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Reformed Presbyterian Church
Lord's Day Morning
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#68

“The Purpose of the Cross II”

John 12:31

Introduction

Friday night was such an exciting night. And a wonderful foretaste of what we anticipate happening here in just a couple of months. I'm talking, of course, about the organizational service for Christ Church, the new Reformed Presbyterian Church on the Westside of Indianapolis. There is so much that takes place in one of these services – five significant events. (The organizing and formalizing of a new and distinct congregation including the receiving of her founding members; the calling of the first pastor; the installation of the pastor; the election of elders; and the ordination and/or installation of the first elders.) But in the middle of all of the necessary movements and motions and procedures there is the one thing that is most important – one thing that drives all of the sacrifice and vision and commitment that is required. And that one thing is the cross of Jesus Christ. It is solely for the sake of the gospel of redemption secured at Calvary that these types of things take place.

Last time we were talking about the purposes of the cross. We saw that Jesus was troubled in His spirit. And we began to wonder why the Son of God would be troubled by the events and circumstances of life. The answer, we saw, was that He was about to go to the cross. Jesus was a few short hours from the most horrible event in history. Jesus was about to die. He who knew no sin was about to become sin. He who existed eternally in perfect union with

His Father in heaven was about to be separated from Him. He who had only ever known the pleasure and the blessing of God was about to receive His wrath for the sin of men.

And yet, as we saw, rather than asking God to change the plan, Jesus embraced the purpose of the cross. His prayer reflected the first purpose of the cross. *Father, glorify your name.* The cross was not the defeat of Christ. The cross was His plan and purpose. And in going to the cross, God received great glory because of all that was accomplished.

This morning we want to examine a further purpose for the cross. Jesus went to the cross to defeat Satan. From the beginning of time Satan has wreaked great havoc on the earth. He has opposed the things of God, ruled over the enemies of God and deceived the nations. But at the cross, a significant and eternal blow was dealt to the ruler of this world. It is to this purpose of the cross that we will give our attention today.

[John 12:27-36]

Verse 31 is the key verse of our text today. *Now judgment is upon this world, now the ruler of this world will be cast out.* There are three questions we want to answer this morning from this text.

1. What is the judgment upon the world?
2. Who is the ruler of this world?
3. In what sense is Satan cast out?

I. What is the judgment upon the world?

This word judgment is used in various ways in the New Testament and it is right to see it in its broadest application in this context. Sometimes this word is used only to refer to the punishment and horror of the final judgment of God at the last great

day for those who have rejected Christ. But in its fullest sense the Day of Judgment has both positive and negative ramifications. As a Christian you will stand before the judgment seat. But because of the cross, it will not go poorly for you. Because of the cross, Jesus Christ will stand up and receive you as His own, because at the cross He took upon Himself your sin and the wrath of God. On the other hand, for those who are apart from Christ it will be the most terrifying day of their existence and the first of an eternity of days like it.

In our verse here we can see that it is the cross that is the dividing line for judgment. In the end it will be your relationship to the cross that will determine your judgment. So we are to understand that because of the cross, the Day of Judgment is coming and for all intents and purposes *has* come – is upon us - because of what Jesus did on the cross.

So then when Jesus says, *now judgment is upon this world* we are to have confidence that the destructive nature of judgment is implied – that is the condemnation of the enemies of God – and the positive aspects of judgment – the judging and ruling over a kingdom for the purpose of its reformation. Neither of these could come apart from the cross.

And so the point of impact for you today ought to be your relationship to the cross. Have you come to believe and trust in Christ's work on the cross? If you have not been crushed and convicted of your sin to the point of repentance and faith in Jesus, then at least understand that the judgment of God is upon you and if you die tonight you face an eternity of terror. If you have trusted in Christ, keeping believing in Him and don't ever start hoping in anything beyond the work of Christ.

II. Who is the ruler of this world?

First, let's review our biblical theology. What do we know about God? Consider the Psalms we have already sung.

Psalm 68 – *O all ye kingdoms of the earth, sing praise unto God; and Him **who is the Lord of all** with praises do ye laud . . . **All** strength to God do ye ascribe because His majesty. **Is over** Israel; His strength is in the heavens high.*

Psalm 144 – *O rescue me and save, grant me deliverance, from hands of alien folk, from power of foreigners.*

Psalm 99 – *The **Lord is King** indeed! Let peoples quail and fear! He sits above the cherubim let earth be moved. The Lord in Zion **rules, and over all is high**; O praise His great and dreadful name, the Holy One.*

Psalm 45 – *Thy sword gird on Thy thigh, O Thou **supreme in might**, and gird Thyself with majesty and with Thy splendor bright. . . Thine arrows sharpened are, Men under Thee to bring, **to pierce the heart of enemies** who fight against the King.*

Of course there are many verses and passages that clearly teach that God alone is the Supreme Ruler and King and Sovereign One. Additionally the stories of the Bible illustrate His power and control over all of creation.

