

John 7.1-36 / COB / 06.22.14

Introduction

† Let's do a little exercise together, ok? Answer the following questions in your mind. There is no right or wrong answer, just decide what you think is best. Ready?

[Slide 1: Question 1] 1. The pastor should spend most of his time...

- a. preparing to teach.
- b. visiting and caring for members of the congregation.
- c. doing evangelism.
- d. running the ministries of the church.
- e. something else.

[Slide 2: Question 2] 2. It is more important that the pastor...

- a. always be nice to everyone and make people feel welcome.
- b. hold people accountable to scripture and provoke them to grow spiritually.

[Slide 3: Question 3] 3. The one thing the pastor should not do is...

- a. talk to people about how much they financially give to the church.
- b. get involved in decisions about the building.
- c. take a turn cleaning the toilets.
- d. force other ministry leaders to participate in ongoing training.
- e. more than one of the above.
- f. none of the above, the pastor should or may do any of these.

† **[Slide 4: Title]** Now, what if your answers are very different from mine? Could you see how that might lead to misunderstandings between us, as I do what I think is right, and you start wondering what in the world is wrong with this new pastor?

- What if I spend most of my time teaching, but you think I should be spending more time doing evangelism, or vice versa? Would you not begin to question whether I was the best pastor for the job, maybe whether I even had my priorities straight?
- Or what if I was the type to get in your face about your sin, but you thought I should always be tolerant and sweet, wouldn't you likely be offended by me?

† This is what we will see was happening with Jesus. People had assumptions about the Messiah-savior that were different than the reality of Jesus. In our three questions, there are not necessarily any absolutely correct or incorrect answers, but Jesus was the Messiah-savior, the Christ, so when people had different ideas about it, they were really struggling with false assumptions. And this made it difficult for them to assess Jesus accurately to see who he really was.

- Let's pray and then we will see what is going on in John 7...
- Turn in your Bible to John 7. If you need help finding it, use the table of contents or ask the person next to you.

[Slide 5: 7.1] John 7.1 NET: After this Jesus traveled throughout Galilee. He stayed out of Judea because the Jewish leaders wanted to kill him.

- † Jesus previously had left Judea, because there was a lot of built up animosity on the part of the religious leaders in Jerusalem; we saw in 5.18 that they wanted to kill him, because they thought he was blasphemous, speaking falsely about God. Here the Greek says “he was not willing to walk around in Judea” because they were seeking to kill him.
 - Your Bible might say “the Jews” were seeking to kill him, and that is a literal translation, but remember we have seen before that John uses that term to refer to the Jewish religious leaders.
 - Our text begins with “After this...” When we last saw Jesus, he was in Capernaum, in Galilee, and he had frightened away most of his disciples by teaching things that made even them uncomfortable. That was back at the time of Passover, in March or April. It now is September or October, about six months later.

[Slide 6: 7.2-5] John 7.2-5: Now the Jewish feast of Tabernacles was near. ³So Jesus' brothers advised him, “Leave here and go to Judea so your disciples may see your miracles that you are performing. ⁴For no one who seeks to make a reputation for himself does anything in secret. If you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.” ⁵(For not even his own brothers believed in him.)

- † This feast or festival was to celebrate the autumn harvest, particularly of olives and grapes. People from rural areas would come to Jerusalem and build makeshift shelters for the week long celebration out of light branches and leaves, calling them booths or tabernacles. Town folk would construct similar structures on their flat roofs or in their courtyards.
 - This festival was very important, in fact God taught about it in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy! In Jesus’ day, all men were required to attend in Jerusalem for this festival, and really all people were supposed to go.
 - God directed in the Law that the people were to reside in these temporary shelters to symbolize the temporary shelters the Israelites used when they first were rescued by God out of Egypt in the Exodus. So this festival commemorated God’s deliverance of the people from slavery in Egypt and God’s provision both then and now through the harvest.
- † It surprises some people, but Jesus had brothers and sisters, children of Mary and Joseph. We know later at least two of the brothers came to faith in Jesus as the Messiah-savior, since both James and Jude wrote books of the New Testament. At this point, none of them believed in him.
 - They were chiding Jesus here, being more cynical than the movie shows. Their contention was that nobody who claims to be the Messiah-savior can hang around in Galilee, for the real action, the proving ground, the religious center is at the Temple in Jerusalem. That is where the Messiah was expected to appear.
 - The irony is that Jesus would make an impact on the world in Jerusalem, but not as his brothers thought: they could not foresee that he would die there, and thus change human history.

