**Series: What Jesus Would Say**

*VBC*

*Pastor John Johnson*

*John 12:44-50*

*Sep 7-8, 2013*

**“The Wisdom of Indifference”**

Gordon MacDonald talks about 4 kinds of people in every church—Jesus had them in His “congregation”—

-VIP’s*—His disciples*

-VTP’s—trainable—those in the outer core—followers in the process of becoming disciples

-VDP’s—dependent—those with high need, who come and go and never change—*the paralytic—John 5*

-VNP’s—nice—but not always there when you need them—*the crowd—John 6*

-Jesus will focus on His VIP’s (13-16)

-but He will have one last conversation with the nice

-who occasionally followed Jesus—2, 6, 8, and here in 12

-they liked the miracles—like all crowds—they like a show, like the food

-they heard about Lazarus—so they again showed up—verse 18

-as with the other crowds, this multitude was a mix—representing almost every possible response

a. some believed, taking palm branches and shouting “Hosanna!” (verse 13)

b. some were curiosity seekers who wanted to see Jesus and get His autograph (verses 18-21)

c. some remained skeptical, unconvinced—like the crowd in John 6 (verses 36-37)

 *—believers and borderline believers—but they will disappear*

-what sets this conversation with the crowd apart from others is that this one is the last one

-there will be no more signs—no more debates

-just one more final summary

-we see this in Scripture—different people standing before the crowd for one last time—

-Joshua—who called Israel to choose today who they would follow-Joshua 24

-Elijah—who called Israel to make a choice: follow God or follow your pagan gods—I Kings 18

-Lady Wisdom—who gave a final challenge to those passing by—eat from my banquet or Lady Folly’s—but make a decision—Proverbs 9

-the Preacher in Ecclesiastes—who gave his final lecture—in the end only one thing matters—fear God—Ecclesiastes 12

Illustration—last sermon to my first church

-in it, I summarized what I believed was my mission

-underscored one more time what is most important

-not that everyone received it—and they did not receive this

*-so what does Jesus say?—read 12:44-50*

-the first thing to note is that Jesus screamed

-this was not some passive address—some *nuanced lawyerly presentation reviewing the facts*

-this was thunder from the top of the ramparts—this was Jesus calling out the crowd

Illustration—when Nate went to Coast Guard boot camp—“You have 12 seconds to get off the bus—and you already wasted 6”

-it was something like this

-it was clear there was urgency, mission

-reminding us Jesus did not come to be nice—“a kindergarten teacher of humanity”[[1]](#endnote-1)

-He came on mission—to call people into mission

-so He uses this final speech to summarize what has been His purpose—and by implication what is to be ours—

*1. TO REVEAL GOD TO THE WORLD—verses 44-45*

*-not hide Him, misrepresent Him*

-Jesus is saying to the crowd—if you look beyond the miracles

-if you look closely—if you look at Me—*you will see God*

-this is why I came—to be His revelation

-in every conversation—in every action—Jesus revealed something of God

a. when He chose unpromising recruits (John 1), He revealed God’s desire to work through us

 b. when He said no to His mother—He revealed God’s sensitivity to timing—John 2

 c. when He traveled 6 hours to meet a nameless woman at the well—He revealed God’s unexplainable grace—John 4

 d. when He both healed and confronted the paralytic (John 5) —He revealed God’s tendency to show goodness and severity

 e. when He fed the 5000 (John 6)—He revealed something of God’s compassion for those who hunger—John 6

 f. when He escaped to the mountain to pray—He revealed the importance God places on occasionally escaping to breathe pure air from the life support system of Word[[2]](#endnote-2)

 g. when He raised Lazarus from the dead He revealed something of God’s might—John 11

 h. and when He accepted Mary’s extravagant act of worship, He revealed something of the value God puts on worship

-John 1:18—Jesus came to exegete (i.e. read out, interpret, portray, detail) the very nature of God

-to make concrete what has been abstract—visible what has been invisible—

-Col 1:15—He is the image of the invisible God—the “icon” of God

-Heb 1:3—He is the exact representation of His nature

-in sum—*He is* *God in the flesh—God in action*

*-what you decide to do with Me—you have decided to do with God!*

-the church has the *same mission*—to show God, reflect God

-be the face of God to the world—BEHOLD WORLD—GOD!!!

