has had in your life. With whom could you share your testimony of salvation within your neighborhood?
3. With whom could you share your testimony of salvation within your neighborhood?

## Liberating Lesson

The most compelling way to convey the message of salvation is to share the purpose of Christ's coming. It is also important to express the benefits of eternal life granted by the light of Jesus Christ. There is so much darkness in the world, with global disease, the senseless killing of marginalized people, corrupted government, and a divided church. All of this darkness can cause people so much pain and grief. Jesus came to provide solutions for all of these issues. When Christ is presented as Savior rather than a judge, more people freely see and believe God. Testimonies of salvation and conversion stories help make Christ reachable. As the church becomes more relatable, reachable, and tangible so does the message of Christ. Christ's message was simple and simple is what people need right now.

## Application for Activation

- Individual believers must share their testimonies with unbelieving family members, friends, and neighbors. Pray for opportunities to share testimonies with unbelievers. Commit to individual evangelism.
- The Church must show how Christ has liberated them from darkness so that the world will know Christ's freedom. Create opportunities and forums to share about the good the Church has done, and the evils the Church used to permit but now has rejected.

## Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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## Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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## More Light on the Text

### John 12:44-50

It is hard to fathom that some people today try to show a separation between Jesus and His Father. Some have gone so far as to say Jesus Himself was not certain He was the Messiah, suggesting He was hesitant in answering questions about His identity. This is not true of course, and in several instances in John's Gospel, including this passage before us, Jesus announces His deity and messiahship clearly.

The woman at the well mentioned that she knew the Messiah was coming—the prophesied One, He who is called Christ— and Jesus said, “I that speak unto thee am he” (John 4:26). To the Jews who asked Jesus to speak plainly about whether He was the Christ He said, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). They immediately tried to stone Him because they knew He was claiming to be equal to the Father. The Jews were hoping for a conquering Messiah, but they had no concept of the Messiah being one with the Father, even though the Old Testament taught this (e.g., Isaiah 9:6). Later, when His own disciples asked about His identity, Jesus said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father...Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (from John 14:9–11). Thus, no careful reading of the New Testament can seriously question that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah and that He was the Son of God.

**44 Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.**

**45 And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.**

John writes that Jesus “cried,” which in Greek is *krazo* (KRAD-zo), meaning to call loudly, like a crow might. Jesus is speaking with loud solemnity. He is responding in kind to the faithless, those of the people who saw His miracles but “were not believing in Him,” and the rulers who believed but “were not confessing Him, for fear they would be put out of the synagogue” (vv. 37, 42). Verse 36 said that Jesus had withdrawn from the people, so it is likely that these words in verses 44-50 were the apostle's summary of what Jesus said in this chapter, but also throughout His entire ministry. Jesus said simply believe in me. The Greek word *pisteuo* (peece-TEU-oo) and its derivative *pistis* (PIS-tis) are the most common New Testament words for “believe” or “faith.” The meaning is to trust confidently, and in this context, to follow and declare Jesus as Lord.

Verse 45 repeats the declaration of Christ's deity, but also includes an important revelation: if we wish to understand God, we can see Him fully displayed in the incarnate Son. The word for “see” used in Greek comes from the root *theoreo* (teh-oh-REH-oh) which refers to studying something, rather than casually observing it. As we gaze intently on Christ— His person, His words, and His actions—we increasingly understand the Father (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18). Christianity is not a matter of personal opinions or political leanings, but is centered on the life of Christ.

**46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.**

When we enter a dark room and flip the light switch, we have an immediate illustration for what illumination is. If we cannot see while writing in a dim environment, we begin looking for a light source (or our glasses). When we leave for a night drive, we will not reach the end of the driveway before we turn our headlights on. Jesus says in this verse that if we find ourselves groping in darkness, He is the only available light. We should look for Him. The very idea of light indicates that darkness is dispelled. In this case, Jesus is the antithesis of the fearfulness, ignorance, and deep dissatisfaction that are so evident in our society. What we have in Jesus is found nowhere else, and

these words assure us that believing in Him brings life and joy. Christ offers more than just improved vision; He offers life abundant.

Each person must do something, however, and that is believe. When the word “darkness” is used in Scripture, as here, it usually is referring to Satan or his kingdom. By the grace of God, the believer steps out of the power of this palpable wickedness into the light of Jesus by trusting in Him and by accepting His sovereignty in their lives. It is alarming that people, who are made to be in the Light, would rather dwell in the joyless, hopeless, and devil-infused darkness. Nevertheless, some do. Those of us who have chosen the Light and have become followers of Christ should remember that these words apply to us as well—even after conversion. We may have accepted Him as our Savior, but we must continually live each moment in the light of His presence. We can choose always to walk as those who are in the Light.

**47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.**

Jesus was speaking clearly: I am here to save. It is incidental that He emphasizes He is not in the world to judge. Judgment is certain for those who refuse to listen (v. 48), but we should not lose sight of Jesus’ main purpose of salvation. Jesus says when a person does not phulaxe (fu-LAH-ksay)—translated in the King James Version as “believe” but literally meaning to “guard”—he judges himself or herself. Later translations use the phrase “does not keep them” for “believe not,” in an effort to render an accurate translation. We could rightly translate that such a person who does not “keep” Christ’s words does not hold the words of the Lord closely, or does not “guard” them. As such, these people judge themselves by not holding to the Word.

