

**Life in His Name – Part 17**  
**Missing the Mark – John 7:1-24**  
Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Intro:**

This morning's passage from John 7 addresses three significant issues which help us to trust God's plan, discern true teaching, and make right judgments. I imagine all of us at times have misunderstood our role and relationship with Jesus or followed misguided teachers and teaching or misread someone or something and made a wrong judgment. If you are like me, you have done all three, and the results have been painful and costly.

We can avoid these mistakes now and in the future by paying close attention to our text from John 7 and personally applying what we learn from it. Each of our three main points functions like the wheels on a bicycle; we need both wheels to get anywhere and properly apply these points.

**Believe in Jesus and trust His plan**

- If you remember from the last few weeks, we saw Jesus feed the 5,000, walk on water, and teach about being the "bread of life." People, including Jesus's disciples, continued to sort out who Jesus was and what it meant to follow Him. Jesus was the "hot topic" of the time, where it seemed everyone was talking about Him, and He had made many friends, followers, and also enemies in high places. We will pick up the text in John seven, starting with verse one.

**John 7:1-9 NIV**

**After this, Jesus went around in Galilee. He did not want to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him. 2 But when the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near, 3 Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do. 4 No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." 5 For even his own brothers did not believe in him.**

**6 Therefore Jesus told them, "My time is not yet here; for you any time will do. 7 The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil. 8 You go to the festival. I am not yet going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come." 9 After he had said this, he stayed in Galilee.**

- Jesus indeed had brothers by the union of Mary and Joseph, and their names are recorded in Matthew 13:55 – James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas (not Iscariot). These brothers were telling Jesus what He should do. Now we don't know their motivation in doing so; perhaps they were trying to help Jesus in His mission, or perhaps they were looking for their own recognition as brothers of Jesus, or perhaps they had some other motive. But what is most revealing is John's comment that "even His own brothers did not believe in Him."
- They did have a measure of faith in Jesus. They believed He could do some stuff, but they did not put their faith in Him for their salvation. They "grew up with God" but did not believe in Him. They believed some things about Him through their experiences, and they knew He could do

some supernatural wonders. They had enough of a relationship with Him that they could talk to Him and advise Him as to what He should do. This is not unlike many people who "grow up with God" in the church but still don't believe. They believe that Jesus can do things, and they feel like they have a relationship so that they can talk with Him, but they do not comprehend His true identity and the implication for their life, or have a relationship with Him for who He is.

- Remember why this gospel was written—so that we would **"believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name" John 20:31**. Believing in Jesus means that you believe who He is. That He is the Christ. That He is the Son of God. Then you put your faith in Him to have life in His name.
- People who "grew up with God" but don't believe in Him do not understand who He is. That He, indeed, is the king of the universe and the Lord, the Creator of all. If you understand who He is, you approach Him differently and trust Him fully. Jesus is not the supernatural bellboy in the sky who only exists to meet your requests. Many people still think of Jesus in this way.
- For them, any time is a good time for Jesus to do what they think He should do. They don't recognize who Jesus is and believe in His identity, and they think their plans are better than the plans Jesus already has. Jesus follows the will of the Father and knows all hearts. He tells the truth, and He tells those who are thinking like the world that their works are evil, even their thoughts and motivations.
- The first thing that you and I need to do, the first thing that all people who "grew up with God" need to do, is believe in Jesus. Believe in who He is, not just that He can do some supernatural stuff. Then once your belief is fully settled in who He is, then you entrust yourself fully to Him, knowing that He does indeed have a plan, and we can trust Him. God does not make things up as He goes along. He has a plan, and it is indeed for your good. If He does not take your advice and do what you ask Him to do, trust that He has a plan and that His plan is better than yours. He knows way more than you do and is working all things together for good. His timing is purposeful and always best.

### **John 7:10-13 NIV**

**However, after his brothers had left for the festival, he went also, not publicly, but in secret. 11 Now at the festival the Jewish leaders were watching for Jesus and asking, "Where is he?" 12 Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, "He is a good man." Others replied, "No, he deceives the people." 13 But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the leaders.**

- Jesus knew the right time to arrive at the festival and in the right manner. He needed to go in secret at this point and not yet show Himself publicly because the leaders were watching for Him. It was not yet "His time" for the final confrontation with them. John continues to paint the picture of how people thought and responded to Jesus, from "He is a good man," to "He deceives the people."
- In this context, Jesus steps up to teach in the middle of the festival in a public way, and from this teaching, we learn the importance of desiring God's will and discerning true teaching.

