

SERIES: Gospel of John: Seeing is Believing?
 SERMON: *Where'd Ya Come From, Where'd Ya Go?*
 SCRIPTURE: John 7
 SPEAKER: Pastor Josh Black
 DATE: December 4, 2011

On Tuesday night I drove to Derby to help my friend Wes Penner move (He's moving to a place where they mow your grass for you. They call it a townhome, but I know better – it's more like assisted living). His house in Derby is essentially at 71st and Woodlawn. I've been to his house dozens of times, but I confess I got lost on Tuesday night. So, I called my father-in-law who was already at the house and asked, "Where is the house?" He replied, "Where are you coming from?" When I told him I was on Rock he said, "Turn onto 63rd." Now remember, the house isn't off of 63rd, it's off of 71st. So after driving between Rock and Woodlawn a couple of times I called again. This time he put me on the phone with Les Seibert. He said, "Where are you coming from?" I said, "I'm at the Kwik Shop at 63rd and Buckner." He said, "You need to go back to the East." The problem was I was still on 63rd, not 71st. So a few minutes later Wes called me. He said, "Sorry everybody is confusing you. The problem is you're on the wrong street. You need to go a mile north." Now keep in mind, Wes lives in Derby. And if you know Derby, you know that 71st street is a mile south of 63rd, not a mile north. I didn't know where I was and I didn't know where I was going. It was frustrating and my aging friends couldn't help me. Long story short, I finally talked with Sheryl Seibert and made it to Wes' house 30 minutes late.

Here's the moral of the story. When it comes to finding a friend's house, where you're coming from and where you're going is important. But if you get it wrong, it's not the end of the world. When it comes to Jesus, directions are much more important. We need to get them right.

Open your Bibles to John 7. The setting of John 7 is one of chaos. The Jewish people have gathered from all over Israel for the Feast of Booths (or the Feast of Tabernacles). And in this chaos it becomes apparent that there is a growing uncertainty about Jesus.¹ People are talking.

Is he the Christ? Or does he have a demon? Is he a good man? Or is he leading people astray? The setting is chaotic. It's hard to track with the narrative and easy to get lost. I've titled this sermon "Where'd Ya Come from, Where'd Ya Go?" not just because I like country music, but because much of the confusion and uncertainty in this passage has to do with where Jesus comes from and where he's going. His brothers want him to *go* up to Judea. The Jews want to know *where* his teaching comes from. The crowds wonder if he might be the Christ, but then say they know *where* he comes from and when the Christ comes no one will know where he comes from. Others say the Christ will come from Bethlehem not Galilee. Then Jesus throws everybody off when he tells them he's going somewhere they can't come. The directions in the chapter are all out of whack.

In the midst of the confusion Jesus makes it clear that he comes from the Father and he is returning to the Father. But he also points out that what is really important is for people to come to him (believe) for it is only through him that they will receive the Holy Spirit.

¹ Mike Bullmore, "Rivers of Living Water."

Sermon in a sentence: Come to Jesus, the long-expected Christ, who comes from the Father and from whom the life-giving Spirit comes.

Because of the length of the passage we're not going to read it all at once, though we will read most of it together this morning in sections. We will look at three groups of people (the brothers, the Jewish leaders, and the people of Jerusalem) and one refreshing statement. As we consider the groups of people notice they each have a problem with who Jesus is. His response to them, however, reveals their real problem, their sin. And through the dialogue we will see who Jesus really is, which provides a solution to the problem of sin.

THE BROTHERS (1-10)

¹After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. ²Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. ³So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. ⁴For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." ⁵For not even his brothers believed in him. ⁶Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. ⁷The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. ⁸You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come." ⁹After saying this, he remained in Galilee. ¹⁰But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private.

The Brothers' Problem with Jesus

Jesus' brothers have a problem with Jesus. They're fully aware of his dwindling number of followers. And so they recommend that he go to Judea and do some miracles there. "You need to market yourself a little more." They think he needs to show himself to the world. But they're not sincere; they're taunting him. Verse 5 tells us they don't believe in him.

