

IS THIS TIME FOR AN INVITATION

John 10:32-42 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Is this time for an invitation in the darkness of our world? Yes, it is! Yes, it is! Yes, it is! Years ago, E. Stanley Jones gave us good advice on how to be light in our darkness today, in the darkness of yet another day of assassin's bullets flying. He said, "In the pure, strong hours of the morning, when the soul of the day is at its best, lean upon the windowsill of the Lord and look into His face, and get orders for the day. Then go out into the world with a sense of a Hand upon your shoulder and not a chip." Even in stoning and killing times, give the lost in our dark world an invitation to receive the wonderful Lord Jesus Christ into their hearts and lives.

When Jesus was teaching at the Feast of Dedication, Hannukah, He said, "I and the Father are One," (John 10:30) It was stoning time in the colonnade of Solomon. What a killing picture it is! Stones in the hands of these incensed, irate Pharisees who were ready to kill Jesus for claiming to be who He was and is. Who would dream that Jesus would consider this was time to make a final call, to give one more invitation to His "would be" murderers? Sadly, most evangelical believers today frown on giving invitations and oppose them. They say God doesn't need or want invitations or what some call "altar calls." Can invitations be abused? Yes, they can! Yet, Jesus' example of giving an invitation to believe in Him to the Pharisees ready to stone Him, cut through both the opposition and the abuse to show us—Spirit-led invitations are always appropriate. Paul said in I Corinthians 6:2, "Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the days of salvation. Hebrews 3:7,15,4:7 say, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."

In Solomon's porch during Hannukah when Jesus told the crowd, "I and the Father are One," there was no soft music playing in the background. There was no orderliness in this chaotic moment. Fists full of stones were raised to kill Jesus. Jesus' disciples must have been backing away, not wanting to join Jesus in being stoned. It wasn't a moment of every head bowed and every eye closed. What was going to happen? Would Jesus die on the spot by stoning? Then it happened, and it seems almost unreal. Jesus began to give an invitation to this stoning crowd to receive Him. There didn't seem to be any open hearts ready to believe the Gospel. Yet Jesus knew better, and He was more concerned with the eternal future of each member of this stoning crowd than He was concerned for His own life. Jesus then, as today was concerned for the eternal future of each person in this lynch mob.

Some years ago, I was making a call for a couple in my office to help them pick out invitations to be married. The number I called had been changed so that I missed the company and got a private home. I began talking to a lady, Darlene Nelson, in Brainerd, Minnesota. I asked her if she knew Jesus, and Darlene said, "No, I don't, but I'm interested. Right there on the phone she gave her heart to Jesus. She now is a member of a Bible preaching church in Brainerd. Invitations are abused and they are opposed, but Jesus in the author of Spirit-led invitations. In the face of preparing to be stoned, Jesus gave a gracious appeal for these Jews to believe and receive Him. There were four characteristics of this invitation appeal

that I trust will speak to our hearts today. What are they?

JESUS' INVITATION TO LOST SINNERS IS ALWAYS TENDER. (I.) We read in Jesus' words in John 10:32, "I have shown you many good works **from the Father**; for which of them are you going to stone Me?" Jesus preparatory words for giving His invitation were tender words and He supernaturally called down a divine hush upon this lynch mob. In their haste to kill Jesus, they were being called to be reasonable. It is almost like Jesus was using Isaiah the prophet's words from Isaiah 1:18 with them. "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow.; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool." How did Jesus get this enraged mob to calm down long enough to put down their stones and listen? All we know is that no stones were thrown that day. Jesus asked them to recall all His works of love and mercy He had done among them. He made the blind to see, lame to walk, deaf to hear, mute to speak, cast out demons, healed the sick, and raised the dead. Jesus asked them, "For which of them are you going to stone Me?"

This was a powerful tender question. Jesus' works had to be works sent from the Father. Even the leader of the Jews, Nicodemus, in John 3:2 said, "Rabbi, we know (not just me) You are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him." Notice Jesus three tender words during Hannukah, "from the Father." Those works "from the Father" are the key. None of these works called for a charge of blasphemy or stoning, but rather for praise and worship. Jesus was reminding them of the Source of His good works, power, and authority. They all were from the Father. Jesus in essence was asking them to stop, think, and make sure of their grounds for stoning Him. He was saying, "Don't do something you'll regret and be sorry for doing." He was asking them, "Do any of My works contradict My claim that I and the Father are One?"

