



Going “all in” with Jesus

Pastor Jon Duncan – John 12

Kick Start:

What was the most memorable verse or thought from John 12?

Main Point:

Are you “all in” with Jesus? Are you like Mary, offering sacrificial love and seeking to understand Jesus’ true mission? Or do we, like Judas, approach Him with self-serving motives, or like the crowd, with temporal expectations? Genuine faith involves complete surrender, loving spiritual life above earthly life, and actively following Jesus as master.

Summary:

John chapter 12 brings us to the final week of Jesus' earthly ministry, beginning with Mary's extravagant anointing of Jesus at a dinner in Bethany and Judas's bitter objection to her costly gift. Meanwhile, a large crowd gathered, drawn by the miracle of Jesus having raised Lazarus from the dead. The crowd greeted Jesus with palm branches and cried out messianic hopes, before pivoting to the arrival of Greek seekers—a signal that prompts Jesus to declare "the hour has come" for His glorification through death. Throughout the chapter we see how Jesus prepares His disciples and the crowd for His coming crucifixion, culminating in His final passionate appeal to believe in Him before His public ministry ends.

Message Outline:

I. Worship and Stewardship

Mary's anointing of Jesus represents three kinds of devotion—remarkable humility (anointing His feet, not His head), remarkable extremity (a pound of costly spikenard worth a year's wages), and remarkable unselfconsciousness (letting down her hair in public, which a Jewish woman would rarely do). Judas's objection to Mary's gift reveals his hypocrisy and greed all conducted in secret.

John 12:1-8

Talk About It:

1. How does Mary’s willingness to offer such a costly and public demonstration of love, challenge or inspire your own expressions of devotion to Jesus?
2. What does Mary’s act of anointing Jesus show about her understanding of who He is?
3. Heart Question: In what ways are you tempted to value money, approval, or possessions more than Jesus?
4. Heart Question: What is one “costly” act of worship you can offer to Jesus this week?
5. What does Judas’s reaction and ultimate betrayal reveal about the dangers of having expectations of Jesus that are not aligned with His true mission?

II. Jesus as King

The crowds welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem with palm branches, shouting ‘Hosanna,’ as they primarily envisioned Him as a political king who would overthrow Rome. Jesus, in response, deliberately chose to ride a young donkey, declaring that He was not a conquering political leader but a King of peace, whose mission was to be a “savior from sin,” not a “political savior.” Despite the celebratory atmosphere, Jesus audibly wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44), grieving their rejection of Him as Messiah and foreseeing the city’s future destruction because they “did not know the time of His visitation.”

John 12:12-19

Talk About It:

1. How does Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem challenge our expectations of leadership and power?
2. How does the disciples' initial misunderstanding in v16 encourage us when we struggle to understand God's work in our lives?
3. Heart Question: Do you follow Jesus as He is revealed in Scripture, or as you imagine Him to be?
4. How does acknowledging Jesus as King affect your daily decisions and priorities?

III. Dying to Self

When Greeks come seeking to see Jesus, He recognizes this as the signal that His hour has come for glorification—not through earthly triumph but through death on the cross, which will draw all peoples to Him. Jesus's teaching on the grain of wheat dying to produce much fruit applies both to His own death and to His disciples' call to follow Him in an “all in” commitment by losing their earthly life in order to keep it for eternity.

John 12:20-26

Talk About It:

1. What does it mean for you personally to “lose your life” for Christ’s sake?
2. Heart Question: How might your life express a “lazy” faith that does not emphasize Jesus as your priority?
3. Heart Question: What self-centered habit or “seed” is God calling you to let fall to the ground so that He can bring forth fruit in you?
4. In what ways can we prepare for our own “hour” of glorifying God? What does it look like to glorify God?

IV. Light and Darkness

Jesus’ soul was “troubled” as He faced the horrifying human experience of the cross, yet He fully surrendered to His Father's will. This ultimate act of sacrifice, His being “lifted up” in crucifixion, was to “draw all people to Himself” and glorify the Father, breaking Satan's power over the world. The people did not understand what He was teaching. They knew that “Son of man” was a title for Messiah, but they could not understand why the Messiah would be crucified! It was an hour of judgment and an hour of opportunity. The light was shining, and they had better take advantage of their opportunity to be saved!