*2. TO BRING PEOPLE OUT OF DARKNESS—verse 46*

*-not leave people in the dark*

-for a third time, Jesus declares this

-it’s a tough sell—people prefer the darkness—3:19

-“those who practice evil hate the light”

-for the light exposes our inherent bent toward evil

-but light enables us to no longer stumble in confusion

-trip over ourselves, fall into the ditches, run into things, step into traps, get lost—*stay stuck* *in the dark*

-with light comes life—Jesus came so that people might live, grow, thrive

-we have the same mission—to be the light—Matt 5:14-15

-give direction, bring clarity, expose things that deaden, bring life to the party

*3. TO RESCUE THE WORLD—verses 47-48*

*-not be its judge*

-Jesus came as God’s rescue operation—He did not come to scream judgment on street corners

-Jn 3:17—“For God did not send His Son into the world that He might condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him

Illustration—people who scream in public squares condemnation need to read this

-Jesus came to reconcile an estranged world back to God—draw the heart of the world back to God

-save it from debilitating shame

-His last words to the crowd amount to an offer to be saved—along with a warning

-there is a present—and a future reality

-we have the same mission—to be a voice of reconciliation—not a voice of condemnation

-yet a voice of warning—if we don’t—people slip into lukewarm spirituality

*4. TO BE GOD’S VOICE—verses 49-50*

*-not speak, try to impress with our own words*

-Jesus came to be God’s mouthpiece—His words were not self—generated

-they first came from the mouth of the Father—and then through the lips of Jesus

-something said over and over—

 *-“My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me”—7:16*

 *- “The words I speak to you I do not speak on My own—14:10*

*-He is defined from the beginning as the logos, the Word of God—1:1*

 -Word that flourishes into conversations and discourses that shape the book[[3]](#endnote-3)

 -intended to shape us—that we might thrive—live at the deepest level

-we have the same mission—be His voice—Pentecost made us a prophetic community-Acts 2:17

-to listen and speak whatever He speaks

-speaking against the status quo, challenging existing structures, pointing out sin’s consequences

-speaking words of life

*5. TO BE HOLY INDIFFERENT*

*-not obligated to our own will*

-it is clear in all that Jesus says that the only thing that mattered is the will of the Father

-something He underscored from the beginning—

 *-“I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (6:38)*

 *-“I can do nothing on My own”—5:19*

 *-“the works I do have been given by the Father” (5:36)*

 *-“My food has been to do His will” (4:34)*

APPLICATION—on Sabbatical—why does Jesus come off as so indifferent at times in John?

1. not yielding to His mother’s wishes in John 2—Woman, what is it to Me?—John 2
2. not seeking to impress Nicodemus—a religious leader—bluntly telling him he needs to start over, be born again
3. showing no regard for established protocol and prejudice with the woman at the well—John 4
4. confronting the lame man and challenging his desire to be healed—John 5
5. telling the adoring crowd that the only reason they have gathered is that they are driven by their bellies—John 6
6. stalling when He hears Mary and Martha need Him immediately—John 11

-sometimes He seems unmoved, apathetic, cold, aloof, or unsympathetic—even here—a bit impersonal

-but this passage gives the answer—

-Jesus did not come for them

-did not come to satisfy expectations, fit into peoples’ timelines, please the crowd, do their bidding

-affirm fragile self-esteem

-He never sought to impress—was not afraid to alienate

Galli—“The most tempting idol—is to imagine Jesus is the servant of our desires”[[4]](#endnote-4)

-which amounts to a Jesus without substance

-to use Matt Mikalatos’ words—*Imaginary Jesus*

*-what matters most—what matters always—WHAT MATTERS ONLY—is the will of the Father*

CONCLUSION

What if we truly lived this way?

-became increasingly indifferent to anything but the will of God?

-sifted every thought, every act through the grid—Is this what the Father, the Son, and the Spirit want?

-is this what They are saying?

Ruth Haley Barton—the first and most essential dynamic of discernment is the movement toward indifference

-indifferent to my wants, my will—indifferent to undue attachments, outcomes—anything that keeps us from God and His will

“I am indifferent to anything but God’s will”

1. Galli, 175 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Yancey, 90 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Peterson, Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places, 89 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Galli, 171 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)