Jesus' tender words remind us of how Isaiah prophesied of Messiah to come in Isaiah 42:1-3, "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold, My chosen, in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him, He will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up His voice or make it heard in the street; A bruised reed He will not break, and a faintly burning wick, He will not quench." Do not Jesus' words call to mind His invitation in Isaiah 55:1,2? "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which does not satisfy?" You may say, "Isn't Christ stern at times?" Yes, His sternest words appear in Matthew 23:1-36, but though Jesus isn't afraid to call sin sin in the strongest terms, yet the Author and Finisher of our faith and salvation still weeps over lost souls. In Matthew 23:37, Jesus cried over Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" Jesus' appeal of invitation is always tender. Will Thompson rightly wrote his hymn of invitation in verse one, "Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling, Calling for you and for me; See on the portals He's waiting and watching,

Watching for you and for me. Come home, come home Ye who are weary come home, earnestly tenderly Jesus is calling—Calling “O sinner, come home!” 2ndly,

JESUS’ INVITATION TO LOST SINNERS IS ALWAYS REASONABLE. (II.)

Notice in verses 33-36. We read, “The Jews answered Him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone You, but for blaspheming, because You, being a man, make yourself God.” Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, “I said, you are gods?” If He called them gods to whom the word of God came, -- and Scripture cannot be broken – Do you say of Him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, “You are blaspheming,” because I said, “I am the Son of God!?” Talk about getting their attention. Jesus pulled a psalm out of the 150 psalms, not a well- known psalm, but Psalm 82, a psalm by Asaph is a rebuke of judges who stood before God’s people to judge with divine justice, but they judged unjustly. God here called these “elohim” judges gods, but rather than live up to their elevated name—God brought them before Him to judge them. In Psalm 75:6-7, Asaph says, “For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up, but it is God who executes judgement, putting down one and lifting up another.” Now let me read the 8 verses of Asaph’s Psalm 82.

There is only one God, called Elohim—Capital E., but God appoints leaders/judges and He lifts them up and even calls them ‘gods’ with a little g. Yet He says they will all die and fall like any mortal man, or prince. In verse 6, God called these Israelite judges, sons of the Most High. Though God elevated these judges, Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Barak, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Samson, and Samuel, to call them “sons of the Most-High”—He said they would die like men or princes. Every king or president should always have a servant speak to him daily to remind him, “Remember, sir, that you are still mortal.” So, Jesus’ argument was, “If God could call unjust judges, called to give impartial judgment, “gods, sons of the Most-High,” how can you say I am blaspheming when I say I am the Son of God? These Pharisees knew the Law—They remembered God saying to Moses as he was making excuses not to obey God’s command to set His people free, in Exodus 4, God said He would send Aaron to help Moses, and in Exodus 4:16, we read, “He (Aaron) shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him.” Later God said to Moses in Exodus 7:1, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet.”

By now, the Pharisees must have been lowering their fist-filled stones. The sweet reasonableness of Jesus. They couldn’t call the psalmist Asaph blasphemous, so why were they about to stone Jesus? Now stay with me, because Jesus emptied their fists with one little word—“gods” with a little g. Then Jesus added, v.35, “and Scripture cannot be broken.” This is Christ’s view of all scripture, and He knew He was not arguing with the Pharisees, because they all believed the same. Scripture is a seamless chain. Theologians, translators, and preachers can try to loosen up a word in scripture to pull it out, to tamper with scripture to make it fit their theology but they are playing with fire. Let me give you two illustrations from Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. Remember the reasonableness of Jesus to find a way to make the Pharisees put down their stones by quoting Scripture and telling them scripture

cannot be broken. Turn to Matthew 22:23-33. Who are these Sadducees. They were the ultra-fundamentalists of their day who said the Torah, the Law doesn't speak of the resurrection. They were hard-nosed and they made up a story of a Hebrew marriage where a woman lost her husband without bearing children, and according to Levirate law, her brother had to marry her to raise up children for his brother. Now they said there were seven brothers, and they each kept dying before she had a child. Someone has rightly asked, "What was the woman cooking?" Remember they were making up a story, it appears. But whether true or not, they asked Jesus, "In the resurrection, (which they didn't believe in) whose wife will she be?" Listen to Jesus' answer. "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven. And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?" He is not God of the dead, but of the living." Jesus' argument turned now—not on one word but on one verb tense. He never said, "**I was the God of Abraham**, but I am the God of Abraham."

