

Sinners rejecting Christ made to receive him

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Congregation, we have heard about the Son of God this morning hour, the Immanuel. The natural Son of God came to this earth to save sinners. The King of kings and the Lord of lords, the light of the world, the most important person ever, infinitely worthy for praise and glory.

Now how did you sit through this sermon this morning and how was it this afternoon? Or look back, have you ever treasured him? Has he ever received a place in your heart? Have you ever adored him from within? Have you received him with open arms, by God's grace, have you received him? Because it's one or the other, you receive him or you reject him. There's nothing in between. You say, "That sounds harsh, Minister." It's what the Bible says. Rejecting, that's in our blood. It's in our blood to reject him, to not pay attention to him. How do you feel when someone writes you or texts you or you text to someone else, rather, and you don't hear back and you say he ignored it. That doesn't feel good, does it? But that's nothing, absolutely nothing compared to him writing you and him speaking to you and not responding at all. There's rejection, "It's not important to me. I don't care about this. I don't have to get an answer, I'm on my own."

So that is the focal point this evening hour, what to do with Christ. He has come but what's next? It's not enough that he has come, he has to become mine, my Savior. How does he become my Savior? So the text for today is from John 1:10 and 11 and 12. We read there as follows,

10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him [we heard about that this morning], and the world knew him not. [And even worse,] 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: [verse 13 as well] 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

So far. Sinners rejecting Christ made to receive him. Sinners rejecting Christ made to receive him. Three thoughts. Rejecting Christ which is 10 and 11, he was in the world, the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. Knew him not. Had no use for him. He came unto his own, Israel, and his own received him not. But they are also in a sense his own. That's quite serious to not receive him and to keep the door locked for

him. That's who we are, aren't we? In the second place of receiving Christ. Verse 12, but, there are exceptions, but as many as received him the blessing to them gave he power, what power? To become the sons of God. And what is that receiving? Well, even them that believe on his name, that's explained. Believe on his name, that's receiving. And then the third place, the work of Christ, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. So emphasis three times: not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but of God. Strong emphasis on the one-sided work of God. So sinners rejecting Christ made to receive him. Rejecting Christ, receiving Christ, and the work of Christ.

Congregation, what a chapter, "In the beginning was the Word." Who is that, children? In the beginning, the very beginning, in eternity it means there was the Word and that Word is Christ. Don't think that Christ began to exist in Bethlehem, was born in Bethlehem, but he was already an eternity old. In his divine nature, he was from the very beginning and we really need to know and understand a little of who he is so then we see how serious it is to not receive him.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God," he's the second person with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, "and the Word was God." Not only belonging to God and with the Lord but he was God himself. See, there is a text the Jehovah's Witnesses don't know what to do about it.

"The same was in the beginning with God." And all the things we saw this morning hour as well, "All things were made by him," by the Word, by the word of his mouth, "and without him was not any thing made that was made."

What's first? Matter or life? It's a tricky question. You would say there was first matter and then out of matter grows life. No, that's evolutionism. There's life in God. God was alive, wasn't he? And the Son of God was alive? That's life and he created matter. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness," the same with our text shining in the darkness, "and the darkness comprehended it not," received it not, understood it not. Rejected it.

And so, "There was a man [of God] sent from God, whose name was John," or Johanas. "The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all," all, "all men through him might believe." All sorts of people. "All" does not always mean everyone in totality.

"He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light." And he did. "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." That's hard and many different implications and I won't play it hard but I would do my best to explain it. The true Light lighteth every man that cometh into the world since Adam. The light shines. Let me say, since the fall, since the mother promise, since the promise to Eve. There was a light shining about the Savior Jesus Christ and Adam and Eve must have told them about it to the children and the grandchildren, about the seed will come and bruise the head and bruise the heel, you know the text. But also in nature the Lord revealed

something of his divinity as we read in Romans 1. So people are without excuse as they still are without excuse and they have no Gospel.

