



Sunday, March 22, 2026

John 7:1-24

John 7:1-24

‘After this, Jesus traveled in Galilee, since he did not want to travel in Judea because the Jews were trying to kill him. 2 The Jewish Festival of Shelters was near. 3 So his brothers said to him, “Leave here and go to Judea so that your disciples can see your works that you are doing. 4 For no one does anything in secret while he’s seeking public recognition. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.” 5 (For not even his brothers believed in him.)

6 Jesus told them, “My time has not yet arrived, but your time is always at hand. 7 The world cannot hate you, but it does hate me because I testify about it—that its works are evil. 8 Go up to the festival yourselves. I’m not going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come.” 9 After he had said these things, he stayed in Galilee.

Jesus at the Festival of Shelters

10 After his brothers had gone up to the festival, then he also went up, not openly but secretly. 11 The Jews were looking for him at the festival and saying, “Where is he?” 12 And there was a lot of murmuring about him among the crowds. Some were saying, “He’s a good man.” Others were saying, “No, on the contrary, he’s deceiving the people.” 13 Still, nobody was talking publicly about him for fear of the Jews.

14 When the festival was already half over, Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach. 15 Then the Jews were amazed and said, “How is this man so learned, since he hasn’t been trained?”

16 Jesus answered them, “My teaching isn’t mine but is from the one who sent me. 17 If anyone wants to do his will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own. 18 The one who speaks on his own seeks his own glory; but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is true, and there is no unrighteousness in him. 19 Didn’t Moses give you the law? Yet

none of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?"

20 "You have a demon!" the crowd responded. "Who is trying to kill you?"

21 "I performed one work, and you are all amazed," Jesus answered. 22 "This is why Moses has given you circumcision —not that it comes from Moses but from the fathers —and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. 23 If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses won't be broken, are you angry at me because I made a man entirely well on the Sabbath? 24 Stop judging according to outward appearances; rather judge according to righteous judgment."

Last week we noticed that John made it quite clear that the setting for John 6 was the Passover Feast. And this was significant because this was the chapter where Jesus would finally declare Himself as the bread of life. Thus making it clear that just as Manna was bread sent from Heaven, He too is bread sent from Heaven, but Manna only provided temporary life whereas He provides eternal life. He was also declaring that He would be the greater sacrificial lamb than what was provided at the very first Passover feast in the wilderness where that lamb allowed the Angel of death to pass over - but did not allow them to escape death entirely. Again, Jesus, as the sacrificial lamb gives life for eternity.

Today as we step into chapter 7, we see John doing the same thing again. Now, instead of blanketing the context in the Passover, it's six months later and he blankets it in the Festival of Shelters - also referred to as the Feast of Tabernacles in other translations. This was a celebration where the Jewish people commemorated the 40 years that their ancestors lived in temporary shelters in the desert after escaping Egypt. During this week-long celebration, many would live in huts constructed of palm branches as a way of identifying with their ancestors of old.

So, just as John blanketed chapter 6 in the Passover, reminding the people that Jesus is the bread of life and the ultimate sacrificial lamb, he's doing the same thing here in chapter 7, with the feast of Tabernacles. In fact, what I think John is doing here, is actually bringing us back to the beginning in Chapter 1:14 where he tells us that the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

That word 'dwelt,' literally means 'tabernacled.'

So, in other words, John is saying that the God who once dwelt with His people in tents... is now dwelling among them in the flesh.

So the theme then of this chapter could very well be, 'God with us.'

And while John doesn't develop it fully here, we know the story doesn't end with God dwelling among His people... He would be crucified, resurrected and then ascend back to Heaven where He would then send us His Holy Spirit - not just to dwell among us but to then dwell within us.

As the Apostle Paul says: '...your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.'

So as Christians, He now dwells within His people. The presence that once filled the holy of holies in the tabernacle of old... and then stood among them in the person of Jesus Christ... now lives in us.

God with us. Emmanuel.

Yet - just as there were those disciples of Jesus who could not accept this truth, we also read of another group of people who did not believe. This time not disciples but family....his own brothers.

Vs. 5 says: '(For not even his brothers believed in him.)'

Which is one of the strangest verses in the Bible. for some of you, you're surprised because you thought Jesus was an only child - lol! But the fact that even his own brothers did not believe is a statement worth looking into.

