

JOH 7:2-7 But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near, 3 Jesus' brothers said to him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles 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, "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. 7 The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil."

As we saw last week the feast of Tabernacles or the feast of Booths, as it is also called, was upon the Jewish community, and Jews from all parts of Israel were going up to Jerusalem to celebrate it.

Jesus was no exception. As a Jew He was obligated by the law to honor God in His obedience. But the issue in our text has more to do with how Jesus would reveal Himself to those in Jerusalem as His brothers were urging Him to make a public display so as to make His bid for the throne of David.

But this was never to be the intention of Jesus since He was not born into this world to set up an earthly Kingdom. He came the first time to redeem sinful men, not by His might as conqueror, but by His sacrificial death and resurrection for us.

His brothers didn't understand this. They only saw an opportunity for their brother Jesus to become more popular, and in turn for them to ride His coat tails to fame and power. And so, as we come to our text this morning we see Jesus' reply to His brothers' request that this would be the right time to show Himself to the world in power.

JOH 7:6-7 Therefore Jesus told them, "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. 7 The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil."

Now, when our Lord says, "the right time for Me has not yet come", this has to do with the timetable that He and the Father are on. Everything that Jesus did was in accord with the Father's will. And it was not His time to show Himself to the world, if you will.

In fact, it will not be time to show Himself to the world, in the ultimate sense, until He physically returns to this world as the risen King and conqueror. But it is interesting that what His brothers desired of Jesus is what many in the church desire today, and that is to show themselves to the world, not as servants but as icons.

There is the temptation to attain to some sort of status and power in this world even among people who claim to know Christ. And unfortunately, they have given the world the ammunition they need to discredit those who portray themselves as representatives of Jesus Christ.

I can't tell you how many times people have come up to me and have made fun of some of those tele-evangelists who spend more time begging for money than begging people to turn from their sin and embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

They look at the church more as some sort of business opportunity for charlatans than a sincere people who want many to come into the Kingdom of God through faith in Christ.

Now, granted many people in the world are always looking for an excuse not to come to Christ, and they are always looking for the negative side of the church as an excuse not to want to be a part of what they conveniently call hypocrites.

But the fact remains; there are hypocrites in the church, just as there are hypocrites in every other part of life. But simply because there are hypocrites in the medical field, for example, who are always telling us not to eat at McDonald's, or to get more exercise, despite the fact that they eat junk food and never get off the couch themselves, doesn't mean we stop going to the doctor when we're sick.

And the world needs to get over it when it comes to what they perceive as hypocrites in the church and start coming to grips with their eternal destinies. This is where you and I come in as we give them no excuse to call the church hypocritical as we extend to them, in love, the solution to their sin problem; Jesus Christ.

I'm not going to allow some other "Christian's" questionable behavior to stop me from being that servant and ambassador for Christ. And I'm not going to allow the world's excuses for not coming to Christ to stop me from loving them with the truth of the gospel.

JOH 7:6 Therefore Jesus told them, "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right."

A.W. Pink in his commentary on John has a very interesting insight into this response from Jesus to His brothers' request to show Himself to the world.

"If Jesus were to show Himself to the world, at His first coming, in all His glory, instead of humbling Himself by dying for our sins, we would all be doomed to eternal condemnation."

If Christ skipped His first coming and went straight to what we know as His second, which would now become the first, we'd be in big trouble. What are we told about His second coming when He shows Himself to the world in all His glory?

**Revelation 19:11,15-16** <sup>11</sup> And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it *is* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. <sup>15</sup> ***From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.*** <sup>16</sup> And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

Praise God that the Son of God did not come in all His glory as He revealed Himself to the world some 2,000 years ago, but instead laid His glory aside to become a man.

This is what Peter meant when he wrote of the Savior who was no less God, nor any less glorious in His person; only that He took on flesh as a servant and therefore His full glory would not be revealed in His flesh prior to His resurrection.

PHI 2:6-8 "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!"

Again, that is in stark contrast to how He will come back to this earth as the King and conqueror, because in that day there will be no false charges raised against Jesus; there will be no kangaroo court which our Lord will submit to; there will be no abusing of our Savior like when He was beaten and crucified for our sins.

No, in that day the world will tremble before His awesome glory and power. This is partly why Jesus says in our text, "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right."

Today is the day of salvation. We don't get a second chance once we have died. Now, the context of our passage has to do with Jesus' will regarding when He will go up to Jerusalem for this feast, but the point A.W. Pink makes in his comment on this passage is that we need to be careful what we ask for from God.

If Jesus had given them what they wanted; to show Himself to the world as King and Lord, they would have gotten something entirely different than grace and mercy. His ways are beyond ours and we need to trust that He knows what He's doing, even if we don't see what we think He should be doing in our time table.

But as our Lord continues in our text He makes the point that His mission in this world is one which is not designed to win Him any popularity contests.

JOH 7:7 "The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil."

This is quite an indictment against the world, actually two indictments. One is that the world hates Christ and the other is that it does evil which precipitates this hate.

If you and I think for a moment that we're in this world as servants of the most High God, to be liked by everyone, then we are sadly mistaken. That does not mean we are to go out of our way to be obnoxious to the world to earn such hate, but it does mean that even in our love for the world as we give them the truth, the world will hate us.

