

# When the World Hates You

John 7:1-13

**BI: Nothing can sabotage faithfulness like the fear of man. Jesus demonstrates how to live in the fear of the Lord.**

Read John 7:1-13

## **Introduction:**

Solomon once said, “The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.” Normally, when we come to the Gospel of John we come to sit at Jesus’ feet, as it were, and listen to His teaching. There are times, however, when the proper thing to do is to learn from His example. The passage before us offers just such an occasion.

In these 13 verses Jesus doesn’t offer any instruction. He doesn’t perform any miracles. And quite frankly there really isn’t anything here that would distinguish him from other men. The text simply shows us how Jesus responds to generally unfavorable circumstances. And as we observe His responses I think we can learn something about how we should respond when faced with the temptation to fear man rather than God. Now let’s take this a piece at a time.

## **I. Jesus Faced Real Rejection:**

1. The reason I say Jesus faced “real” rejection is because often what provokes fear of man in our souls is simply the sense that we might experience rejection from others if we do something they don’t like or fail to do something they expect.
2. Perhaps some examples would help. As you consider the degree to which you are affected by the fear of man consider whether you struggle with any of the following issues:
  - A. Are you tempted by peer pressure? When this happens among adults we call it “people pleasing.” These are simply euphemisms for what the Scriptures call “fear of man.”<sup>1</sup>
  - B. Are you over-committed because you find it difficult to say no?
  - C. Do you frequently second-guess your decisions because of what others might think?
  - D. Are you easily embarrassed?
  - E. Do you lie, even little white lies? One author says “lying and other forms of living in the dark are usually ways to make ourselves look better before other people.”<sup>2</sup>
  - F. Do other people frequently make you angry or depressed?

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Welch, *When People Are Big and God is Small*, (1997) P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, (14)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, (16)

G. Do you avoid people?<sup>3</sup>

3. All of these are practical examples of the fear of man. Dr. Ed Welch, in his excellent book *When People are Big and God is Small* offers three basic reasons why we tend to fear other people:

- A. We fear people because they can expose and humiliate us.
- B. We fear people because they can reject, ridicule, or despise us.
- C. We fear people because they can attack, oppress, or threaten us.

4. Then Welch writes, “These three reasons have one thing in common: they see people as ‘bigger’ (that is, more powerful and significant) than God, and out of the fear that creates in us, we give other people the power and right to tell us what to feel, think, and do.”<sup>4</sup>

5. What I find both compelling and amazing in our passage for this morning is that Jesus Christ never once gave in to the fear of man. I’m NOT saying He didn’t experience the human emotion of fear. I firmly believe that He did experience fear because He was human and the author of Hebrews tells us that He was “tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

6. Do you know what that means when it comes to fear? It means that while He certainly did experience the human emotion of fear, He never let it control Him. Nevertheless, if there ever was someone who had reason to be afraid it was Jesus. Let’s look at some of the circumstances He faced that probably would have tempted us with fear of Man.

- A. In chapter 6 a crowd who claimed to be His disciples abandoned him. Have you ever had someone tell you that your friendship is over? Hurts.
- B. Chapter 6 also reveals that Jesus knew Judas was going to betray Him. Have you ever been betrayed?
- C. We find more reasons here in chapter 7.

7. Look again with me at the beginning of chapter 7 (Read 7:1-2). First, notice in verse 1 the words “walking” and “walk.” These two terms speak to the fact that Jesus had an itinerant ministry throughout Galilee. In other words He was walking from town to town preaching the gospel of the kingdom. But at this point in the story Galilee is the only place He ministering. In fact, He avoided Judea (and especially Jerusalem) for a very good reason. Verse 1 says it was “because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.”

8. Have you every thought someone was out to kill you? I never have. The closest thing I every experienced to that was when I was a freshman in high school in New Jersey and someone told me that Michael Smith was looking for me. And when he found me (which was inevitable) He was going to beat the fire out of me. Now, I must admit that I probably deserved it... but that didn’t reduce the fear in my soul one single degree. I knew he would eventually find me and there would be a fight and I would lose. Now I

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<sup>3</sup> Each of these examples are adapted from Edward Welch (Ibid, 14-16).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 23

was pretty sure He wasn't going to kill me, but I knew it was going to hurt and that filled me with fear. So I did everything I could to avoid my enemy for as long as I could. But what about Jesus? We'll come to that in a moment.

9. Notice with me that John points out (2) that this was happening during the Feast of Booths. Deut. 16:16 "Three times in a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread and at the Feast of Weeks and at the Feast of Booths. So here is the problem, every male in Israel is required to go to Jerusalem for these three feasts but Jesus knows that the Jewish authorities are looking for Him so they can arrest and kill Him. Would you go to the feast anyway?

10. Now the Feast of Booths was a unique event. It was a time when people would come to Judea (around Jerusalem) from all over the known world and they would set up little "booths" or shelters to remind them of the story of how God had rescued their ancestors from Egypt. The people who lived in Jerusalem would set up little shelters on their rooftops and everyone else would find a place where they could build a little structure made of sticks and willow branches. They would live in these shelters (Booths) for seven days. In fact, devout Jews today still do this only they typically set up tents in their yards. It's like a week long camp out. But it was more than that. This particular feast took place at the end of the grape and olive harvest (roughly in October) and was celebrated as a time of thanksgiving to the Lord for His provision and care.