The Real Problem: The world's work is evil

But there is irony in their taunting which reveals their real problem and an amazing solution. Jesus says two important things in these verses which show us the irony. First of all he says that the world's works are evil (v. 7), thereby implying that their works are evil. Secondly, he says that his time has not yet fully come to show himself to the world (vv. 6-8). But his time will come. Jesus is on a very specific mission from his Father, one that will be fulfilled. His time is not *now* at the Feast of Tabernacles, but six months later at the Passover Feast Jesus' time will come.

We see this in John 12. "*The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem*" (v. 12). This is speaking of the triumphal entry, the week of the Passover, the same day on which Jesus was crucified. Later in the chapter Jesus speaks of his time coming. "*Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.*" (v. 27)²

² Other references to Jesus' "hour" in John: 2:4; 4:21, 23; 5:25, 28; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23,27; 13:1; 17:1

Jesus' Solution to the Problem: Jesus' work will save the world.

It was at this hour that Jesus not only showed himself to the world, as his brothers had earlier suggested; it was at this hour that he died for the evil works of the world.

Jesus speaks hard words to his brothers. He tells them their time is always here (v. 6). In a sense he's saying, "What you do is really not that significant compared to what I've been called to do." He also makes it clear to them that they will not set his agenda (v. 8). We know this because in verse 10 we're told that Jesus does in fact go to the feast – not triumphantly,³ but privately. God is sovereign and Jesus will do things on the Father's watch, not theirs. But the thing that is amazing about Jesus' words is that while they are hard on the surface, at the same time they are pointing to the most loving act in human history. *For God so loved the world [even though it's works were evil] that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life...* (Jn 3:16-20).

Throughout this chapter Jesus has hard words for the people that reveal their sin, but all the while he is making his way to the cross where he will deal with their sin! Mike Bullmore titled his sermon on this passage, "Incisive Words and Amazingly Persistent Love."⁴ Jesus' words seem like confusing driving directions, but Jesus knows that unless he takes people through the dark streets of their sin, they will never understand the significance of the road to Calvary.

THE JEWISH LEADERS (11-24)

John 7:11-24 (ESV)

¹¹*The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, "Where is he?"* ¹²*And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," others said, "No, he is leading the people astray."* ¹³*Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.*

¹⁴*About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching.* ¹⁵*The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?"* ¹⁶*So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.* ¹⁷*If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.* ¹⁸*The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.* ¹⁹*Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?"* ²⁰*The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?"* ²¹*Jesus answered them, "I did one work, and you all marvel at it.* ²²*Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath.* ²³*If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well?* ²⁴*Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."*

³ Mike Bullmore, "Incisive Words and Amazingly Persistent Love."

⁴ Ibid.

The Jewish Leaders' Problem with Jesus

The Jewish leaders have many problems with Jesus. The major problem came about in chapter 5 when Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath and then claimed to be equal with God (v. 17). Those problems are in the background here and are ultimately the reason that they are seeking to kill him (cf. 5:18; 7:1). But in addition to these problems a new problem is introduced in this section. They want to know where Jesus' teaching comes from. They want to know why he teaches with so much authority when he hasn't been formally trained.

The Real Problem: Man breaks the Law

Jesus answers their question and lets them know that his teaching comes from his Father, the one who sent him (v. 16). But he quickly reveals their real problem, their sin. He has hard words for the Jewish leaders.

First of all, they don't desire to do God's will, otherwise they would know that his teaching is from God (v. 17). They want to do their own thing and that's why they're not able to discern that Jesus is the Christ. Secondly, and related, they seek their own glory (v. 18). They are full of pride and want all of the attention on themselves. They pride themselves in the law, but that brings Jesus to his third indictment of them, which summarizes the other two. They don't even keep the law that they pride themselves in (v. 18). They're splitting hairs over the law of the Sabbath (the 4th Commandment), which Jesus clearly has kept, but they fully intend to break the law against murder (the 6th commandment); they're seeking to kill Jesus.

Now before you get too excited about how bad and hypocritical these Jewish leaders are let me suggest that we're not all that different from them. We too are generally more concerned with our own will and getting our way than we are with doing God's will according to God's ways. We too are often more concerned with our own glory and with having all of the attention on ourselves rather than on God's glory. And we too have tendencies toward legalism even though we are law breakers; we're hypocrites in so many ways.