[Slide 7: 7.6-10] John 7.6-10: So Jesus replied, “My time has not yet arrived, but you are ready at any opportunity! ⁷The world cannot hate you, but it hates me, because I am testifying about it that its deeds are evil. ⁸You go up to the feast yourselves. I am not going up to this feast [with you] because

my time has not yet fully arrived.”⁹When he had said this, he remained in Galilee.¹⁰But when [after] his brothers had gone up to the feast, then Jesus himself also went up, not openly but in secret.

- † His brothers are still of the world, unbelievers, so of course the world does not hate them. But Jesus has been proclaiming the world’s sinfulness and need for a savior, and he thus has aroused much animosity from demons, those influenced by the sinful culture, and those happily dwelling in fleshly sin rather than God’s light.
- † His brothers gave Jesus their human wisdom, what they would do, but Jesus was under the guidance of God the Father, he had to fulfill God’s plan for him. According to that plan, it was not yet time for him to go to Jerusalem, though his brothers could go at any time.
 - Jesus here is not declining to ever go to the festival, but he is declining to accompany his brothers on their trip to Jerusalem. He would go later, without fanfare, in secret.
 - We should note this is Jesus’ final departure from Galilee! He will not return before his death. I imagine he looked around with some sorrow as he made his way south toward Jerusalem.

[Slide 8: 7.11-13] John 7.11-13: So the Jewish leaders were looking for him at the feast, asking, “Where is he?”¹² There was a lot of grumbling about him among the crowds. Some were saying, “He is a good man,” but others, “He deceives the common people.”¹³ However, no one spoke openly about him for fear of the Jewish leaders.

- † The Jewish religious leaders were anticipating Jesus’ return to Jerusalem for the festival, hoping he would fall into their hands. This is why Jesus came in secret, so that God’s timing could play out.
 - The crowd was unsure what to make of Jesus. Some liked him, but others believed he was a deceiver. This would remain the official Jewish pronouncement about Jesus, that he was a deceiver, as evidenced in the Babylonian Talmud, which the Jewish religious leaders wrote a few centuries after Jesus’ death and resurrection.
 - The crowd was murmuring among themselves [grumbling is not the best word, since some were saying positive things]; they were murmuring, but nobody was making public declarations about Jesus, because they feared it could draw the ire of the religious leaders.

[Slide 9: 7.14-15] John 7.14-15: When the feast was half over, Jesus went up to the temple courts and began to teach.¹⁵Then the Jewish leaders were astonished and said, “How does this man know so much when he has never had formal instruction?”

- † Jesus’ brothers told him to go make a splash, the religious leaders were looking for him, the crowd was all debating about him, and then John writes in Greek, “But when the festival was already in the middle...” All that buildup of anticipation and tension, but now it was half over and nothing had happened! But then, “Jesus ascended to the temple and began teaching.”
- † If you are using a different translation, your Bible might say they were astonished because Jesus had never learned or never been educated, but obviously the religious leaders meant what the NET spells out: Jesus had not had formal instruction under one of their prestigious rabbis.
 - Most Jewish boys attended the local synagogue school, so they would expect that of Jesus, but not that he would be so advanced in his biblical and theological understanding. You would think they would not be surprised by this time, but it still astonishes them to hear his teaching live.

- It is ironic that they think of him as not having the necessary qualifications to teach, when really he is the Son of God himself!

[Slide 10: 7.16-19] John 7.16-19: So Jesus replied, “My teaching is not from me, but from the one who sent me. ¹⁷If anyone wants to do God's will, he will know about my teaching, whether it is from God or whether I speak from my own authority. ¹⁸The person who speaks on his own authority desires to receive honor for himself; the one who desires the honor of the one who sent him is a man of integrity, and there is no unrighteousness in him. ¹⁹Hasn't Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law! Why do you want to kill me?”

- † Jesus said some of these things before. First, if you have a heart for God, you will be able to discern that what he is saying is godly teaching consistent with the prior revelation of the Old Testament.
 - Second, Jesus is trustworthy and righteous always, because he has no agenda of his own, and he is not speaking on his own; rather he has come to teach by God the Father’s authority, was sent by God’s will, is guided by God’s direction, and serves for God’s glory.
 - This is similar to when we do something in Jesus’ name or Christ’s name: e.g., we will do VBS by his authority, by his will, by his guidelines, and for his glory.
- † Third, recall that when he last was in Jerusalem, back in chapter five, Jesus told the religious leaders that despite their love for the writings of Moses in the first five books of the Bible, Moses would accuse them of being unrighteous, because they did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah and Greater Moses Prophet, about whom Moses had written.
 - So here Jesus returns to the Moses theme, and look how he chides these religious leaders! He is speaking among the crowd, but he is answering the doubts of the religious leaders. He says their beloved Moses gave them their beloved Law, yet none of them keeps the law, because they want to kill him!
 - As we will see, this turn of logic totally throws the crowd for a loop, but the religious leaders know that they are seeking to kill Jesus. They think this is justified because they view Jesus as a dangerous blasphemer, that is, one who spoke wrongly about God, because he said that God was his father and that he and God the Father were one in unity.
 - But it is Jesus’ contention that if they did have a heart right with God, then they would not be doubting his teachings and would be following the Law. Since they are not right with God, they cannot discern him clearly, and thus want to kill him.

