Rock Valley Bible Church (www.rvbc.cc)

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June 15, 2025 by Steve Brandon

The Final Call

John 12:44-50

1. Believe Me (verse 44).
2. Know Me (verse 45).
3. Follow Me (verse 46).
4. Obey Me (verse 47).
5. Receive Me (verse 48).
6. Hear Me (verse 49).
7. Live by Me (verse 50).

If you have traveled at all by plane, you know the scene. You arrive at the airport. You check your bags. You go through security. You look on the display boards for your gate. You arrive at your gate, and you sit and wait to board your plane. You sit and you watch people.

You notice Barry, the businessman, who is dressed in a suit, glued to his laptop, typing what appears to be a sales presentation. You notice the Smith family with small children, where the parents are juggling snacks, strollers, and sticky toddlers. You notice Gail, the Grandma, who is sitting quietly and patiently, waiting to see her grandchildren. You look up and see Hustling Harry, who is walking very quickly down the terminal. You glance again at your gate and see Kayla the College Kid, who's wearing a hoodie, has her AirPods in her ears, her iced coffee in her hand, and not a care in the world. You notice Nancy the Nervous Flyer, who keeps asking if the flight is on time, triple-checking after every announcement.

Well, about 40 minutes before the flight, one of the workers at the gate will get on the intercom and say,

> "Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. This is the boarding announcement for United Airlines flight #1863 with service to San Francisco, departing at 3:51 p.m. It is 64 degrees and cloudy in San Francisco. Our flight is on time. We'll begin boarding shortly. Please

> make sure all carry-on items fit either in the overhead bin or completely under the seat in front of you. If your bag does not fit, we will be happy to check it at the gate for you free of charge. Please have your boarding pass and ID ready, and listen for boarding group numbers."

After that announcement, you notice that more and more people have arrived at the gate. Many of them are now standing with bags in tow. Soon, you hear the same voice on the overhead saying,

> "We would now like to invite our pre-boarding passengers, including those needing extra time or assistance getting down the jetway, and families traveling with young children or strollers. You are now welcome to board at this time."

A few minutes later:

> "We are now boarding our First-Class passengers, active-duty military personnel, and passengers with elite or premier status. Welcome aboard."

Then, at regular intervals, you hear:

> "We will now begin general boarding by group number." "Now boarding Group 1."

> "Now boarding Groups 1 and 2."

> "Now boarding Groups 1 through 3."

Then, you may hear:

> "At this time, we're clearing standby passengers and processing any last-minute upgrades. Please wait near the podium if your name is on the list."

Then, if you are still at the terminal, you may hear this:

> "This is the final boarding call for United Airlines flight #1863 with service to San Francisco. If you are holding a boarding pass, please proceed to the gate immediately. We are closing the door shortly."

Once the door closes, you are either on the flight, or you missed the flight.

My message this morning is entitled, “The Final Call.” It comes from the last section in the 12th chapter of the gospel of John, verses 44-50. My message is titled, “The Final Call,” because this is what we see Jesus doing in this text. we see him giving the final call to the world, to come to him and to believe in him and to follow him!

It’s the “Final Boarding Call” to get on board the plane. If you miss the plane you may hear an announcement like this:

> “The boarding door is now closed. If you’ve missed this flight, please see a gate agent for rebooking options.”

It is right here that the analogy breaks down at this point, because, if you miss the Jesus plane, there are no more re-booking options for eternal life. Jesus, himself, said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). If you miss taking off with Jesus, you will miss eternal life. And Jesus is offering for all to enter the boarding gate to get on the plane.

So, let’s consider the final boarding call of Jesus by reading our text:

> John 12:44-50
> And Jesus cried out and said, “Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.”

With these words, Jesus closes his public ministry. Beginning in chapter 13, Jesus will be with his disciples, until the end of chapter 17. In chapter 18, Jesus will be betrayed, arrested, and placed on trial. In chapter 19, Jesus will be crucified and buried, only to be raised from the dead in chapter 20. In the last chapter of the

gospel of John, chapter 21, Jesus will restore Peter and release the disciples for their world-wide ministry.

So, from chapter 13 and on, we don't see Jesus addressing the crowds anymore. No more invitations to believe. No more invitations to follow Jesus. No more offers of salvation. No more boarding announcements.

You might think of the Gospel of John like this:

> Chapters 1-12 contain the "public" ministry of Jesus.
> Chapters 13-21 contain the "private" ministry of Jesus.

