

# John 7.37-52 Sermon / COB / 06.29.14

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## Introduction

- † **[Slide 1: Printer]** I saw in the *Wall Street Journal* a couple of weeks ago that these new 3-D printers are coming down in price, to where families might buy one. Have you heard of these?
- These devices use plastic molding to generate a three-dimensional object just like a printer generates a two-dimensional picture of an object. So now, at home, you could create your own hair comb, key fob, or VBS gadgets. Students could “print” a three dimensional illustration of a skeleton or the solar system, Noah could learn to “print” his own working toy trucks!
  - The author of the article wrote, “My current obsession is figuring out how to print my friends’ heads as custom Chia Pets.”
  - **[Slide 2: Chia]** The image in the upper left is the type I received as a gift from so-called friends in graduate school, but the author wants a more lifelike version. At this point, if you want to stay affordable, you are limited to items about the size of a good coffee cup, but bigger models are coming down in price, no doubt. It is amazing what we can do today with technology!
- † It also is amazing what Jesus can do without technology. Never mind the fact that he created everything in the universe, I’m not even talking about that. I’m talking about what he can do today.
- Jesus wants to do miracles in you. He wants to generate faith. He wants to generate spiritual life where there was death. He wants to generate spiritual light where there are still pockets of darkness in you. He wants to introduce you to God himself! He wants to generate in you a process of purification, healing, and freedom. The question is why so many of us say, “No.”
  - **[Slide 3: title]** Let’s pause to pray about that...
- † Please turn in your Bible to John 7.37. This picture is of the ruins of the Pool of Siloam, where Hezekiah’s tunnel brought water into the city. As we will see in a moment, this pool was part of the festivities during the Festival of Tabernacles.
- Archaeologists just excavated this pool in the last decade, after it was discovered during some sewer work in Jerusalem. They have uncovered these twenty steps that went down into the pool and a sliver of the bottom of the pool itself. Unfortunately the land on the right of the image is owned by the Greek Orthodox Church, which is not allowing it to be excavated.
- † In our narrative, last week we saw that after many months of staying away from the district of Judea, Jesus now has returned to the Temple courts in Jerusalem for the Festival of Tabernacles.
- We saw last week that while the crowd was still trying to figure out what to believe about Jesus, many of the religious leaders in the Sanhedrin – the ruling religious council of the Jews – were seeking to seize Jesus, hoping to have him executed. They got frustrated in not being able to grab him, so they sent out some assistants to do the dirty work.
  - When we paused in our study, Jesus was still teaching in the Temple courts, this time about his approaching departure from the planet. We pick up the story in John 7.37...

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**[Slide 4: 7.37-39]** John 7.37-39: On the last day of the feast, the greatest day, Jesus stood up and shouted out, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me, and <sup>38</sup>let the one who believes in me drink. Just as the scripture says, ‘From within him will flow rivers of living water.’” <sup>39</sup>(Now he said this about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were going to receive, for the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.)

