

Sermon 11th October 2020

Do you remember the WWJD bracelets or wrist bands of the 1990's? Perhaps you remember the cooler, younger members of the church wearing wrist band with the letters WWJD on them. Now I was never cool enough or indeed brave enough to wear of these bands, although several of my friends in the youth group did. The letters on the bands stood for What Would Jesus Do and were meant to remind the wearer of their responsibility to act and behave as Jesus did. This challenge was to demonstrate the love of Jesus through their actions and that this witness would draw people to Jesus.

This morning we are going to look at WDJJ, that is "what did Jesus do" and WDTMTM that is, "what does this mean to me."

Firstly, a bit of context for our verses. Chapter 11 told the story of the raising of Lazarus **John 11:1 - 44**, which caused the Jewish Council (also known as the Sanhedrin) and the high priest to plot Jesus' death **John 11:45 - 54**. Chapter 12 opened with the story of Mary anointing Jesus at Lazarus' home, an anointing which Jesus said was "for the day of my burial" **John 12: 1 - 8**. The chief priests are plotting to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus, because "it was on account of Lazarus that many of the Jews were deserting them and were following syJesus" **John 12: 9 -11**.

This was followed by the Palm Sunday narrative **John 12: 12 - 19**, which concluded with these words, spoken by the Pharisees "Behold, the world has gone after him!" which leads directly into the next verse, where some Greeks, representatives of "the world" the Pharisees had spoken about come to see Jesus.

In verse 20 God-fearing Greeks or Gentile have just turned up and ask to speak with Jesus. What was Jesus response to the request of these Greeks? Well not what you would expect. Jesus told His disciples and possibly the Greeks "The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (v. 23). Why did Jesus respond with this rather cryptic remark? Well because Jesus knew that the approach of the Greeks was the beginning of the final chapter. Soon the path He was on would lead Him to death at

Golgotha. His ministry to the nation of Israel was finished and the ministry to “all men” was beginning. The turning point was the raising of Lazarus, in response to which the world (including these Greeks) comes seeking Jesus, causing the opposition to Jesus to harden. Suddenly the cross, which had always been in the background of Jesus’s life and ministry suddenly moved to centre stage. In the shadow of the cross Jesus’ thought turned to His imminent crucifixion and death. Even as He contemplates His own death Jesus seeks to explain the need for His death to those around Him with a short teaching parable. **John 12: 24** *“Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”* Jesus was illustrating the truth that for there to be many seeds, that is for all men to draw unto Him he must first die. This is a paradox that for life to come to many, the one, Jesus must die. There was temptation for Jesus as He look at all that was happening around Him Jews were leaving the Pharisees and turning to Him, the multitudes had turned out to welcome Him into Jerusalem and now even the Greeks or Gentiles were coming to Him. Jesus must have been tempted to think that He could just go on preaching and healing as had been and that God’s purposes would be met, after all it seemed to be going so well, wasn’t it? Jesus may have pondered did He really have to endure the cross. Yet Jesus recognises God’s will can only be worked out through His death on the cross at Golgotha. It is only through His death can God draw all men to Himself. This is a paradox that for life to come to many, the one, Jesus would have to die.

Jesus goes on to develop the parable he just told. He does this by introducing another paradox that those who love life in this world will lose it and those who hate life in this world will keep it for eternal life. This is a difficult verse to get to grips with and need to be understood that Jesus is using hyperbole, that is exaggeration to make a point. Jesus uses two contrasting and opposite words that is love and hate to highlight a person attitude to following God’s will. Just as Jesus was not commanding people to actually "hate" their family **Luke 14:26**, He is not telling us to actually "hate" our lives. Rather, He's saying that we must priorities God’s will over our own will. Those who want to cling to the world, demonstrate that they love the world too much, that is choose their own will over Gods too much to be able to sincerely claim they are followers of Jesus **Mark 10:21–23**.

In other passages, Jesus speaks of the fundamental choice between the world and God **Matthew 10: 39; Mark 8: 35 – 36**. A person cannot cling to worldly things and still make God their top priority. Those who seek to truly follow Christ have to—as it would seem to the world—lose everything. The end result, however, is exactly what the seed—the believer—was always intended for, which is something greater and more glorious **1 Corinthians 15: 36 – 42**.