The Scripture cannot be broken. Turn to Matthew 5:17-19. We read, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Jesus here says that the inerrancy of Scripture can turn on less than one word or one verb tense. He says not one dot of an i or one crossing of a t will pass away until all is fulfilled. To touch or tamper with the Word of God means we will be least in His kingdom. I warn us. Millions of believers in America have decided Jesus will not catch away His Bride to heaven—that there will be "a meeting in the air." They deny the catching away of Christ's Bride. (I Thess. 4:13-18) I warn us; this is rampant in the church today. Jesus says, "The scripture cannot be broken." He says, "Whoever breaks/relaxes one of the least of these commands—What's the command? Paul tells us in I Thess.4:18 after announcing rapture of the church coming, "Therefore, encourage one another with these words." God help us listen to the reasonableness of Jesus' words and heed them. Jesus word about **breaking** one of the least commandments is the same word for His word-saying the Scripture cannot be **broken--luo** – means to pull out, to put off, to loosen, to break, to release, to dismiss, to dissolve, to destroy. Jesus' invitations are reasonable/tender. Thirdly,

JESUS' INVITATION TO LOST SINNERS IS ALWAYS CONSISTENT. (III.)

Notice John 10:37-38. "If I am not doing the works of My Father, then do not believe Me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I am in the Father." We are getting to the heart of this invitation. The Pharisees by now must have been startled that their inerrant law taught that God called men He appointed to office "gods." If Jesus were claiming no more than that He belonged to that class of men, their charge of blasphemy would be false. But Jesus didn't say He was the

same class of men as the judges in Psalm 82. He was and is infinitely above them. Now Jesus was telling them that the works of the Father done by Him were perfectly consistent with His claim to be one with the Father--“The Father is in Me and I am in the Father,” v. 38. Jesus is saying—“Be consistent. Don’t fly in the face of the facts. You can reject My words as being only human, but you cannot divorce My works from My Father without setting yourselves in opposition to God the Father. Hear the invitation. “Even if you cannot now accept Me as your Savior and Lord, examine My works carefully so that by seeing them, you will see they are the works of the Father, and finally come to trust in Me.” There is no contradiction in Jesus’ invitation. Tenderly, reasonably, and now consistently He was calling the Pharisees to Himself. Now for sure, Jesus was speaking words as Isaiah spoke in Isaiah 1:18, “Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow.; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.” Christ’s invitation/appeal had a fourth/final characteristic.

JESUS’ INVITATION TO LOST SINNERS IS ALWAYS OPEN. (IV.) Notice John 10:39-42. “Again, they sought to arrest Him, but He escaped from their hands. He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained. And many came to Him. And they said, “John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true.” And many believed in Him there.” You may say, “Why give an invitation to the lost when no one responds? Over all my years of ministry, as I give invitations, many countless people have turned to Jesus. Yet in many of those invitations, no one has responded to receive Jesus. Our example is Jesus! Though these Pharisees did not believe, Christ’s invitation was not without effect. The desire to stone Jesus was now clouded with some uncertainty. Thus, now as the Jews closed in on Jesus it was not to stone Him to death, but the attempt was to arrest Him and bring Him for a formal trial before the Sanhedrin. Christ eluded them for His hour had not yet come. Thus, Jesus departed east down from Jerusalem, across the Jordan River to the place where John had been baptizing at first, the place where Jesus Himself was baptized by John the Baptist to fulfill all things in being made like us.

In this remote spot on the east side of the Jordan, Jesus now spent most of the last days of His earthly ministry. Here He preached His Gospel of “repent and believe the Gospel and many believed. Stones were Jesus’ reception in Jerusalem. Faith was Jesus’ reception in Perea, east of Jericho. In four short months, Jesus would return to Jerusalem where stones would be replaced by nails and crucifixion. In Perea, the people realized that though John the Baptist did no signs or miracles, yet all that he spoke about Jesus as His forerunner was true. Thus, they believed. In Jerusalem, the Pharisees knew what Jesus said was true, but they stubbornly refused to believe Him. Both places received the same open invitation, but only the people in Perea gained Christ as their Savior. How have you responded to Christ’s invitation? His invitation is tender, reasonable, consistent, and still open today. There will soon come a day when His invitation will no longer be open; when it will be too late. Yet until Jesus returns, the invitation is always open. The Savior is waiting to enter your heart, why won’t you let Him come in, there’s nothing in this world to keep you apart, what is your answer to Him?