"He was in the world. "He was in the world," is our text. He was. It does not refer to the Incarnation. "He was in the world" does not refer to Bethlehem. It says he was all those years, he was same as the mother promise, he was in the world and testified in the world and the world knew him not. There's the Christ. For the world, he refers to the past existence of the world, but even of the times past from the creation of the world, the Light was shining so that the world, the world in general as opposed to Judea, so verse 10 refers to the Gentiles and verse 11 refers to the Jewish people and they do the same. The Light shines in the darkness of the entire world, to nature and through the promises made in the past people have forgotten about, but also to the Jewish people. Quite something that the world was made by him and the world knew him not.

You know, there is a stranger at your door, you have no time, you say, "Good-bye." Or if you have a telephone call and you have no time, you say, "No time." That's fine. When your mother comes and visits you, it's a little harder to say, "Mom, I have no time." If it is someone in authority, a police officer, someone else has an important message, you don't say, "I have no time." You say, "What's up? Tell me, please." You make time when these people are at your door, but the Son of God, the Light shining in the darkness, he came into the world. He was in the world and the world knew him not.

Let me try to rub this in a little further, who Christ is. Remember this morning that we emphasized that he was God himself and also co-Creator, so rejecting the Creator is quite serious. We quoted also from Colossians, "He is before all things and by him all things consist." And then we also elaborated a little bit more with a few more texts on the purpose of creation. Remember that, the purpose of creation? It's Christ. Let me show you beside the texts I mentioned this morning. Hebrews 2:10, "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Or Romans 11, "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." So the Lord Jesus ultimately, infinitely worthy, the most highest Majesty, to receive him is the greatest good and to reject him is a crime.

"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." All the time that you read the word "to know God," you have to keep in mind to know God has a deep meaning. Not just knowing about the facts and the dogmatics, but to know God means to have a relationship with him like Adam knew his wife and Abram knew Sarai. Same word. Closeness. Communion. Fellowship. So the world was made by him and the world said, "I have no interest in thee." Young people ask each other for a date and she says, "No." Well, that's fine, she has the right to say that but when the Almighty God comes, the Almighty God comes with his word as the Supreme One and people saying, "No," that's our deep fall in Adam, isn't it?

So the inhabitants of the world knew him not as their Creator, they did not acknowledge the mercies they received from him, they did not worship him, they did not obey him,

they did not love him, they did not fear him, they did not know him as the Messiah, Mediator, Savior and Redeemer. There was at first a general knowledge and that knowledge did not continue. In the process of time it was being neglected, it was forgotten, and people became utterly lost as mankind and became so ignorant. It was not God's fault.

So the world, the general population of society was made by him and the world knew him not but verse 11 makes it even more serious, "He came unto his own," unto his own. Who is that, "his own"? Is that his elect? It cannot be. It cannot mean he came to his elect and his elect received him not, so that it all must refer to a high privilege of people but that's not to say saving, and that in the first place refers to the Jewish people. They were God's peculiar people, his chosen people. They still are. The Jewish people are still God's people, in a sense. The seed of Abraham. Whenever you see a Jew, you feel in your heart, "That's family. That's a covenant child." Whenever I see some in the airport, I would like to sit next to that person and say, ask a few questions and respect him.

So the Lord has separated Israel and spent so much on them that's unbelievable in types of David and the prophets, in the promises they received, in the prophecies they heard, the word of God in his ordinances. They received men like Moses. They were rescued out of Egypt. They were led through the sea on dry ground. They received a [unintelligible]. They received so many privileges. He came to his own and his own received him not. There was so much around their tree, fertilizers, so much, so often warned and called but only the Jewish people. You too. Me as well. How old are you? Have you all those years rejected him and you were just not home, you pretended not to be home?

You know, now another example about marriages. When things don't go so well, a husband and wife may argue, right, a little bit? But sometimes they get so upset and then he or she doesn't talk at all anymore. She does not even answer the most simple questions. He just sits down or he doesn't talk. We call it the silent treatment, right? They say, counselors say that the silent treatment is worse than arguing. Why is that? Well, if you don't respond at all and you give the silent treatment, the other one does not exist for you. "I don't even talk to you. I'd like to go to another room. I've no interest in communication. You don't exist for me right now." Isn't that what it is spiritually? The Lord's speaking to you and you're not answering. The silent treatment. Too busy with other things. It's so offensive. I wish I could bring it to your attention to your heart that your hearts would break under that.

