

EXPOSITION OF JOHN

Message #33

John 7:1-9

When I was in Bible School a number of years ago, I met a young man who had quite a remarkable story. He had come to faith in Jesus Christ and wanted to go to a school where he could learn how to handle the Word of God. His father was a very successful businessman, who owned his own company, but he was not a believer and he wanted his son to go to an impressive Ivy League college. When his son told his father that he wanted to go to a school to learn the Word of God, his father blew up. He told his son that he would foot the bill on any school that he would attend, but if he went to a Bible school, he would not give him one dime. This boy made a choice and he turned his back on the help and support of his father and went to school to do the will of God.

When you come to faith in Jesus Christ and you truly want to do His will, you will discover at times that some people in your own family, not only don't understand, but they actually oppose you. They have no sense of God's Word or work and they have no sense of God's will. There are family members who may even hate you because you are right with God and they aren't.

This problem with family members is not new to us; it was a problem that existed even with the family members of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was God in the flesh. He was on a specific schedule. He was continuously doing the will of God and He was continually revealing the will of God. Everything He did and said was in perfect conformity with the timing and plan of God. Now that did not square with His immediate family. They were just floating through life like most of the rest of the world. As a result they didn't have a clue as to what Christ was all about and never does that become more evident than right here.

There is an amazing prophecy concerning Jesus Christ given in Psalm 69:8, which not only predicts Jesus would have trouble with His own brothers, but also specifically brings out the fact that He is His mother's Son. The reason for this is because Joseph was not His actual father, God was. There is a great lesson to be learned from this passage:

WHEN JESUS CHRIST WAS ON EARTH PERFECTLY DOING THE WILL OF GOD, HIS OWN FAMILY MEMBERS HAD NO SENSE OF GOD'S WORK, TIMING OR WILL.

You purpose to do the will of God and you will discover you will be at odds with some in your own family. They don't have a clue as to what you are all about. They do not understand your commitment and your thinking. It was that way for Jesus Christ and it is that way for us as well. In this context, Christ's own unbelieving brothers want Him to go to Jerusalem, as if they were in a better position to determine God's will. Christ does not listen to them, but it does show the problems that can arise even in one's own family when one is truly given over to doing the will of God.

As we come to this text, there are three key narrative realities:

REALITY #1 – The timing of this family episode. 7:1-2

“After these things” refers to the specific things that had just occurred: 1) Many disciples abandon Christ (6:66); 2) Christ is nearing betrayal (6:71); 3) Jews want to kill Him (7:1).

Chapter 6 took place about the time of the Passover Feast (6:4). Chapter 7 took place about the time of the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths (7:2). What this practically means is about six months have transpired between chapters 6 and 7 and Jesus Christ is approximately 6 months away from going to Calvary.

The Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles, was one of three Jewish feasts that the O.T. law required Jews to attend. The details of the feast are given in Leviticus 23:33-43 and Deuteronomy 16:13-15. It was celebrated after the harvest season. It was a time when Israel was reminded of how God cared for her for 40 years in the wilderness and provided for her. During this time, Israel lived in transitory tents. So this feast remembers this. Jews actually built temporary shelters or booths for this feast, where they lived for one week. There were no campers or campgrounds or trailers or trailer parks. An important principle to see by this feast is that **harvest times should not cause us to forget wilderness times.**

Now Christ had been spending time in Galilee, not Judea, because, “the” Jews (specifically the religious leadership) were seeking to kill Him. Christ is not afraid of these Jews, but He is operating on God’s Divine time clock. There was a big storm brewing and it was aimed straight at Jesus Christ. Christ would eventually be killed by the Jews, but only on His time schedule, not theirs. He knew exactly when He should die on a cross and He was in charge, not them. If you are truly Christlike, there will be some who will hate you. Christlike people have courage to stand for what is godly and stand against what is godless.

There is nothing wrong with spending time with those who appreciate you. Jesus did that. He was not a martyr who walked into enemy territory and let them butcher Him. He stayed away from people who hated Him, until it was time for Him to go to Calvary.

REALITY #2 – The request of his brothers. 7:3-5

Jesus Christ had four half brothers, who were born to Joseph and Mary - 1) James, 2) Joseph or Joses, 3) Judas and 4) Simon (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). James was probably the one who wrote the book of James and Judas was probably the one who wrote the book of Jude. Out of the four, only two became leaders for God.

At the time they make this request to Jesus, none of them are believers (7:5). This is actually mind-boggling because obviously they had lived with Him for years, plus they had seen His miraculous works (7:3). Yet, they had not believed on Him as their Savior. So what we have here are family members who are unsaved, telling Jesus what they think He ought to do. This is the ultimate of stupidity. Spiritual insight for these brothers does not exist.

Their advice was that Christ should leave Galilee and go to Judea and do spectacular things so He could rally His troops. After all, many disciples had just abandoned Him (6:66).