Jesus' Solution to the Problem: Jesus fulfills the Law

But again while Jesus has hard words for the leaders and their failure to keep the law, he is all the while fulfilling God's law, seeking God's glory, and living to do God's will.

The leaders split hairs over circumcision laws and Sabbath laws. But Jesus is the fulfillment of circumcision; he brought the new covenant where those who believe will be given a circumcision of the heart. And Jesus is the fulfillment of the Sabbath; he offers eternal rest to all who will come to him, to those who believe.

Remember what Jesus said to the religious leaders in chapter 5, verses 39-40. *"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life."*

Jesus Christ lived the life that we each have failed to live. It is through his perfect life and perfect sacrificial death that we are able to have eternal life. But in order to receive this eternal life we have to come to Jesus; we have to believe in him.

Man breaks the Law. Jesus fulfills the Law (and the Prophets).

THE PEOPLE OF JERUSALEM (25-36)

²⁵Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, “Is not this the man whom they seek to kill?
²⁶And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? ²⁷But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from.” ²⁸So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, “You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. ²⁹I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me.” ³⁰So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. ³¹Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, “When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?”

³²The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him. ³³Jesus then said, “I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. ³⁴You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come.” ³⁵The Jews said to one another, “Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? ³⁶What does he mean by saying, ‘You will seek me and you will not find me,’ and, ‘Where I am you cannot come?’”

As some of the people in Jerusalem hear Jesus’ teaching and hear his interaction with the authorities they wonder, “Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ?” (v. 26) And some of them believe themselves that Jesus is the Christ (vv. 31, 41). But many still have a problem that prevents them from believing that Jesus is the Christ.

The People of Jerusalem’s Problem with Jesus

One group says that “we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from” (v. 27). Another group says something similar in verses 41-43. “Some said, ‘Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?’ So there was a division among the people over him.” So in summary, their problem is they know Jesus is from Galilee and the Messiah isn’t supposed to come from Galilee.

The Real Problem: They don’t know God

Jesus could have answered them and said, “I grew up in Galilee, but I was born in Bethlehem. I’m a descendent of David. I’m the Messiah, the king of Israel.” Again, it seems like he’s giving them confusing driving directions. But remember that unless people drive down the dark street and see their sin they’ll never understand the significance of the road to the cross.

He could have simply addressed their surface level problem, but he doesn't. Instead, he reveals their real problem. Look at verses 28-29. *"You know me, and you know where I come from? But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me."* Jesus does answer their question. The Savior comes from God first and foremost, not Bethlehem. But in doing so he also reveals their real problem. They don't know God.

These are hard words. But along with Jesus' hard words which reveal man's sin he is revealing who he really is – and he is the solution to man's problem. Jesus knows God. In fact as we have learned elsewhere in the book of John, Jesus is God. This is significant. And that brings us to Jesus refreshing statement in verses 37-39, which will show us how we can come to know God.

A REFRESHING STATEMENT (37-39)

³⁷*On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'*" ³⁹*Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

As we read these verses we have to keep in mind the setting. It is very important in understanding a narrative passage (and sometimes will require some research). The setting serves as an illustration to make this text clear. It is the last day of the feast. The Feast of Booths, or the Feast of Tabernacles, was a huge feast, the most popular of the Jewish feast according to Josephus.⁵ The feast lasted seven days. The feast was designed to help the Jewish people look backward and forward.

They would look backward to the years following the exodus when the Israelites wandered in the desert. They remembered God's faithful provision to the Israelites when he provided bread from heaven and water from the rock. The way they remembered the past was by constructing booths or tabernacles (tents).

But not only would they look backward to God's faithful provision, they would also look forward to a time promised by the prophets when God would pour out his blessing anew in the Messianic age. They looked forward to a day when God would pour out his Holy Spirit on his people, like the water flowed from the rock. Listen to some of these prophecies.⁶

Isaiah 44:3 (ESV)

*For I will pour water on the thirsty land,
and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring,
and my blessing on your descendants.*

⁵ Don Carson, *The Gospel According to John*.

⁶ Mike Bullmore, "Rivers of Living Water."