He came to his own. He spent so much time with, he came to his own and his own received him not. You know that from the Bible, right, you know that famous text, "He is despised." That's even worse, despised. People spat in his face. Despised, rejected of men. Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. We hid, as it were, our faces from him. Hiding your face, that's worse than silent treatment. He was despised and we esteemed him not, no use for him. Psalm 22, "I'm a worm and no man, a reproach of men and despised of the people." Matthew 26, "Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands." And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their head.

So I realize when I'm preaching this that I don't get it through. I realize that people become defensive and begin to say, "But you know, Minister, that we cannot." We'll come back to that but first let this sink in, "He came to his own and his own received him not." So that he's not receiving, that's not the receiving of a friend, of a husband, no, the Savior. Highly offensive. Says the friendly voice, "Come unto me you who are heavy-laden and I will give you rest." You just walk away. You don't say anything.

There was a court case. Often the prophets pretended court cases, it's a special style of preaching, and they summoned the people to come before court. There was an accusation made and a lawyer and a defender and a prosecutor. And all those texts from Micah 6, that's a typical lawsuit text, "O my people, what have I done unto thee?" What have I done unto thee, "and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me." So you not having received Christ yet, I hope it will come some day otherwise you're lost for eternity, but if you have not received him so far, why not? "O my people." My people, does he say "my" to you? Yes. "O my people, what have I done unto thee?" What did he do wrong to you? "Do I deserve this?" Does God deserve that, that the child in the manger is ignored? That you enjoy your meals and your social time and your visits and your traveling and your sightseeing and you enjoy all that but there is no going to the manger? Why not? "O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee?" Have I wearied thee? Have I wearied you out? "Testify against me."

So enough on the verses 10 and 11. He was in the world before the people of Israel existed, and the world was made by him and the world knew him not, didn't care for him, and he came to his own and his own received him not, it's even worse, and then verse 12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Receiving Christ for the blessing. There are exceptions. It is happening. We cannot deny it. Hopefully it's happened this morning. But of all, in general people are not interested. There are exceptions, we will see why, but as many as received him. Some do. And "receiving" in Greek, "lambano," is also translated "accepting." It's the same thing. Don't make a difference among that. Don't say you cannot accept it, you need to receive it. That's a false contradiction. It's the same word. As many as received him, accepted him, that's what it means, to accept him because he came to offer himself, and some people have received him in their arms like Simeon, "Now lettest thou thy servant go in peace," and he received the child in his arms. So as many as received him, that's what these shepherds did. They received him. They went and bowed their heads and worshiped him. That's what the wise men did, received him.

"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." They received him in what sense? What is the receiving? What is that [unintelligible]. That's explained in his text, namely, "even to them that believe on his name." Believing on Christ is exactly the same as receiving him, as trusting him, as drinking him, as eating him, as giving yourself over unto him, as completely relying on him. It's the same as accepting him, receiving him.

So did that happen this morning? You heard about the child, did you receive him? Do you know that he was at your door this morning, and did you say by God's grace, "Yes," or did you by God's grace, did you by God's grace open the door? Well, that's the work of the Holy Spirit. They received a child in a manger as not only for others but for myself. Does receiving him as your King to follow him, to obey him, to adore him, receiving him as your prophet who has the words of eternal life and you can't have life without him, but receiving him as the High Priest because you cannot suffer yourself and you cannot do the work for yourself but he is the High Priest, receiving him as the Lamb of God? Receiving him as the bread of life? Receiving him like people at the Communion Table when they receive the bread? Receive him and so receive Christ and putting it in your mouth in a spiritual sense and eat him, "My flesh is meat indeed."