11. The Feast of Booths was perhaps the most enjoyable of the three feasts. The people really liked coming together for all the festivities. The important thing to remember however is that everyone had to go to this feast. It was the law. So not only does Jesus have the concern about all the people who abandoned Him and the fact that Judas was going to betray Him, now he has the added pressure of knowing that it was time for Him to obey the law and go to Jerusalem for the feast. But He knows there are people who are waiting for Him there and are actively looking to kill him. But then the tension mounts even further when Jesus gets into a conversation with His brothers. (Read 7:3-4)

12. For so many of us home is a place of solace, comfort, and rest. If you are having a problem you can always go home and get good counsel or at least the comfort of family to undergird you and build you up. But not Jesus. Scholars differ about what His brother's tone was here, but I think they are taunting him. Look, I have five boys and I know how they can be. Envy, jealousy, pride; these are all too common in most every brotherly relationship. Jesus' brothers were not looking out for their old brother's well-being. They were taunting Him! "Hey, if you really are who you say you are than why not go down to Jerusalem with everyone else? There will be plenty of people to impress with your tricks and fancy speaking. And maybe you can recoup some of the disciples you lost a few days ago!

14. John then makes it clear why they were speaking to Him in this way (5) "For not even His brothers were believing in Him." So, He was rejected by many of His disciples. Men in Jerusalem are waiting to kill him. And His brothers turn out to be worse than Job's

friends. And beyond all of that, the crowds in Jerusalem were grumbling about Him. (Read 7:10-13).

15. Once again we see how polarizing Jesus was. Everywhere He went He stood as a fork in the road requiring men to either receive or reject Him as the giver of reconciliation with the Father and eternal life.

16. The point of all of this is that Jesus had valid reasons to be afraid. He was experiencing Real rejection by a lot of significant people. How do you normally respond when People don't appreciate you or when they seek to do you harm? The amazing thing about this passage, I think, is How Jesus responded to all of this. First we observed Jesus faced Real Rejection. Now let's see Jesus' proper evaluation of the Rejection.

## **II. Jesus Properly Evaluates the Rejection:**

1. Let's go back to Jesus conversation with His brothers, because His response to them shows how He evaluated things. (Read 7:6-9)

2. I think the reason we so often fail to deal with the temptation to fear man properly is because we tend to be led by our emotions rather than the word of God. Jesus had every human emotion you and I have but He never allow His emotions to rule His thinking or His behavior.

3. Notice that He properly evaluated the reason for his rejection

(Read v. 7)

4. The reason people rejected Jesus was because His message was offensive. He kept telling people that they did not really know God and reason for that was because of their sin: "Your deeds are evil."

5. Truth be told, most of the time people chose to reject us is not because they don't want to hear God's message but because we sinned against them and are too proud to deal with it. Not so for Jesus. He never ever sinned. And He loved people too much to not show them they danger they were in with God because of their sin. Jesus properly evaluated the reason He was rejected.

6. Second, Jesus also properly evaluated what God required of Him in His situation. Another key term in this text is Time. In v. 6 "My time is not yet here." In v. 8 "My time is not yet fully come." You see, Jesus knew that His Father required Him to be in certain places and do certain things as specific times. It was not time for Him to go to Jerusalem. If He did so now He would be killed before the established time. The Father had dictated that the Son would be killed at Passover (six months later) but not now.

7. Now I realize that unlike Christ, we are not on a divine mission that has established times to do this or that. But we do have clear directives from God. And those directives do not come to us through mystical impressions or special messages from heaven. No, they come to us through His word.

8. What resource has God given to us for those moments when we are face with temptations to fear man? He has given us His written word. And because we have His written word, we know that at certain times God wants us to do specific things.

- A. There is a time to go to a brother or sister in all humility, name how we have sinned against them, and ask them for something we know we don't deserve; namely, forgiveness (Like the prodigal son).
- B. There is a time when a brother or sister in Christ has sinned and you know God wants you to talk to them about it and call them to repentance (like the prophet Nathan called David to repent).
- C. There is a time when someone will invite you to do something that you believe is unethical and You know that God wants you to stand your ground and trust Him with the results (like Daniel in the OT).
- D. There is a time when an injustice has taken place and people have been hurt and you know that God wants you to say something to try to make it right (Like Ester).

9. And how do we know when those times are? We know them as we properly evaluate each circumstance against God's sufficient word.

10. So we see that Jesus Faced Real Rejection: Jesus Accurately Evaluated his Rejection; and finally

### **III. Jesus Would Not Be Ruled by Rejection.**

1. Read v. 10 & 14

2. You see, the fear of being rejected by men never kept Jesus from doing what He knew His father wanted Him to do. He knew He had to go up to Jerusalem, but it had to be done at the correct time and in the correct manner. So He waited until His brothers and all of the crowds found their way to Jerusalem and then, in obedience to the Law of God, He went up too. He sneaked in secretly (10) so that He would not be arrested prematurely and then began teaching publically (14) in obedience to His Father's command.

3. Ultimately, the reason Jesus did not allow Himself to be ruled by the fear of man was because He chose instead to be ruled by the fear of God.

4. What it is that you know God wants you to do that you have been reluctant to do because you are afraid of how others will respond?

5. Solomon once said, "The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted."

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