[Slide 11: 7.20-24] John 7.20-24: The crowd answered, “You're possessed by a demon! Who is trying to kill you?” ²¹Jesus replied, “I performed one miracle and you are all amazed. ²²However, because Moses gave you the practice of circumcision (not that it came from Moses, but from the forefathers), you circumcise a male child on the Sabbath. ²³But if a male child is circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses is not broken, why are you angry with me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? ²⁴Do not judge according to external appearance, but judge with proper judgment.”

- † Many of the crowd were from out of town, and might not have been aware of the plot of the religious leaders, so they were shocked by Jesus’ abrupt question. They might have thought him paranoid and suffering from delusions of self-importance, acting insanelly with this accusation.

- † The one miracle to which Jesus is referring is from back in chapter five, when he healed the paralyzed man on the Sabbath and told him to carry his mat away. The NET says this amazed people, but a more nuanced translation might be “astonished.” They were astonished because Jesus broke their manmade customs about the Sabbath and instructed the healed man to do the same. In their minds, this was not normal behavior for a rabbi and prophet!
- † But Jesus pointed out that they would break the same customs when they circumcised male infants on the eighth day of life, even when that fell on the Sabbath. It had always been Jewish custom that circumcision took priority over the Sabbath.
 - Later Jewish writing in the Talmud noted that circumcision affected just one of the 248 recognized parts of the body, so if circumcision took priority over the Sabbath, how much more should the saving of the whole body! So later rabbinic thought agreed with Jesus! This is ironic since the later rabbis derived from the Pharisees of Jesus’ day, who hated him so much.
- † In v.24, Jesus says we should judge with just judgment. We never judge people in the sense that we condemn them or we assess ourselves as better than them, but we do use moral discernment about people’s actions. Here Jesus tells his opponents to be fair about it, not to fall into self-righteous legalism when they are assessing his actions.
 - The religious leaders have misconstrued his character based on false deductions from the Old Testament Law, an approach which has left them too focused on mere appearance of following the letter of the Law and manmade customs about the Law, rather than being focused on the character of God as revealed in the Law.
 - If they had been pursuing God’s will by faith, they would discern that Jesus is not an unlawful Sabbath breaker, but the One who has come from God to bring deliverance.

[Slide 12: 7.25-27] John 7.25-27: Then some of the residents of Jerusalem began to say, “Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? ²⁶Yet here he is, speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to him. Do the rulers really know that this man is the Christ? ²⁷But we know where this man comes from. Whenever the Christ comes, no one will know where he comes from.”

- † Some of the people from Jerusalem knew about the plot of the religious leaders. So they were surprised to find Jesus speaking boldly in the Temple, and not getting arrested. So they wondered, had the religious leaders changed their minds about him, had they come to realize that Jesus is the Messiah-savior like he says he is?
 - But they refuted that idea among themselves! They would know of the prophecy that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, but there was a school of thought that interpreted other prophecies to say that the Messiah would suddenly appear somewhat mysteriously.
 - **[Slide 13: Malachi 3.1]** For example, Malachi 3.1 NIV: “‘Then suddenly the Lord [Adonai, the master or judge] you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,’ says the LORD [Yahweh] Almighty.”
 - Thus many of the Jews of Jesus’ day thought the Messiah would be wholly unknown until he suddenly appeared at the Temple, to bring about Israel’s restoration. In contrast, Jesus apparently has come out of Nazareth and been doing itinerant preaching for a couple of years, with the result that now some believed he was good and others that he was a deceiver. These people figure Jesus cannot be the Messiah if he is known and ineffectual.

[Slide 14: 7.28-29] John 7.28-29: Then Jesus, while teaching in the temple courts, cried out, “You both know me and know where I come from! And I have not come on my own initiative, but the one who sent me is true. You do not know him, ²⁹but I know him, because I have come from him and he sent me.”

† The author John, loves irony, and here he shows us some more ironic things that happened. The people gathered in the Temple thought they knew who Jesus was and where he was from in Nazareth of Galilee, but they did not realize that he was the Son of God who came from God the Father in Heaven.