Because you would think that those closest to Him - those who grew up with Him - would have been His biggest supporters. After all, Mary and Joseph likely would have shared the story of His miraculous birth, the prophecies, the shepherds....wisemen....star in the sky...etc.

And yet, even his own brothers did not believe.

So let's dig through this. It says that His brothers encouraged Him to attend the Feast of Tabernacles but Jesus said it wasn't His time. Specifically, He says...

John 7:6-7

'My time has not yet arrived, but your time is always at hand. 7 The world cannot hate you, but it does hate me because I testify about it—that its works are evil.'

Which can be a bit of a confusing statement until you look at it through the Message version which

says:

John 7:6-7 (MSG)

‘Jesus came back at them, “Don’t pressure me. This isn’t my time. It’s your time—it’s always your time; you have nothing to lose. The world has nothing against you, but it’s up in arms against me. It’s against me because I expose the evil behind its pretensions. You go ahead, go up to the Feast. Don’t wait for me. I’m not ready. It’s not the right time for me.”

Jesus is making a clear distinction here between Him and His brothers. By using the language that the world hates Him but not His brothers, He’s showing that they are operating from two completely different perspectives.

Just like the majority of society at that time, Jesus’ brothers are aligned with the thinking of the world - and the world doesn’t oppose them because they don’t challenge it - they fit within it.

But it opposes Jesus because He exposes it. And that exposure and opposition will eventually lead to His death. His death - which would become the ultimate exposure of the world - revealing both the depth of human sin...but the fullness of God’s saving grace.

And yet, even with all of that, they don’t just misunderstand Him...they misidentify Him.

Sure, they may have believed He was a special man - with supernatural abilities...maybe even a prophet sent by God. But to believe that He was God in the flesh...now dwelling among them? That was a truth they simply could not accept.

We see another example of this in the Gospel of Mark when Jesus’ own family says that He has lost His mind.

Mark 3:21

‘When his family heard this, they set out to restrain him, because they said, “He’s out of his mind.”

Which is interesting, because that’s earlier in His ministry - and it allows us to see a kind of progression in their thinking.

Because now, they’re not saying He’s crazy...it’s more like they’re saying, ‘If this is really true - then this is your moment. This is the place to prove it. Show everyone.’

Think about it - in the last chapter (approx. 6 months ago) we read of the mass-exodus of His disciples so Jesus' following has just been reduced dramatically. So in their minds, this is the perfect opportunity to go to Jerusalem, make a public appearance, perform some miracles, and rebuild His influence - gain back the followers He lost.

Again, their unbelief seems to be less about His ability to perform miracles, His connection to God as potentially a prophet-type figure and more about the fact that He was claiming to be the Bread of Life - God in the flesh. But again, it does show an element of progression here - at least they're not saying He's out of His mind anymore.

And what's really interesting is that this element of progression actually continues all throughout the rest of the New Testament and the lives of Jesus' brothers. In Mark 3 they thought Jesus was out of His mind. A year later they challenge Him to go up to Jerusalem to partake in the Feast of Tabernacles and, if we follow the path of church history, we see that Jesus' brothers eventually came to full belief and acceptance of Him as Messiah. Some of them - like James in particular - even became leaders in the early church. And Jude is identified as the author of Jude.

Which, if you're following the trajectory here, means that the ones who once doubted him the most would later devote their life to Him completely. Jesus didn't write them off.

This is so redemptive. And I think it's a strong reminder for us here today as well. That some of us may have family members who do not believe in Jesus Christ.

Yet.

Don't write them off. Let that word - yet - become a part of your daily prayers and vocabulary. Because it's a reminder that their story is not finished being written.

So be encouraged. Don't give up praying for your family. Don't take their current resistance as the final word. Keep praying that they may 'yet' believe, and be used significantly in the kingdom of God.

If I'm allowed to rabbit-trail, for just a moment, I want to draw your attention to the book of James that the brother of Jesus himself wrote. Look at how he introduces the second chapter. He refers to his brother as, '...our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory'. And then Jude - in his opening verse

identifies himself as, 'Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James...' Jude drops the brother tag entirely - gives that to James and identifies himself not as the brother of Jesus but now as a servant of Jesus! Isn't that incredible! Just look at that progression! The Bread of Life had once slept under the same roof, ate at the same dinner table, played with their friends, spoke to them like a brother, endured their unbelief, paid the debt of their sin, and then brought them to faith.