They knew that the Feast of Tabernacles would draw big crowds so they thought this would be the perfect time for Him to establish Himself publicly.

Their thinking was logical, rational, somewhat factual, but not Biblical. They are typical lost people who think like typical lost people. I have seen that in the church. We need to really put on a show to draw in the crowds. Let's perform some publicity stunt to really rally the crowds. Jesus did not buy into any of that. **Sometimes when you are right with God, you will have to ignore suggestions from those who aren't, even in your own family.**

REALITY #3 – The response of Jesus to His brothers. 7:6-9

The most difficult people to convince concerning the Truth of God are your own family members. Even when the Person is Jesus Christ, the same was true. He had no faults, yet He still could not get them to respond. We do have faults, but that is not the reason our family does not respond. There are six specific responses that Christ gives to His own brothers:

(Response #1) - My time is not yet at hand. 7:6a

Christ was operating on God's time clock. He had already turned down an opportunity to become king (6:15). As Dr. Warren Wiersbe said, "Celebrities might ride to success on the applause of the crowd, but God's servants know better" (*Be Alive*, p. 85).

Jesus Christ would never shirk His duty. He would never back away from His responsibility because it might make things uncomfortable.

Jesus Christ was always very careful and very conscious of His time. Elton Trueblood said, "We must use the Time which we have because even at best there is never enough."

Christ's response here is a nice way of saying **your time is not God's time, but My time is God's time** and it is not time for Me yet to go to Jerusalem.

Lost relatives have no sense of the timing of God, nor of the will of God. They don't have a clue what is going on. They will give advice and it may appear to be very reasonable, logical and even philosophical, but it is not Biblical and should not be heeded.

(Response #2) - Your time is always an opportune time. 7:6b

Jesus' time belonged to God the Father, the brother's time, so they thought, belonged to them. What this means is that you are worldly, lost people so it is always the right time for you to do whatever you want to do. Lost people are opportunistic. I knew a man who went to church to make business contacts. That was his sole purpose for going to church and when he made all the contacts he could, he went to another church. I just had someone tell me that he knew a certain person who went to church to show off their clothes. We must always realize that time is ticking. We have one life, we get one shot and we need to use time for God.

(Response #3) - You are not hated by the world. 7:7a

When Christ talks about the "world" He is referring to the satanic system, which includes its education, goals and philosophies, which are contrary to God. The world was not a dangerous place for Christ's brothers who were unbelievers. They fit right in with the world. They were part of the world. The world is a nice environment for lost religious people. They fit right in

with its goals, and objectives. These brothers of Christ were worldly. They had no conviction, no discernment and no courage for God. They never criticized the world. They never denounced evil things in it. They never made enemies. They minded their own business and fit right in. You get along just fine in the world if you never witness for God. If you never attack any evil or never stand for right, you'll be loved. Rebellion loves company.

(Response #4) - I am hated by the world. 7:7b

The very presence of Jesus Christ caused people to hate Him. He was righteous and they were not. The world for Jesus Christ was not a safe environment. It was a dangerous place for Him to reside because the world hated Him and wanted Him dead. **The reason why it hated Christ is He told them the truth. The world was caught up in an evil, religious works system.** It was a Jewish system of works and God viewed it as evil.

If we don't ever find ourselves at odds with that which is contrary to God, then we have good reason to question whether we are saved (John 15:18-25). When things are always tranquil for us in a world which hates Jesus Christ and the Word of God, then we need to question where we are at in our relationship to Him. Martin Luther said if you preach the truth of God with fearless fidelity, you will arm the whole world against you. Luther should know. He preached the same pure Grace message Christ preached and he was hated and denounced.

(Response #5) - You go to the feast, but I am not going with you. 7:8

If you are going to actually travel in life in a close relationship with Jesus Christ, there will be times when you will probably have to go it alone. There will be those who don't understand your commitment to God's Word and will or won't agree with your decisions. But that is too bad.

Most people traveled to these outings in caravans. Christ was not going to this feast with His brothers and He was not going to publicly display His miracles at this feast. He would make a secret appearance (v. 10), to fulfill the law of God, but He was not about to go with these guys. Jesus Christ did not do anything because someone coerced Him or persuaded Him. He did not jump because someone said jump. No one pushes Him around.

But what this tells us is that you can go to the most religious ceremonies on earth and not go with Jesus Christ. Christ was not with them. Think of it, here is a religious gathering that supposedly is designed to worship God and God isn't even there. Every Sunday millions go to churches and I wonder what percentage really knows Jesus Christ.

(Response #6) - Christ stayed in Galilee. 7:9

He would not show up to the feast until it was about half over.

What a passage. His own brothers had no clue concerning the will of God. They had not really or truly believed on Jesus Christ even though they were all caught up with religion.