So then, first and foremost, it is necessary that we understand that Satan is not like God. He is not omniscient, omnipresent or omnipotent. He is, in fact, subject to God in every way. We can see his power and cunning in the Garden of Eden. But we also see that he is indicted, tried, judged, and sentenced by God for his actions. We see in the story of Job that he acts only with permission from the Almighty.

But still he is called here the ruler of the world. In Ephesians 2 his title is *the prince of the*

power of the air. Ephesians 6 says he is a *world force of darkness* that fires fiery missiles. I John 5:19 tells us that *the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* James says he's a roaring lion. Jesus called him the father of lies and deceiver of the world.

And so we know that Satan is a powerful foe and enemy. And we can rightly affirm that he rules over darkness and those who hate Christ. For much of history he held the nations of the world in bondage and blinded their eyes. So, is he the ruler of the world? The answer is yes – but only in a limited sense – only in so much as the world represents that which lies in darkness.

But this of course leads us to the real crux of the text this morning and to the point of the cross and our final question.

III. In what sense is Satan cast out?

When Jesus was born and began His earthly ministry, things began to change in the world. Certain freedoms that Satan had been allowed, certain powers to deceive the world began to be curbed. Remember when Jesus sent His disciples out 2x2? When they returned, filled with joy and excitement because of the fruitfulness of their labors, Jesus said, *I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.*

Later Jesus explained what was happening. In Matthew 12, Jesus cast out a demon that had been possessing a man causing him to be blind and mute. The crowd witnessed this miracle and were nearly overcome with astonishment. They'd never seen anything like it and immediately they were speculating that Jesus might be the Promised One. Predictably the Pharisees began to panic. So they tried to explain to the crowd that Jesus had done this

by the power of Satan. To this Jesus says, *If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? . . . But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.*

What Jesus was saying was that by His coming He had bound the strong man. He had entered Satan's house, where God had given him permission to deceive and blind, and Jesus had bound him. This idea is taught again in Revelation 20 with further explanation. Listen to verses 1-3. *Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.*

If you remember that Revelation is written with all kinds of symbolic language you can begin to see and understand that through the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, Satan has been bound. This is not a literal binding – but language that shows us that he has been limited and restricted in his activities. The thousand years is not some future time frame – but a symbolic number that represents the period of time from the cross until shortly before His return. We live in that time. Satan, in a certain sense, is bound.

But most importantly we are told the reason for the binding and limitations imposed on Satan. It is so *that he would not deceive the nations any longer*. Up until the resurrection of Christ the nations were held in bondage by Satan. No nation

would turn to Christ. No nation would believe except Israel. But after His earthly work was done and Satan was cast out, the nations began to turn to Christ. No longer was the enemy allowed to blind them. No longer could he succeed in deceiving them.

The casting out of Satan doesn't mean that he no longer works. It doesn't mean that his final judgment has come. Certainly individuals are still blinded and deceived. Certainly he still wages war against God and His church. Certainly he is still a powerful foe. But what Jesus is telling us here in John 12:31 is that the purpose of His cross was to cast out Satan from his position of the deceiver of the nations. No longer would he be allowed to do what he'd done for centuries. So the purpose of the cross was to cast him out.

But the cross did more than bind him for a season. Secondly, at the cross Satan was ultimately defeated. His future and outcome was sealed. This was the prophecy and sentence imposed upon him at his trial in the Garden of Eden. *And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.* At the cross, Jesus' heel was bruised. But at the cross, Satan's head was crushed. I John 3:8 says "*the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.*" Hebrews 2:14 says that *through death He (Jesus) might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.* And maybe most clearly and powerfully we have this historic overview of Satan given to us in Revelation 12:7-11. *And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and*

*there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. **"And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb** and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.*

What are the implications of Jesus' words?

Two things:

1. The nations can be evangelized and disciplined. Because Satan has been cast down we go to Yemen; we go to Sudan; we go to Japan; we go back to Scotland.

2. You are safe. If you belong to Christ, Satan cannot destroy you. Listen to I John 5:18. *We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, **and the evil one does not touch him.***

Because Jesus endured the cross for you, you have life. Because He went to the cross the kingdom of God is coming on earth as it is in heaven. Brethren, you have the Spirit of God in you. Do not keep on sinning. Live in the freedom He has given you. This is your right and privilege in Christ.