It may have taken 20-30 years of faithful, prayerful witness by the Son of God, but the miracle occurred: His brothers believed. Oh that the Lord would grant the same grace to our unbelieving family members. Oh that our example of Salt and Light would draw them into His presence instead of push them away. Oh that we would allow the Lord to carry this burden so we may be free to continue to pray, sow seeds and wait patiently for Him to reap a harvest that only He can.

And so, not even a quarter of the way through Chapter 7, we're already seeing the stage of hope being set through the Feast of Tabernacles. That in the wilderness He was the God who dwelt with His people in tents. In the Gospels He was the God who dwelt among them in the flesh. And in Acts - and until He returns - He is the God who now dwells within us.

He is God with us.

This is His nature. He does not change. He has always been with us and He will always be with us. For He will never leave you, nor forsake you.

But being 'God with us,' doesn't always look like how we think it should. We see this in the next section as Jesus' brothers head up to the feast without Jesus.

Interestingly, Jesus actually does make His way up to the feast anyways but not openly or publicly. Instead He goes privately.

Which brings clarity to what He just said to His brothers about, 'His time.'

You see, the feast takes place in Jerusalem - and the next time Jesus goes to Jerusalem publicly like this will ultimately lead to His crucifixion.

But it's not that time yet. Obviously the brothers don't understand this innuendo and are actively encouraging Jesus to make the trip with them because in their mind this is a great way for Jesus to rebuild His following.

But Jesus goes up - not to perform, but to teach.

And His teaching actually cuts against the very mindset of His brothers - and perhaps many of the onlookers as well. They're looking for something visible - something impressive. They've seen the works before and they want to see them again.

The problem though, is they believe His works... but they don't believe His words.

And what they don't realize is that the miracles and supernatural wonders were never the point. They only served to confirm His words. His words are the point!

John 1:1

'In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God and the Word was God.'

Jesus - the Word - is the point. His words are life. His words are true.

And this is the tension we've seen from the very beginning.

And typical-Jesus, He doesn't lighten up on His language either, He now presses it even further by calling to memory the healing of the crippled man by the Pool of Bethesda in Chapter 5 and comparing it to the act of circumcision. Which seems like a really strange comparison for Jesus to make.

You see, for a Jewish man, circumcision was the outward sign that he was consecrated - set apart - and distinctly part of the people of God. And over time, that sign had become a source of pride for many... even a kind of spiritual superiority.

But Jesus calls that out by saying:

'You circumcise a boy on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses won't be broken... so why are you angry with me for healing a whole man on the Sabbath?'

In other words - you're willing to perform a partial act of restoration on the Sabbath, but you're outraged when I make a man completely whole.

And then He drives it home in verse 24 by saying:

‘Stop judging by outward appearances, but judge with right judgment.’

What Jesus is exposing here is that they had become more committed to the appearance of obedience than to the heart of what God actually desires.

They had spent their whole lives judging based on outward appearance - and because of that, they were blinded to the true heart of the message of the gospel.

And this is a theme that runs all throughout the Bible.

We see this especially in the lives of the Pharisees as they were the ones who paraded around town while they were fasting - praying loudly and letting the world know that they were ‘godly.’ Jesus calls them out. Even with their giving. They would make it a spectacle and when compared to the widow who silently gave her two mites - all she had - Jesus made it clear that the heart was the point - not the outward appearance.

Perhaps this is why the verse - out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks - continues to be a very relevant theme here. Because ultimately Jesus is more concerned with the condition of our hearts than the actions we perform. Is our heart submitted to him. Are we surrendered to Him. Are we sacrificing our wills and desires so that we may embrace His? Or are we hiding the true condition of our heart by masking it over with good works. It’s the heart that He wants.

And if we aren’t careful, we too can make the same mistake.

Because while man looks at the outward appearance...God always looks at the heart.

May the Lord Bless you and Keep you
May He cause His face to Shine upon you
May He be gracious towards you
Lifting up His countenance upon you
And may He give you peace
In Jesus name, Amen.

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