You know that receiving is tasting him, experiencing him, loving him, highly esteeming him and much more, and if people receive him, they receive the power to become the sons of God. Be careful here. The power? They received the power to do something so the Lord gives them the free will of soul so that when they believe they become powerful and they can do things themselves? Because now they believe, the Lord gives them the power to become the sons of God so now they can become God's children because they believe? No, that power does not mean ability here. It is not so that by faith they receive an ability to become God's children, but the word "power" means the status, means the right, the legal right, means the place given by God, the authority.

So as many as received him, to them gave he the authority to become the sons of God, to be the sons of God and to become the sons of God. Why to become? Well, some expositors say it's not only a fact that they become God's children immediately when they believe but also it's the process of sanctification that will be finished at the end of their life, and then in the fullest sense, without sin be God's children. It makes sense to me. So "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

So the child Jesus, you've heard about him this morning, have you received him? One of the most important marks of grace is, Alexander Comry's says, highly esteeming Jesus. Some people don't dare to say that they are God's people although they have the status of God's people, although they have the right to be God's people, because they have the true faith in their hearts, the Lord has separated them, but some of them can't believe it for themselves but the mark of grace is that others may see it better than they do, that they highly speak of the Lord Jesus.

I remember a visit that they asked someone: do you profess anything? "No, Minister. There's nothing." Do you know something of your sins. "Ah, it's probably not enough. I wish I would have more knowledge of my sins." Do you have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that believed in him ever? "No, Reverend." And then I asked the next question and to my surprise he said something else. I said: do you ever trust him, ever trust the Lord Jesus? He said, "I certainly do." Well, that does not sound bad to me, if someone really trust him, he's poor and needy, cannot help himself at all, and he's so [unintelligible] himself, does not qualify, but really trust in the Savior, does not doubt

him, he's doubting himself, not him. There is still faith. There is a faith that the lump on your back, it still exists.

So "as many as received him," all of them, if you receive Christ no matter who you are but if you have received him, you have that status of being a child of God and that's quite something. That means a lot. Being a child of God means that you are predestinated. He has secured his blessings for you in the covenant of grace and he has put you among the children; that he assigns a goodly heritage to you, you become heirs of eternal life; that he gives his Holy Spirit to discover and apply all the blessings, to also give that witness in the heart of the Spirit, with the same with your spirit that you're God's children. Quite something.

So congregation, it can be Christmas and it's over tomorrow and New Year's Eve and New Year's morning and the school starts soon again and you go back to work, and what is left behind? You've heard about the child, but wrestle with that tonight. Bow your knees this evening hour and say, "Lord, it's Christmas again and I've heard about the Christ but I've never received him, I've never received him myself. I feel so awkward about all that. I feel so guilty." How do you feel? Guilty about that and the Lord has a solution for that because all things come from his hand.

The third thought. First he's saying how come that some receive him? How can that be? I [unintelligible] that nobody would. That's right but the Lord makes people to believe, and makes people to repent, and makes them his people, and changes them around and gives them a new birth. That's what we read in God's word. Born, verse 13, "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." But the emphasis three times "not, not this, not that, not such and so." So apparently it's very important. We're born, born again, but not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man. There are many explanations on that, all people differ so I'm not going to argue about that but I'll give you my best thoughts and they might not be really the exegesis of the text but at least true.

"Which were born, not of blood." I think of a bloodline, the bloodline, the blood of Abraham, right? John writes about that quite often that the Jewish people are proud of their blood. They had that Jewish blood in their veins, the covenant people. I think that's what it means. I'm pretty sure. "Which were born, not of blood." Your Jewish background does not save you. The covenant of God is not sufficient. You should not say, "Well, I was chosen as God's people so that's fine, that's enough." You shouldn't say translated into our times, "I was baptized, so I was born in the church." In some churches, they don't ask any questions, they just assume that we're all saved but you're not born by blood. They should not believe in covenant theology that is automatic.