- † In vv.33-34, Jesus said he would soon return to God the Father in Heaven. But with Jesus, even his departure is a blessing, for as Jesus would explain to his disciples just before his death, only if he returned to Heaven could he send the Holy Spirit to them.
- † The feast or festival of the Tabernacles was timed to coincide with the autumn fruit harvest. It celebrated God’s provision back during the Exodus from Egypt and now through the harvest.
  - As part of the festivities, each day the High Priest would lead a procession that filled a golden pitcher with water from the pool of Siloam and then returned back to the temple. This activity celebrated God’s provision of water in the desert during the exodus and the fruitfulness that could come only with God’s provision of rain.
  - Because of Old Testament prophecy [like Isaiah 44.3 and Joel 2.28, which we read earlier in the service], the Jews also celebrated God the Father’s promise of pouring out his Spirit in the last days, symbolized by the pouring of the water in the temple.
  - So it was a logical connection Jesus made, saying he would give rivers of living water – that is flowing water or pouring water – as a metaphor for the Holy Spirit.
- † **[Slide 5: New Covenant]** The Holy Spirit was involved in creation and in all history since; he is just as eternal as God the Father or Christ the Son.
  - But Jesus was about to send the Holy Spirit to fulfill the New Covenant, and that would mean a new sort of provision for believers. From the time of Moses forward, the prophets kept saying that an even better covenant or agreement between God and mankind was coming.
  - This New Covenant would include sanctifying cleansing by God, intimacy with God, forgiveness from God, and God putting the Holy Spirit in believers to empower them to live as God’s people instead of sinful people.
  - So Jesus – knowing he was going to ascend back to Heaven after the crucifixion and resurrection, and then send the Holy Spirit in this new way – said that all who were thirsty should come to him – in faith – and he would give the believer the gift of the Holy Spirit.
  - Are you thirsty? Would you like spiritual renewal, spiritual cleansing, spiritual maturity, spiritual empowerment? Then come to Jesus, and receive the blessings associated with the indwelling Holy Spirit.
  - Even if you have long been a believer, you might find yourself in need of these blessings. You might find yourself in a rough patch, a dark place; you might know you need these blessings but you are not experiencing them. Then do as I did when I was thirty, come back... Come to Jesus, and receive the blessings associated with the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- † **[Slide 6: 7.37-39]** The Greek text did not have punctuation and Greek does not follow the same principles of word order that we have in English, so sometimes we can be confused as to how to translate a complex sentence. That is the case here in vv.37-38. The NET translates in such a way

that it can be Jesus from whom the living water flows. Some other translations make it sound like the living water is flowing from the believer.

- Either way, the point is this: Christ will provide the Holy Spirit to believers, and this is symbolized with living water, which meant flowing water in that culture, but also could be translated as life-giving water.
- The Holy Spirit gives us new life in the salvation process and fulfills in us many of the New Covenant promises for true life through the sanctification process.

† You might wonder what that is. If you have missed church any of the last five weeks, I hope you will listen to the sermons you missed on our church website.

- We have been discussing God's promise to sanctify, or purify, his people, and we left off with discussion of the Holy Spirit's work of filling us with the character of God and leading us in life.
- These are important parts of Jesus' promise in this text, and essential for you to understand if you are going to realize the full blessing he promises.

**[Slide 7: 7.40-43] John 7.40-43: When they heard these words, some of the crowd began to say, "This really is the Prophet!" <sup>41</sup>Others said, "This is the Christ!" But still others said, "No, for the Christ doesn't come from Galilee, does he? <sup>42</sup>Don't the scriptures say that the Christ is a descendant of David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?" <sup>43</sup>So there was a division in the crowd because of Jesus. <sup>44</sup>Some of them were wanting to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him.**

† When Moses wrote Deuteronomy, just before the people reentered the promised land, he prophesied that God would send a greater prophet than him one day, and this prophet would speak God's words which must be obeyed. This became known in Israel as "The Prophet."

- As we have already seen in this gospel, some people recognized that the Prophet and the Messiah were the same, but others did not. Here some of the crowd is speculating that Jesus might be this greater Moses Prophet, who speaks for God.
- Others were speculating that he was the Christ. Christ and Messiah mean the same thing, they just derive from two different languages. The Messiah or Christ is God's anointed, the one the prophets predicted would come to die for sin, reconcile people with God, usher in the New Covenant with God, and deliver Israel from oppression.

† As we saw last week, there was a belief based on Malachi 3.1 that the Christ would appear suddenly when it was time to rescue Israel and usher in God's kingdom. Whereas these people know that Jesus has been living and ministering in Galilee.

- Furthermore, Micah 5.2 was understood to say the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David's people, and everyone knew if the Messiah was to be king in God's kingdom then he would have to be a descendent of David, since God had promised that David's line would rule forever. Since they know Jesus grew up and has been living in Galilee, these people dismiss his claim to be the Messiah.
- Of course, we know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and that both his parents were descendants of King David, in fact they were the exact people who could make Jesus the rightful heir to the throne of David. God made sure of that!