Now, this isn't quite true, as his crucifixion was quite public. But he wasn't speaking to the crowds during the crucifixion event. He wasn't giving invitations to the crowds to come to him and believe in him. All we see is Jesus barely speaking at his arrest and trial, saying but a few words on the cross. Jesus does have an extended dialogue with Pontius Pilate, but that was all in private, in his headquarters (John 18:33). So our text this morning closes out the public ministry of Jesus.

Now, the most difficult part of our text this morning is the setup to the words of Jesus. We read this in verse 44:

> John 12:44
> "And Jesus cried out and said..."

These words are difficult because they have very little context. In verse 36, we find Jesus departing and hiding himself from the crowds. And now, we see Jesus crying out these words, as if he is crying them out to some unknown crowd. And we have no idea who this crowd is, whether it's a Jewish crowd, or whether it's a Gentile crowd, or whether it's a crowd at all.

Mickey Klink comments well about these words:

> The (historical) specifics of the scene are not indicated. ... But this reappearance of Jesus makes for an emphatic and climactic 'final appeal to believe,' not only for the crowd listening but also for the reader of the gospel.[1]

In other words, in the absence of the historical context, it's almost as if John places the words of Jesus right here for us, the readers, to consider for our own lives. So, this may not merely be "The Final Call." It may be "Your Final Call" as well.

Now, I know that most of you have embraced Jesus. You have trusted in him. You come each week to worship at Rock Valley Bible Church, because you love your Savior.

But there may be some of you here who haven't trusted in Jesus. You have heard the exposition of John. You have been here for a bunch of chapters, but you still haven't believed in Jesus. you still haven't trusted him with your whole heart. This word may be for you. It may be your final call. Oh, come to Jesus! Get on the plane!

If you have trusted in Jesus, consider these words again, and received them afresh in your hearts.

Now, before we dig into these words, I have one final comment. There is nothing in these words that we haven't seen before in the gospel of John. It's all review! In fact, I think that this is the point of this section of the gospel.

Do you remember how the gospel of John began? In the first 18 verses? John 1:1-18 is often called, "The Prologue," meaning the first words of the gospel of John. But I used the word, "overture" to describe them. Now, if you remember from one of my introductory messages on the gospel of John, an overture is "an orchestral piece at the beginning of an opera, suite, play, oratorio, or other extended composition. ... Overtures serve as precursors to the main performance, setting the tone and mood for what's to come. They often incorporate melodies from the forthcoming songs or themes."[2]

The first 18 verses set forth a bunch of themes from the gospel of John foreshadow themes in the gospel of John.
If you remember those verses, they talk about the following topics, which occur also in the gospel of John:

- Light (1:4-5, 7-9; 3:19-21; 5:35; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9-10; 12:35-36; 12:46).
- Life in Jesus (1:4; 3:15-16; 5:21, 26; 6:33, 48; 10:10; 11:25).
- Darkness (1:4–5; 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35-36, 46).
- Rejection by the world (1:10-11; 3:19-20; 5:43; 7:7; 8:45; 12:37-40; 15:

18–25).
- Reception and Belief (1:12; 3:16-18, 36; 5:24; 6:29; 11:25-26; 20:31).
- Witness of John the Baptist (1:6-8, 15; 1:19-36; 3:22-30; 5:33-35).
- The Word that existed before time began (1:1-2; 8:58; 14:10; 17:5).
- Glory (1:14; 2:11; 11:4, 40; 12:23; 17:1–5, 24).
- Grace and Truth (1:14, 17; 8:32; 14:6; 18:37).
- The New Birth (1:12-13; 3:3–8; 8:39–47).
- The Incarnation (1:14; 6:51; 10:30, 38; 14:9–10)

All of these themes are present in the "Overture," the first 18 verses.

Now, in chapter 12, we have the "Finale." A finale is "the concluding section of a composition, movement, or performance. ... A finale is the final segment that brings a piece to a definitive end, often encapsulating the main themes, emotions, and musical ideas that have been presented throughout the work."[3]

That's what we will see in our text this morning. We are going to see themes that have already been mentioned in the gospel of John. Now, this "finale" isn't the finale of the entire book of John. We are only in chapter 12, only halfway through the book. This is the "finale" of the first half of the book. It's the "finale" of the public ministry of Jesus. The "public ministry" of Jesus starts with an "overture," of the entire book of John and ends with a "finale" of his public ministry, complete with "encapsulating the main themes, emotions, and ideas that have been presented so far in the gospel."[4]

So, let's look at "The Final Call."