It's important to understand the narrow context of Jesus' words here. Jesus is not commanding us to hate and despise this world; to draw apart from it like some hermit living in cave somewhere. Look at Jesus life He appears to have rather enjoyed his life. Indeed, the thought of leaving His life caused Him great suffering. Rather Jesus uses love and hate to illuminate where a person focus is, what is important to them? Is there focus on themselves and gaining all that they can for themselves whether that be wealth, fame, recognition, ease of life, friendship or anything else they want or demand. Or are they prepared to put God's will first and forgo the blandishments of this world? It is a simple question of who are you living for yourself or for God? It should be noted that when Jesus speaks of those who love this world losing their life Jesus is not speaking of sometime in the distant future when we shuffle off this mortal coil, no the sense of what He is saying that is that the love of this world is actively destroying, or killing them now. To live your life loving this world solely for yourself is to literally kill or destroy the real authentic you who was born to fellowship with God, serve God and glorify God.

Jesus then says to them something I wish as a parent I could have said to Hannah, Sarah and Lucas, that is “don't do as I say do as I do”. Jesus is about to show the greatest example of “hating the world”, that is choosing to do God's will. He is going to choose to go to the cross, obeying God's will and bringing glory to God and by giving up His earthly life. Jesus didn't just preach you have to put God's will first, no Jesus lived it out. We are all as Believer called to put God first, to say day by day, moment by moment, not my will but yours be done. This “hating” of the world and all its blandishments is not easy it is difficult, troubling, costly and quite frankly the world thinks it is madness. Yet Jesus says that those who do as He does God will honour. God sees the true motives of our lives and actions and will honour and value our decisions to put His will first. How we live our life here in our day to day existence

matters to God and when we prioritise His will over our own, God will see what is done and value both the deed and the doer.

Is it easy for us to prioritise God's will over our own, no it is not? Was it easy for Jesus to surrender His life, to choose God's will for Him, no it was not? Verse 28 provides a fascinating glimpse into the humanity of Jesus Christ. Here He describes Himself the same way He did when approaching Lazarus' grave **John 11:33**. It's the same term John chose to depict the turbulence of the pool of water at Bethesda **John 5:7**. All of these passages use the Greek root word *tarassō*, often translated as "troubled," implying an agitation or disturbance. As one who is fully human, Jesus experienced the same troubled emotions of fear, terror, anxiety, dread as anyone else would given all He knows of what's to come **John 19: 1; 19: 16**.

In verse 28 Jesus is saying the same thing He'll pray later in the garden of Gethsemane **Matthew 26: 39; Luke 22: 42**. Then in that Garden of tears, with His death hours away, Jesus will make the request His humanity is begging for that he be spared the horrors of the cross. At the same time, and without contradiction, He will pray for the will of God the Father to be done. Here, Jesus is saying the same thing, in a somewhat less dramatic form. His statement recorded here is along the lines of saying, "I can pray to be spared the cross, but I know God's will is for this to happen." Jesus chooses to glorify God, to do God's will, to hate the world to go to the cross.

So WDJJ? Jesus choose to obey God, to hate the world and to suffer the shame, iniquities, betrayals and pain of the cross so that our sins could be forgiven, and so we can be called a child of God. Satan was defeated and the sting of death removed. God was glorified in Jesus choice and God honoured Jesus who now sits at His right hand.

So WDTMTM? As Jesus said if you call yourself a Christian, literally a follower of Christ then you too have a choice to make to "love" or "hate" this world, serve God or yourself, to choose God's will or your own, to be where Jesus is or not. This is not a one-off decision, but a series of decisions to be made minute by minute, moment by moment as we pass through life. These decision are not made by your resolve, strength or determination these decisions to follow God's will are only made possible

by the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the opportunity to choose is only made possible by the Holy Spirit illuminating our hearts, showing us God's will in the first place. We are all challenged to consider WWJD or rather I think WWJCTD, that is "what would Jesus choose to do".