- † **[Slide 8: “others”]** Just for interest sake, let me tell you that the Greek text does not literally say “others” were denying Jesus was the Christ. Rather, it indicates people previously mentioned in the story were denying Jesus was the Christ, which probably means the religious leaders who were involved in the part of this scene we studied last week. So it seems likely that the religious leaders were going around trying to squash the idea that Jesus was the Christ or Messiah.
  
- † In any case, as we see so often in the gospels, there was division among the people because of Jesus. Jesus today remains a lightning rod for controversy. Few people remain apathetic about him: people either believe in him and thus cherish him as their savior, or they don’t believe and thus revile him as a deceiver; or maybe they believe enough to feel threatened and convicted, like the demons did, but do not believe in his offer of salvation.
  - Don’t be surprised if associating yourself with Jesus draws antagonism from people today. We see it happening in Jesus’ day and the days of the early church, Jesus predicted believers would be persecuted just as he was, and it has held true all these many years. Be prepared for it, not surprised or dismayed by it.
  - The video shows Jesus looking anxious, but he wasn’t. He anticipated all that was going to happen, and he warned his disciples that the same would happen to them. We need to take that warning to heart, and be prepared.

**[Slide 9: 7.45-49] John 7.45-49: Then the officers [those who had been sent to seize Jesus] returned to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, “Why didn't you bring him back with you?”** <sup>46</sup>The officers replied, “No one ever spoke like this man!” <sup>47</sup>Then the Pharisees answered, “You haven't been deceived too, have you? <sup>48</sup>None of the rulers or the Pharisees have believed in him, have they? <sup>49</sup>But this rabble who do not know the law are accursed!”

- † These “officers” are the assistants the Sanhedrin sent out to seize Jesus. But they were not thugs who would carry out their orders mindlessly, they were intellectual and religious fellows, priests in their own right, who sought to do what was right.
  - As they waited for an opportunity to seize Jesus, they had to listen to him teaching, and they were moved by what they heard. This confused them: was he deserving of death as the ruling council said or was he really a prophet from God? In the end, they dared not seize him.
  
- † This earned them the scorn of the Pharisees and other religious leaders gathered there. The Pharisees didn’t think the assistants were deceived, but they mocked them for their confusion.
  - Then the Pharisees compared themselves with the crowd: they thought of themselves as the intellectual, well-educated, spiritual leaders, and they were against Jesus; whereas they figure the crowd is ignorant of the law and righteousness, and so is accursed; and so it is no wonder those poor slob are deceived by Jesus! I think it is humorous that the NET interprets the Pharisees’ scorn and calls the crowd “the rabble.”
  - Obviously, this is more irony, of which we see a lot in this gospel. The Pharisees who prided themselves on being smart and not deceived were the ones deceived the most, so much so that they were plotting to kill the Messiah-savior from God.

**[Slide 10: 7.50-52] John 7.50-52: Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before and who was one of the rulers, said,** <sup>51</sup>“Our law doesn't condemn a man unless it first hears from him and learns what he is

**doing, does it?" <sup>52</sup>They replied, "You aren't from Galilee too, are you? Investigate carefully and you will see that no prophet comes from Galilee!"**

- † Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin. He visited Jesus one night, which we saw in chapter three. Back then, he treated Jesus with respect, calling him a prophet and teacher from God. Nicodemus at that point did not understand all about Jesus' identity, but at least he was not accusing Jesus.
  - In the course of that conversation, Jesus revealed that even a religious leader needed to be born again into the New Covenant by the Holy Spirit, that Jesus was the prophetic Son of Man whom God the Father chose to be his ultimate representative and ruler on Earth, that Jesus would have to die on the cross, and that those who trust in God's deliverance through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus will receive new "born again" spiritual life and eventually resurrected physical life from God.
  - We don't know if Nicodemus at this time in chapter seven is a true believer or not. Obviously he had not shown himself to be a believer, since his fellow Pharisees did not know about it. If you don't know what happened to Nicodemus, the devotion this week has a surprise for you!
  