The text has seven verses. I have seven points, each of them are a call to believe and follow Jesus, as you shall see. I have worked hard to form an application from each verse. Here's my first point:

1. Believe Me (verse 44).

> John 12:44
> And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me.

If there has been any theme so far in the gospel of John, that stands out among them all, it is the theme of belief. I did a quick check, and noticed that the word "believe" occurs in the book of John more than it appears in any other book of the

Bible. The gospel of John is all about believing. It’s not an accident because John’ s whole purpose in writing is about belief.

It bears repeating:

> John 20:30-31
> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John wrote that we would believe in Jesus. If all you remember from the gospel of John is those verses that we read in unison so often during my messages, all is well and good with the gospel of John. You will have remembered the main point: John wrote that you would believe in Jesus. So, believe in his death, burial, and resurrection for your sins.

Believe that "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). Believe what Jesus said, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst” (John 6:35). Believe Jesus when he said, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:37-38). Believe what Jesus told the Jews, "unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins” (John 8:24). Believe what Jesus said in his discussion with Nicodemus: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3: 16).

This is his final call!

In believing in Jesus, you are a believer in God, the one who sent Jesus. “Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me" (John 12:44).

Let’s move on to my second point:

2. Know Me (verse 45).

> John 12:45
> And whoever sees me sees him who sent me.

Now, verse 45 doesn't say anything about "knowing" Jesus. But we are in a predicament because we weren't living in Jerusalem when Jesus walked the earth. We didn't lay physical eyes upon Jesus as John did. He writes in 1 John 1:1, 3, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life, ... that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you."

As Jesus speaks these words of his final call, he spoke to those who saw him! To see Jesus was to see the Father, because he was God in the flesh! But we don't see him now. So, I believe that our best application here for us is to "know him."

Know that his words are true. Know that his signs are real. Know that Jesus is the Christ. Know that Jesus is the Son of God. Know that Jesus is the only way to the Father (John 14:6). Know that knowing him is knowing the Father.

Jesus told the Jews who didn't believe in him, "If you knew me, you would know my Father also" (John 8:19). To see Jesus is to see the Father. To know Jesus is to know the Father. Jesus said, "And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

When I talk about "knowing" God, I'm not talking about "knowing about God." I'm talking about "knowing God." Jesus calls us to "know him." He's just a prayer away. Jesus calls us to speak to him in prayer. Jesus calls us to learn from him in the Scriptures. Oh, do you know him? Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). This is the best way that you know that you know him: if you are following him.

This leads us nicely into our next point.

3. Follow Me (verse 46).

> John 12:46
> I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). That's the idea that Jesus is bringing out in verse 46, "Follow Me."

Jesus is the light. He has come into the darkness. But whoever believes in him won't remain in the darkness. But he will follow after Jesus, the light of life.

One of the big motifs of the gospel of John thus far has been this idea of light and darkness. The world was in darkness before Jesus came. but he came as a light, to bring people out of the darkness and into the light. We saw this as one of the themes in the overture. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:4-5).

Yet as Jesus said, "The light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God" (John 3:19-21). Those who follow after Jesus, come out of the darkness and into his light!

Are you walking in the light? Are you following after the ways of Jesus? Or are you walking in the darkness, and fear that your works would be exposed (John 3: 20).

There is some urgency in the voice of Jesus. Look back a few verses, to verse 35.

> John 12:35-36
> The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light."

In the historical context of Jesus' day, he knew that his time was limited. He knew that he would soon depart. That's why Jesus said, "The light is among you for a little while longer" (John 12:35).

The same exhortation comes to you this morning: This is the "Final Call" of Jesus! Board the plane! Come into the light while you have time! I don't want to be prophetic, but never presume upon your next breath! Follow Jesus into the light.

OK, our fourth point:

4. Obey Me (verse 47).

John 12:47
If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.

If you aren't following after Jesus, and if you aren't obeying what he says, you have a judgment that you will face. You will come into judgement because you have ignored the mission of Jesus. He came to save! "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:17).

The mission of Jesus was a mission of salvation. He came to the earth, to live a perfect life among us, that he might be the sinless sacrifice upon the cross for our sins. We simply need to look to him to be saved. We simply need to believe in him to escape the judgment.

But it is interesting here in verse 47 that Jesus doesn't mention faith, but obedience. "If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him." That's because obedience is the fruit of faith. We show our faith by our obedience. And where there is disobedience, and we do not keep the words of Jesus, and ignore the salvation that he brings, we can only expect the judgment of God to fall upon us.