So covenant, "Which were born, not of blood," under the covenant line, "nor of the will of the flesh." The will of flesh, carnality. That's our own will, our good deeds, our works. You cannot do it yourself so if someone believes in him, it's not because that he's a covenant child, it's not because they do good works, it was the will of the flesh, there is nothing powerful from the will of the flesh, "nor of the will of man." That's a little harder

but I think it is this. Fathers raise their children [unintelligible] and they cannot save them. They cannot save their children. They may be very concerned about that, pray about them, and talk to them, but they cannot do anything about it. Your ancestry and your parents and your upbringing does not really help you. You can be blessed, it's not sufficient.

So bloodline, good works, good upbringing is not doing it, we must be born of God, right, it says, "but of God." It was easy not speak that same sense to Nicodemus. Jesus answered and said unto him, "Verily, verily I say unto thee except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." He cannot. He cannot. Impossible. If someone is not born again, he is blind. Not only blind but unwilling and a wonder needs to happen of the Holy Spirit to be born again, to not only kind of repent and say sorry and just make yourself believe in Jesus, but you need a major change of heart. "A new heart will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh." The Apostle Peter was excited about that. Is that we were excited? "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ which according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again," has begotten us again, has delivered us again, has given a new birth, "which according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

So we teach what needs to happen in order to believe in the Lord Jesus, at the same time we also call sinners to repentance to believe. It doesn't make any sense, right, but it's the Bible. It's the Bible. The Bible says, "He came to his own and his own received not." That's bad. That's awful. That's so sensitive and grievous to the Lord and yet it's also true that the Lord has to do it.

I would like to go over two pieces of the Canons of Dort with you to bring this home. On page 104, Article 6 of the Second Doctrine read the following. Page 104, Article 6, "And where as many who are called by the gospel do not repent nor believe in Christ but perish in unbelief, this is not owing to any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice offered by Christ on the cross, but is wholly to be imputed to themselves." You see, if you do not believe and do not repent, you have no defense. You cannot excuse yourself because it says it's wholly imputed to you. It's your fault and you have to give account for that.

Or look at page 107, Article 9, "It is not the fault of the gospel, nor of Christ offered therein, nor of God, who calls men by the gospel and confers upon them various gifts, that those who are called by the ministry of the Word refuse to come and be converted. The fault lies in themselves," etc. The fault lies in themselves. Oh do I hope, do I pray that thou unconverted friends here in this hour may see this and come before God in the dust and say, "Lord, I have heard the Gospel so many years and it's my fault that I don't believe in it yet."

And yet it's also encouraging to see that it's the Lord's work, that it's not set, verse 13, it is not spoken, it's not written here to keep you back and say, "But wait." No, not at all. That's not the purpose, it's not saying it's offered to you but be careful. That's not the purpose. The purpose is the Lord offers it, commands to repent and to believe, but how

encouraging it is to hear that the Lord is doing the work himself. He saves a people and makes them willing for the day of his power. It's his work so that means there's hope for them that do not repent. So God receives all the glory, right?

He came to his own, he's not received, so God will be glorified in their death and don't take any responsibility for that and we get all the blame. Think of eternity, all the blame. But if you may believe in him, if you have received him, the Son of God, don't praise yourself, you won't, I trust, that's glory to God in the highest. So how do we have, how do we know if we have been born again? 1 John 5:1, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Whosoever believeth. I may not in historical faith but in miraculous faith of the temporary faith with the saving faith, and someone puts all his trust as a poor sinner in him and life is not life without him, Christ is his life, whosoever believeth in that sense that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.

Congregation, the Lord is still not finished with his work. He still calls us. Parents, you tell your children you need a new heart, right? You tell them pray for a new heart, right? Well, keep doing that but add something, I mentioned it before, say, "Boy, girl, the Lord calls you." Right? Can you say that tonight, can you say, "I agree with the Minister"? He calls us [unintelligible], he calls us. If you deny that, that God calls you sincerely, that's an awful sin. I have no words for that. We like to talk to you if you deny that the Lord calls you, that he means well.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ which according to his abundant mercy," you have to hear about that, abundant mercy, that's the life, that's the hope of a poor and needy people. Amen.