- † At this point, Nicodemus at least stands for justice. There is not a specific command in the Old Testament for hearing a person's defense before condemning him, but this was Roman law and Jewish custom at the time. Maybe he also was trying to be a voice of moderation, trying to cool the influence of the hotheads among the council.
  - He got abused for it. The frustrated antagonists of Jesus asked him derisively if he was from Galilee too. Galilee was held in contempt by Judeans, especially those in Jerusalem. It is not clear exactly what they were implying here, but perhaps that Nicodemus also was a rural backwoods sort of thinker like those in the crowd, that he was biased because of similar origins as Jesus, or maybe they were just spitting venom without making sense.
  - They also stammered out that no prophet rises up from Galilee, when that is clearly false because Jonah was born in Galilee. They were so frustrated, they were just being nasty, even though what they said was demonstrably false. Another irony is that Jesus isn't from Galilee anyway, having been born in Bethlehem, in Judea.

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## Conclusion

- † **[Slide 11: Jesus]** Let's review. Jesus is the prophet Moses predicted would come to speak the very words of God.
  - Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah-savior, whom many prophets said would come to deliver Israel and to restore our relationship with God and bring us forgiveness of our sins.
  - Jesus is the King in the line of David whom God promised would rule Israel and through Israel the world forever.
  - Jesus is the Son of Man, the one the prophet Daniel saw as the ultimate representative of God the Father on earth.
  
- † **[Slide 12: crucifixion]** Jesus knew that he would have to die by crucifixion, be resurrected from the dead, and then ascend to Heaven.

- He died to usher in the New Covenant with his blood and to pay our penalty for sin.
- He was resurrected on the third day, to prove his victory over death and sin, and to provide the promise that we too would be delivered from death and even someday resurrected to new life on a new earth.
- He ascended to be our mediator so that our salvation was assured, and to send the Holy Spirit to fulfill the New Covenant Promises.

† **[Slide 13: HS]** The Holy Spirit brings us to faith in who Jesus is and what he offers us through his crucifixion and resurrection, and thus regenerates us in spirit, what Jesus in chapter three called being born again or born from above.

- In that process of salvation, of being born again, God justifies us, which is to say, he declares us righteous in his sight, because he is attributing to us the righteousness of Christ because of our faith that Christ paid the penalty for our sins. We call this imputed righteousness, because it is imputed or accounted to us.
- The Holy Spirit then sets about the work of progressive sanctification, a lifelong process of purifying our character, renewing our human nature, so that we become true people of God instead of people in sin.
- The Holy Spirit indwells us and empowers us to walk in the light with Christ instead of pursuing sin, and empowers us to understand God's Word and to grow in intimacy with God.

† **[Slide 14: blank]** Now we have a choice to make.

- Do we want to identify with Christ, to acknowledge publically who he is, even though that might bring us struggle?
- Do we want to identify with Christ, and receive the salvation blessings he offers, even though that means we have to learn to live like him, to live for him?
- Do we want to identify with Christ and receive the blessings of the Holy Spirit, even though that means change in ourselves and in our lives, as we grow spiritually and learn to represent God and reflect God's character as our highest priority in life, even though that means we need to sacrifice, suffer sometimes, and serve the gospel mission?
- Who do you want to be? The thirsty one Christ called to that day? Or the one who rejected and spoke against him? It's your choice...
- That's supposed to be the end of the sermon, but on Friday morning, I awoke with some enlightenment: what is the first public way we identify ourselves with Christ? It is to receive water baptism! We are going to have a baptism party on August 10. If you have not received baptism by immersion as a believer, then please come talk with me about this. Getting baptized is an important step of faith and an important act of obedience. I know some of you are older and might feel awkward about this, but don't! There is no awkwardness among family! We need to be both authentic and loving with each other. We want to celebrate with you!
- Let's pray