The word “save” in Greek is sozo (SODE-zo), which can mean to heal a person from an illness or deliver them from peril. Jesus clearly announced the saving message of the Father, which had been in the works since the original fall of man. In popular teaching today, the idea of “the scarlet thread of redemption” is often used in reference to God’s revelation of salvation. This “thread” begins in Genesis and goes through Revelation. (An example of this “type” is recorded in Joshua 2:17–24 when Rahab was instructed to let down a red thread from her window, and so her entire family was saved.) All of the books of the Bible connect to reveal God’s loving-kindness and His desire that all would be saved and fellowship with Him (1 Timothy 2:4). Everything else is secondary, including judgment.

**48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.**

To reject Jesus is to declare Him invalid. Notice that a man or woman need not rail against Jesus to incur judgment; they only have to ignore Him. Sadly, our world today is filled with people who invalidate Jesus and His words. The first reference to “words” in this verse uses the word rhemata (rhe-ma-TA) in the Greek, and the second is logos (LO-gos). Rhemata appears in some modern translations as “my sayings,” while logos is simply translated “word.” Also, rhemata is more appropriately used for individual spoken or audible words, while logos refers to the truth in a more general and universal sense.

Jesus is referred to as the Logos (John 1:1), as He is the embodiment of the essence of the Father. It is a frightening possibility to reject what Jesus teaches and His incarnation of God’s truth. The result is that His truth and our reaction to it will be our judge rather than Jesus Himself. In essence, Jesus has already laid out the law; it is up to each of us to accept His words and follow them. How a person reacts to Jesus shows what he really is. If he sees in Christ something attractive, believable, true to His word, then he has shown that his heart has been warmed to the Savior. On the other hand, if a

person finds Jesus repulsive, rejects His words, considers those words false and unreliable, then he has shown he is not open to God, and has thus far judged himself. A conscious decision to accept Jesus is needed. Some call this section of Scripture the last sermon of Christ to Israel. Jesus had more to say to the disciples privately in the following chapters (the "Farewell Discourse," John 14–17), but these were His last public words in John's Gospel. Some of those who were standing nearby and listening to this final sermon were Jews, some of whom were in the process of rejecting Christ. Jesus is warning them that there is no way to the Father except through Himself, because He is the embodiment of the Father on earth. No racial heritage, no great learning, and no societal standing will bring a person into the kingdom of God; only the Messiah can do that, and Jesus is identifying Himself as that One.

**49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.**

The question arises, what specifically is Jesus speaking about? He is referring first to His identity as the Son of God and therefore His purpose as completely entwined with the Father. This condition was continuous during Jesus' earthly sojourn; it was a symphony playing through all of His miraculous works and authoritative teaching. Nevertheless, there were times when it was made plain. God spoke of Jesus when John baptized Him in the Jordan. As Jesus came up out of the water God said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). At the Transfiguration, the disciples heard the voice of God, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5). In the verses before today's text we hear that when Jesus said, "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (John 12:28). Long before this, the prophets spoke of His coming, for example Isaiah said, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). Jesus was well attested by the Father. This "commandment" given by the Father was an encompassing one that went with every word and action that Jesus took. The Greek word used, entole (en-to-LAY), refers to a single command (or a body of commands) that is usually a commission given by a king. Jesus walked in the fullness of God and so carried forth His commands. We remember that Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19).

**50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.**

Here the "commandment" is more clearly stated. This word "commandment," the same word used in verse 49, should be translated throughout these verses as something like "direction" or "commission," not as Moses would give a command, but as a way of thinking and being that would indicate how we should follow the Lord in Gospel living (see also John 13:34). This "life everlasting" is promised in the very essence of Jesus' life and deeds and not just in a single command. Other sayings of Jesus recorded in John's Gospel may help us here: "I am come that they may have life, and that they have it more abundantly" (from John 10:10); "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16–17). What Jesus brings to us is the salvation offered by God, and He does this with full assurance. He said, "I know" this life everlasting is offered! He happily brings this to anyone who would receive it. Sadly, this should remind us that if we put ourselves in opposition to His words we choose peril. On the other hand, if we choose Him, we follow His example and go about our gospel business with joy and purpose.

Jesus does not do this alone, for He reminds His listeners that His words carry the heft of the Father. Because of our knowledge of Jesus' place in the Trinity, which we know much more fully than those who were listening in that day, these words may seem unusual to us. It is as if He is including God to verify His words. In interpreting this and any of the words of Jesus while He was on earth, we must factor in the Incarnation. Though Jesus was fully God and had not lost any of His essence, He was not in His eternal position of glory. Here He was verifying that His words were given to Him by the Father, and so they carried the full weight of that authority. Knowing this, when Jesus said, "so I speak," the only acceptable response is, "we will heed."

# Daily Bible Readings

## **MONDAY**

You Must Be Born from Above  
(John 3:1–8)

## **TUESDAY**

Jesus Brings Eternal Life  
(John 3:9–17)

## **WEDNESDAY**

My Rock, Fortress, and Deliverer  
(2 Samuel 22:2–7)

## **THURSDAY**

Salvation Comes from God  
(Psalm 62)

## **FRIDAY**

Don't Neglect God's Message of Salvation  
(Hebrews 2:1–9)

## **SATURDAY**

Father, Glorify Your Name!  
(John 12:27–36)

## **SUNDAY**

Jesus, the Light of the World  
(John 12:44–50)