Now, don't think at all that Jesus here is advocating perfectionism, as if any little disobedience will bring judgment upon your life. He's not talking about that. Jesus is talking about your life I the broadest sense.

Are you one who is believing in Jesus, and following in obedience after his word? Or are you not trusting in Jesus, and following after your own ways? That's the point of Jesus here. He's calling us to obey him, as an expression of our faith.

John 3:36 sums it up well: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."

Let's move on!

5. Receive Me (verse 48).

John 12:48
The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.

Now, as we have read through the public ministry of Jesus (John 1-12), we have noticed how sad it is that so many people have rejected him. Do you remember chapters 6-8? It was three chapters of conflict and tension between Jesus and the Jews. They seemingly resisted his every word.

Even the miracles were not enough to persuade them! When Jesus healed the invalid, who had not walked for 38 years, they were angry at Jesus because he healed him on the Sabbath (John 5:9). When Jesus healed the man born blind, they could not deny the miracle, but they condemned Jesus, “We know that this man is a sinner” (John 9:24). When Lazarus was raised from the dead, the Jews sought to kill Jesus because so many were following after Jesus (John 11:48). they even sought to kill Lazarus "because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus" (John 12:11).

Those who did receive Jesus often rejected him just as quickly. Oh, the crowds followed after him when he fed the 5,000, but when Jesus spoke the truth to them, “Many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him” (John 6:66). Many who did believe in him, would soon cry for his crucifixion.

This is exactly what the overture said. "He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him" (John 1:10-11). But some did. "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

So the question is this? Have you received him? Have you welcomed him into your life? Can you say with Peter, when Jesus asked the disciples, “Do you want to go away as well?” (John 6:67). Peter said, "Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God” (John 6:68-69). That’s what it means to receive Jesus. It means that Jesus is your only hope.

But if you reject the words of Jesus, his words will come to judge you on the last day. Again, verse 48, "The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day." For us, Jesus will simply pull out the Bible in that day, and let the word of God speak! The Bible tells us that salvation comes through faith in Jesus. We simply need to receive it and believe it. And God will change us and transform us to be one of his children, "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the

flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13).

Oh, church family receive him! Hear his words and accept them! "Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God" (John 8:47).

6. Hear Me (verse 49).

> John 12:49
> For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak.

When Jesus speaks, we ought to listen. Thus the command to "hear." We need to listen to Jesus. Jesus gives us the reason why, because his words come straight from the mouth of his Father.

I love how Jesus here connects himself in complete dependence upon the Father. How appropriate this is for us for Father's Day.

This has been a theme throughout John's gospel. He only speaks what the Father has told him to speak:

- "I declare to the world what I have heard from him" (John 8:26).
- "I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me" (John 8:28).
- "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me" (John 7:16).

Jesus is relentless in sharing how he has only spoken as his Father directed him to speak. It gives us great comfort, then to know, that the words of Jesus are the words of God.

It's as if Jesus was God's personal envoy to us! The gospel begins by describing Jesus as the Word that was with God. They idea is that they were together, speaking with each other. And Jesus has come and spoken the words that he gave him to speak!

Do you listen to the words of Jesus?

Finally,

7. Live by Me (verse 50).

> John 12:50
> And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me."

Again, we see the dependence that Jesus has upon his Father. "This charge I have received from my Father" (John 10:18). "For he whom God has sent utters the words of God" (John 3:34). And what are his words? His words are words of life that come by faith

> - "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him" (John 3: 36).
> - "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (John 5:24).
> - "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day" (John 6:40).
> - "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).

Jesus has eternal life. He gives it to all who believe in him. Of his sheep, Jesus says, "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:28).

Jesus said, "Believe Me" (verse 44). Do you believe him?
Jesus said, "Know Me" (verse 45). Do you know him?
Jesus said, "Follow Me" (verse 46). Do you follow him?
Jesus said, "Obey Me" (verse 47). Do you obey him?
Jesus said, "Receive Me" (verse 48). Do you receive him?
Jesus said, "Hear Me" (verse 49). Do you hear him?
Jesus said, "Live by Me" (verse 50) . Do you live by him?

"This is your final boarding call please proceed to the gate immediately. We are closing the door shortly."

Don't be left out.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on June 15, 2025 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org.

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[1] Edward W. Klink III, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: John (* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 561.

[2] See https://yousician.com/blog/overture.

[3] See https://www.m5music.hk/en/dictionary/finale/.

[4] Ibid.