- Jesus told them they did know who he was and where he was from; he had told them, but they didn’t believe him. What they thought they knew was false.
- Again it is ironic that they Jews prided themselves on being the people who knew the one true God, but Jesus said they did not know God. If they really knew God, then they would recognize Jesus for who he is.
- The last time Jesus was in Jerusalem, back in chapter five, he chastised the people there for not recognizing him, saying they did not have the Word of God in them, for if they had believed what Moses wrote, they would see clearly who he was.

[Slide 15: 7.30-32] John 7.30-32: So then they tried to seize Jesus, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come. ³¹Yet many of the crowd believed in him and said, “Whenever the Christ comes, he won't perform more miraculous signs than this man did, will he?” ³²The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things about Jesus, so the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to arrest him.

† Some in the crowd started to defend Jesus, speculating that he really was the Messiah-savior, because of all the miracles he had been doing both in Judea and Galilee.

- This spurred the Pharisees to action: they must shut him down, before the crowd is swayed in his favor. They have not had the ability to seize him themselves, so they convinced the Sanhedrin to send officers to arrest him. The Sanhedrin was the ruling religious council of the Jews, mostly made up of Sadducees, not Pharisees, but the Pharisees were in a passion about Jesus and they were very influential because they taught at the synagogues, like local churches.
- There is some debate about whether these “officers” were the Temple guards or some other servants of the council. The Greek literally says just “assistants” or “deputies.” In any case, they went out to look for an opportunity to seize Jesus.

[Slide 16: 7.33-36] John 7.33-36: Then Jesus said, “I will be with you for only a little while longer, and then I am going to the one who sent me. ³⁴You will look for me but will not find me, and where I am you cannot come.” ³⁵Then the Jewish leaders said to one another, “Where is he going to go that we cannot find him? He is not going to go to the Jewish people dispersed among the Greeks and teach the Greeks, is he? ³⁶What did he mean by saying, ‘You will look for me but will not find me, and where I am you cannot come?’”

† Jesus continued to teach, and I believe he was teaching publically, in the temple courts, not just to the officers sent to arrest him as the movie shows. Now he was teaching prophetically about his ascension back to Heaven, which would occur after his crucifixion and resurrection.

- This confused the religious leaders who continued to monitor him. They wondered where was planning to go! They speculated that he might join one of the Jewish communities outside of Israel, to teach his inflammatory material to Jews there, or even to Greeks, perhaps meaning Gentile believers in Yahweh, the one true God.
- So we pause here with Jesus teaching in the temple courts during the festival, while the religious leaders monitor him and their assistants await an opportunity to seize him and put him under arrest.

Conclusion

- † **[Slide 17: problems]** So far in this scene, we have seen that everyone was approaching Jesus with some false reasoning.
 - His brothers doubted he could be the Messiah, and assumed the Messiah should be making a big splash at the Jerusalem Temple, not doing ministry in Galilee.
 - The crowd thought the Messiah should suddenly appear to deliver Israel, not be doing ministry for a couple of years, mostly in Galilee, after growing up in Nazareth of all places.
 - The religious leaders thought a prophet should not break their customs about the Sabbath and that Jesus was blasphemous because they did not understand that he really was the Son of God.
 - What about you? Are you sure you don't have any misconceptions or false assumptions about Jesus? I would bet most people in churches in Parkesburg do have some. The only way to tell is to carefully investigate what Scripture really says about him.
- † We see that one problem people were having was they were not genuinely seeking to know God and his will, and they were not genuinely seeking truth in the scriptures.
 - What about you? Jesus says that if you are genuine in these things, you will recognize his words as those from God the Father and know that he is who he said he was: he is the Messiah-Savior we call Christ, whom the prophets repeatedly said would come; he is the divine Son of God, who came to die so we could be forgiven of our sins and reconciled with God.
- † Another problem people were having was they were superficially obeying the commands of scripture without really figuring out what it meant. They were going through the motions, but not seeing in scripture or adopting for themselves the character of God. Thus they became legalistic and false in their discernment, not really understanding the things of God and not really living as his representatives.
 - What about you? Do you see scripture as a list of dos and don'ts or do you see in it revelation of God's character that you could adopt and live out?
- † Next week, we will look at the other half of Jesus' teaching. For now, think through these questions and make sure – whether you are a believer or not – that you are approaching scripture and Jesus with the right mindset and heart.
 - There is a devotion this week. I hope you will give it a try. Just ten minutes a day could help you know Jesus better. If you are interested in the earlier devotions from our study of the gospel of John, they are collected in a binder out at the welcome center.
 - Let's pray...