John 12:27-36

Talk About It:

1. How do these verses challenge any tendencies one might have to delay a full surrender to Christ, and what does it reveal about the seriousness of each ‘no’?
2. What does it mean for you to ‘believe in the light’ today, and how can you ensure you are actively receiving and letting His light transform you rather than remaining in darkness?
3. Heart Question: Are there areas of your life where you are still walking in darkness rather than the light of Christ?

V. Fear and Faith

There were those who would not believe, and there were those who would not openly confess Christ even though they had believed. Some would say this is false, shallow, or lazy faith with no surrender, no denying self and taking up cross to follow Jesus. Some would say that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea belonged to this group initially but eventually came out openly in their confession of Christ. It was the old struggle between the glory of God and the praise of people and these “secret believers” wanted the best of both worlds.

John 12:37-43

Talk About It:

1. Why do you think people can witness miracles or hear the truth and still not believe?
2. What might it look like for us to be more concerned with what people think of us rather than what God sees in us?
3. What holds you back from openly sharing your faith, and how can you overcome it?

VI. The Word That Judges

God sent the Son and to see the Son means to see the Father. Jesus is the Light of the World and His words are the very words of God. Faith in Him brings salvation; to reject Him is to face eternal judgment. In fact, the very Word that Jesus spoke will judge those who have rejected it and Him!

John 12:44-50

Talk About It:

1. Heart Question: Jesus said that His Word will judge on the last day—how seriously do you take His teachings?
2. If someone watched your life this week, what would they conclude you believe Jesus’ words mean for you personally?
3. How does this passage deepen your understanding of Jesus’ mission and your accountability to respond?

Wholehearted surrender

This five-day devotional walks deeper into John 12's urgent summary of Jesus' ministry: He is the Light who came to save, yet persistent refusal to believe carries real spiritual consequences. Each day invites you to move from mere agreement to wholehearted surrender—responding to Christ while the Light is near. Come honestly, listen closely, and ask God to form genuine, “all in” faith in you.

Day 1 - John 12:44-46

Jesus' final public words in John's Gospel are not casual closing remarks—they are a merciful, last-call invitation. He cries out that believing in Him is not simply adopting a religious opinion; it is trusting the One the Father sent. Pastor Jon's sermon emphasized that many around Jesus had “head belief” that never reached the heart, and John records this summary so we won't settle for a faith that observes Jesus from a safe distance.

Jesus identifies Himself as Light, and that image is both comforting and confronting. Light reveals what's real—our need, our sin, our false securities—and it also shows the way home. The urgency in Jesus' voice reminds us that spiritual openness is not guaranteed forever; the next step of faith matters. Today begins with a simple, honest question: am I coming into the Light to be changed, or staying near the edges so I can remain the same?

1. Where are you most tempted to keep Jesus at a distance—relationships, habits, priorities, or hidden fears?
2. What would “coming into the Light” look like in one specific area of your life this week?
3. In your own words, write what you believe Jesus is inviting you to trust about Him (not just know about Him).
4. Set aside 10 minutes today to read John 12:44-46 slowly and ask God to expose any self-deception gently and clearly.
5. Tell God one thing you are ready to bring into the open, and ask for courage to respond rather than postpone.

Day 2 - John 12:24-26

Jesus explains what genuine faith looks like by using a seed: life comes through death, fruit comes through surrender. The sermon described saving faith as going “all in”—not earning salvation by effort, but yielding your whole self to Christ because you believe He is worth more than everything else. This kind of faith doesn't treat Jesus as an add-on; it follows Him into a new way of living.

Jesus' words also clarify that discipleship is not a vague feeling—it is a path: serving, following, being where He is. That does not mean neglecting responsibilities on earth; it means re-ordering them under a greater love. When spiritual life becomes more precious than comfort, reputation, or control, it's evidence that the Light is truly taking root and bearing fruit.

1. What is one “seed” you sense God asking you to let fall into the ground—an attitude, an agenda, a craving for control?
2. How would your schedule change if following Jesus was your first priority rather than a secondary one?
3. Name one area where you want fruit (peace, purity, courage, love) but resist the surrender that produces it.
4. Choose one concrete act of service you can do in Jesus' name this week, even if no one notices.
5. Pray: “Father, make my faith real—teach me to follow Jesus where He leads, not only where it's easy.”