Isaiah 58:11 (ESV)

*And the LORD will guide you continually
and satisfy your desire in scorched places
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters do not fail.*

Ezekiel 36:24–26 (ESV)

²⁴I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. ²⁵I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

Joel 2:28–29 (ESV)

*And it shall come to pass afterward,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
Even on the male and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit.*

As the Jews celebrated the feast each year they looked forward to the day when God would fulfill these prophetic words and pour out his Holy Spirit. They did so by pouring out water at the temple every day of the feast. Don Carson says that every day “a golden flagon was filled with water from the pool of Siloam and was carried in procession led by the High Priest back to the temple.”⁷ As the pilgrims at the feast watched the procession they filled the temple with singing and shouts of joy. On the seventh day of the feast there was a special water-pouring rite (they walked around the temple 7 times) that was accompanied by a lights ceremony (cf. 8:12).⁸ All of this looked forward to the great day when God would pour out his Spirit on his people.

So, do you have the setting firmly fixed in your mind? It was on this last day of the feast, the great day, that Jesus stood up (possibly in the middle of the water-pouring rite) and cried out, “*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.’*” (vv. 37-38)

They thought their problem was with Jesus, but Jesus wanted them to see that he was the solution to their real problem. Their problem was they didn’t know God. Their works were evil. They sought to do their own will. They sought their own glory. They were law breakers. They were dead in their sin. Jesus made all of this plain through his hard incisive words. But he also shows himself to be the one who is able to provide eternal life to whoever would believe in him.

⁷ Don Carson, *The Gospel According to John*.

⁸ Andreas Köstenberger, *John*.

As we have seen in the book of John it is the Holy Spirit who gives eternal life. And Jesus is saying he's the one who is able to give the Holy Spirit. He's the fulfillment of the promise which the feast anticipated.

Look at verse 39. *“Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”*

During Advent we celebrate the coming of Emanuel – God with us. *“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us”* (Jn 1:14). Jesus was sent from the Father – that's where he came from. And he then returned to the Father – that's where he went. And he was sent for a very specific purpose. He was lifted up on a cross to pay the price for our sins. John puts the lifting up of Jesus on a cross as the first step in his glorification before he returned to the Father. But when Jesus returned to the Father, he didn't leave us as orphans (cf. 14:18). After Jesus returned to the Father he sent his Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2). God is still with us through the Holy Spirit.

This Holy Spirit is like living water that never ceases, but continues to flow. It is the Holy Spirit that gives eternal life to those dead in their sin, like water for thirsty souls. It is only through the Holy Spirit that we are able to know God. In order to receive the Holy Spirit who gives us eternal life we must come to Jesus and drink. We must believe that Jesus is the Christ.

The people in chapter 7 had many opinions about Jesus' identity. They were going in many different directions. They each seemed to have their own map. But there is only one direction that leads to eternal life. All who are thirsty must come to Jesus; we must believe that he is the Christ. Those who only believe Jesus is a miracle worker do not have the Holy Spirit and eternal life. Those who only believe that Jesus is a good man do not have the Holy Spirit and eternal life. Those who only believe that Jesus is a prophet do not have the Holy Spirit and eternal life.

Only those who come to Jesus and believe that he is the long-expected Christ, who came from the Father to take away the sins of the world, will receive the life-giving Spirit. It is important that we get these directions right.

In John 19:28 we are told that just before Jesus died, knowing that all was now finished (his time had fully come – 7:8) said, *“I thirst.”* Listen to these words from Sinclair Ferguson. *“... Jesus the Messiah becomes the thirsty one under God's covenant curse (cf. Dt 38:48), so that to those who are thirsty he may hand over his thirst-quenching Spirit (Jn 19:30). Again, John alone notes that when one of the soldiers pierced Christ's side both blood and water flowed from it (Jn 19:34; cf. 1 Jn. 5:6-8). Christ's death is to be seen both as a sacrifice for sins and as the means by which the water of new life in the Spirit flows to us.”*⁹

*“All who are thirsty, all who are weak, come to the fountain, dip your hearts in the streams of life. Let the pain and the sorrow, be washed away, in the waves of his mercy, as deep calls out to deep.”*¹⁰

⁹ Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 67.

¹⁰ Lyrics from the Vineyard song “All Who are Thirsty.”

Benediction**John 20:19–22 (ESV)**

¹⁹On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” ²²And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

2 Corinthians 13:14 (ESV)

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

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