## Desire God's will and discern true teaching

John 7:14-18 NIV

Not until halfway through the festival did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. 15 The Jews there were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having been taught?"

16 Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. 17 If anyone wants to do God's will, he will know whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. 18 Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.

- When Jesus finally went to the temple, He did so in the middle of the festival, perhaps when people were no longer looking for Him. And notice that He did no "works" or miracles, but taught.
- The Jewish leaders were not contemplating what He was saying, but were wondering who taught Jesus what He was saying. Jesus responded by saying that "His teaching was not His own," and that what He was teaching came for the one who sent Him, which was God the Father.
- Then He makes this fascinating statement in verse 17. "If anyone wants to do God's will, he will know whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own." So our desire to do God's will gives us the heart to discern if what is being taught is of God or not. If we just want to "know more stuff," then we continually collect different ideas and teaching. But if we genuinely want to do the will of God, we have to funnel down the information to things we will put into practice. Doing so forces us to choose what is right and what is wrong. It forces us to discern the truth.
- When you are looking for teaching that comes from God, ask the question "who is the teacher/preacher/speaker drawing attention to?" Are they looking to bring glory to God or bring glory to themselves? Do they want people to listen to them or listen to God? Are they hoping that people leave thinking what a great speaker, or are they hoping people leave thinking what a great God? If they are seeking the glory of God, you can trust that person (even though they can make mistakes, they are honest mistakes). Make sure that what they teach aligns itself, is built upon, and points to and from the written word of God. Man's words will fade away, but the word of God will last forever.
- In our age of 10,000 teachers and preachers, don't be led astray by something and someone who is false. This will harm you and those you love. Instead, desire to do God's will and discern that what you follow is true. Jesus gives us some more help to do so.

## Think deeply and judge correctly

John 7:19-24 NIV

"Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?" 20 "You are demon-possessed," the crowd answered. "Who is trying to kill you?"

21 Jesus said to them, "I did one miracle, and you are all amazed. 22 Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you

circumcise a boy on the Sabbath. 23 Now if a boy can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing a man's whole body on the Sabbath? 24 Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly."

- In verses 19 and 20, both Jesus and the crowd make a judgment. Jesus first starts out with a question, "Has not Moses given you the law?" This question establishes what kind of people they are (those under the Law of Moses), and establishes their understanding and authority. Then Jesus says, "Yet not one of you keeps the law," which is a judgment statement. Then He connects that to another question, "Why are you trying to kill me?"
- The crowd then responds with a judgment statement, "You are demon-possessed," which is even worse than not keeping the law. If anyone was going to give themselves over to being possessed by a demon, Jesus is the last person who would ever do so. Then the crowd defended themselves by playing innocent. "Who is trying to kill you?" they asked, when they knew who was trying to kill Him.
- To these things, Jesus responded by pointing out the evidence for His judgment call, giving one example of how they break the law to "keep the law" and how His miracle of healing a whole man on the Sabbath (the healing at the pool of Bethesda) was better than what they allowed, and yet they wanted to kill him for it while they saw what they did as honorable.
- Jesus then said, "Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly." So Jesus was not condemning them for making a judgment, but He was teaching them that when they made a judgment, they needed to be correct in their conclusion. This means we do need to make judgments, and we do so all the time, but we must be careful and accurate when we do so.
- To do that, we must be curious first and foremost. We must ask good questions, know the story, and think things through before we draw a conclusion. Many of us don't do this and make the mistake of making a judgment before there is a proper investigation. We judge on "mere appearances." I have done this with cars, and I have done this with people.
- Perhaps you have judged something wrong or have done so prematurely. Let us be people who are "slow to speak and quick to listen" (James 1:19). We, for the most part, do that well as a congregation, and we have a culture here that does this well. However, we must always be aware of our tendency to "judge by mere appearances." On a personal level, please think about if you have done this with somebody or multiple people or groups of people. Let the Lord spotlight this for you and change your approach by getting to know the person for who they are versus who you think they are. Be open-minded and open-hearted first. Be curious and cautious first, knowing that "**with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you**" (Matt 7:2 ESV).

### Conclusion and Communion

- Decide today what you are going to take away from this message. It could be to **believe in Jesus and trust His plan** or to **desire God's will and discern true teaching**, or to **think deeply and judge correctly**. Whatever it is, take something with you. Think about it and put it into practice.
- Next week we will continue our series as the people of Jesus's time debate and are divided about who Jesus is and where Jesus makes a significant and startling claim. But today, we are concluding this service with an opportunity to renew and restate our belief in and commitment to Christ.