Day 3 - Hebrews 5:7-8

Jesus does not call us to surrender from a distance; He surrendered first, in full humanity. Hebrews says He offered prayers with loud cries and tears, and He learned obedience through what He suffered. The sermon highlighted that the Father heard the Son, yet did not remove the cross—because salvation required more than sympathy; it required substitution. This means your suffering and your wrestling prayers are not signs you've been abandoned; they can be places where obedience is formed.

This also guards us from shallow faith. If Jesus Himself embraced costly obedience, we should not be surprised when genuine trust involves letting go, waiting, and enduring. The comfort is that our High Priest understands from the inside. He does not merely command surrender—He meets you in it, strengthens you through it, and uses it to deepen your faith beyond mere words.

1. When you face pain or pressure, do you tend to withdraw from God, perform for God, or be honest with God?
2. What is one specific situation where you need to pray with greater honesty rather than polished phrases?
3. How might God be forming obedience in you through a hardship you would never have chosen?
4. Write a short prayer of surrender patterned after Jesus: “Not my will, but Yours,” naming the issue clearly.
5. Reach out to a trusted believer for prayer today, practicing humility instead of carrying the burden alone.

Day 4 - Isaiah 55:6

“Seek the LORD while he may be found” is not meant to create panic but to awaken seriousness. The sermon warned against the habit of spiritual delay—assuming you can keep saying “later” without consequence. In John 12, repeated refusal hardened into inability, not because God is cruel, but because persistent resistance can become a settled posture that God eventually confirms as judgment.

This day is about responding to God’s nearness. Opportunities to repent and believe are gifts, not guarantees, and the Spirit’s conviction is grace. If you sense God pressing on your heart, that tenderness is something to treasure—not to drown out with distraction. The safest response is a simple one: seek Him now, call on Him now, and let today be the day you stop negotiating with obedience.

1. Where have you been telling God “not yet,” and what reasons do you usually give?
2. What distractions most effectively dull your spiritual sensitivity—media, busyness, cynicism, secret sin, or fear?
3. Take five minutes in silence and ask: “Lord, what are You saying to me right now that I’ve been avoiding?”
4. Write down one immediate step of obedience you can take in the next 24 hours and when you will do it.
5. Pray for someone you love who is resisting God, asking for mercy, clarity, and timely responsiveness.

Day 5 - John 12:47-50

Jesus says He did not come to condemn the world but to save it—yet He also says His words will judge on the last day. The sermon held these together: the posture of Jesus toward sinners is saving mercy, but rejecting Him is not neutral. His words are not suggestions; they are truth from the Father, and to refuse them is to refuse the only Light that can lead out of darkness.

Today’s invitation is to settle what your life will be built on. Superficial belief admires Jesus when it’s convenient, but genuine faith receives His words as life—trusting His cross and resurrection as your only hope and yielding to His authority as Lord. The goal is not to manufacture anxiety, but to cultivate clarity: salvation is a gift to receive, and discipleship is the fruit of receiving it with an “all in” heart.

1. If someone watched your life this week, what would they conclude you believe Jesus’ words mean for you personally?
2. What part of Jesus’ teaching do you most resist—His authority, His call to repent, His exclusivity as Savior, or His claim on your priorities?
3. In a brief sentence, write what you are trusting for eternal life, and be as specific and honest as possible.
4. Pray a surrendering prayer: confess sin, thank Jesus for the cross and resurrection, and ask for a faith that obeys.
5. Identify one habit you will change to “keep His words” (John 12:47)—and choose a small, measurable first step today.

Prayer Points:

- May our worship of Jesus be a lavish and humble offering, like Mary's, so that the fragrance of His presence fills our lives and is evident to everyone we are around.
- Help us recognize every opportunity to serve those in need.
- Help us approach you Father with hearts ready with honest confession, continually repenting of our selfishness and distractions, and gratefully receiving your cleansing and forgiveness.
- Grow our faith to be in complete surrender, going "all in" with Jesus so that our relationship with Him is center of our lives.
- May we respond with open hearts to God's invitations today, embracing every opportunity to hear His voice and surrender, rather than squandering the precious time we have.
- May our hearts remain soft and receptive to the Holy Spirit's promptings.
- Pray for the needs of the group.