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not a masochist. I don't look for trouble. But if we are faithful to love and obey our Lord trouble will eventually come looking for us. And the reason for this is because Satan hates anyone who takes a stand for Christ.

He doesn't care about Christians who only pay lip service to Christ and not live their lives in love and obedience to Christ. He doesn't need to worry about them. But He does worry about those who pray to God and seek His will. He does worry about those who share their faith. He does worry about those who serve in the body of Christ as they encourage the saints with their gifts.

Now, I don't mean to paint a negative picture of what it means to be a Christian. I just want to paint an honest picture. Because what I have found is that Christians who are attacked by the enemy are those who can rejoice in the fact that they are being singled out because they are seeking God and that pleases God.

I'm not as concerned with Satan's attacks as I am with pleasing my God and making Him happy. Satan has no dominion over my life anymore. I've been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. I've been given a new life and a new nature and the hope of eternal life.

What can Satan do to me? Well, he can make my life miserable. And there are times when he does. And unfortunately, it's usually during these times when many Christians decide that the road is too hard and so they get out of the race. But that's the last thing we want to do, for a number of reasons.

We end up allowing the enemy to determine how we'll love and serve God and we also end up missing out on the many blessings of being a faithful servant of Christ. Yes, it sometimes hurts to follow our Lord, but we shouldn't be surprised. Our Lord knows what we go through and He personally intercedes on our behalf to the Father that we would remain faithful.

JOH 17:14-16 "I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. 15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.<BR>17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."

But at the end of verse seven of our text Jesus says another very interesting thing as to why the world hates Him; "because I testify that what it does is evil."

And the reason for this hate is rooted in the evilness of man's heart toward his creator. This is not the first time God has addressed the evilness of man's heart. In fact, it was this very evilness that precipitated the first world-wide judgement.

**Genesis 6:5-7** <sup>5</sup> Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. <sup>6</sup> The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. <sup>7</sup> The LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from

the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them."

The evilness of man will also be the catalyst for the second world wide judgment from God as Christ makes clear by comparing this judgement at second His coming with the days of Noah where the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually.

**Matthew 24:37-39** <sup>37</sup> "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. <sup>38</sup> "For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup> and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Just as men hated God during the days of Noah, so too will they continue to hate Him and His people right up to the end of this world.

JOH 15:19 "If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you."

Notice what John says here. He essentially says that the world which hates Christ will love you if you embrace them and their hatred. But because you refuse to hate Christ, and instead love Him because He first loved you, they will hate you just as they hate Christ because you belong to Him.

I've always said that if the world loves us and encourages us in our ministries then we need to start worrying about our message. Jesus points this out again.

JOH 15:20-21 "Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. <sup>21</sup> They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me."

God's perspective on sin hasn't changed. He is still within His righteousness to destroy mankind again. But what we see in Christ's statement, where He has personally challenged men's sinfulness, and that men's response is that they hate Him, only magnifies His grace being extended to us.

Our Lord Jesus has defeated Satan's stranglehold on His people by doing for man what man can't do for himself; living perfectly and

sinlessly before the Father and becoming our substitute as He takes our penalty for sin.

But the other thing we see here is that Jesus was not afraid to point out what it is that separates us from God. Yes, we risk people hating us when we tell them this truth, but not to tell them is not loving them. If we hide the problem of sin from people, then they won't see a need to seek a solution.

It's like the analogy of a doctor knowing that we have cancer but not telling us because it may not be a popular diagnosis and if he tells the truth we may like him anymore.

Not to give the world the diagnosis of their sinful hearts is not to be honest with them. Remember, we're talking about where people will spend eternity. But our emphasis doesn't have to dwell on the diagnosis because we have a solution to their sin problem.

And this is where God uses us to lift the veil of darkness in the lives of people as He gives them sight to receive the truth. I've shared the gospel with people who have yelled at me and called me names and essentially hated me for pointing out the truth of their spiritual state.

But you know, some of those people later thanked me for loving them with the truth as they came to faith in Christ and were delivered from the penalty and power of their sin.

Don't be afraid of telling people the truth of their diagnosis. But don't do it in such a way where we glory in that diagnosis as we beat them with such truth. As I've said before, we've not been called to be "Jerks for Jesus" but servants who love people with the truth. We want to meet people where they are and deal with them at that level.

One of my favorite verses is where Paul gives us some very practical ways of sharing the gospel with people. And what I like about this verse is that it shows us how we don't take a cookie cutter approach to sharing the gospel. This is what he says.

COL 4:5-6 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how [you should respond to each person, (NASB)].

Paul is saying that everyone will afford us a different opportunity that will not be identical to the next. When I speak to Roman

Catholics about Christ it is different than when I speak to Jehovah's Witnesses.

When I speak to teen -agers about Christ it is different than when I speak to adults. I don't mean the content of the gospel, I mean the approach. People are different and we need to be sensitive to their needs; what's going on in their lives and what they understand about God and Christ.

This is exactly what Paul did when he spoke to the people at Athens, primarily the philosophers at the Areopagus where he was given an opportunity to speak to some very learned men about this strange new teaching he was promoting.

Now keep in mind that this city was full of idols and we're told in Acts 17:16 ..... he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols.

Now being greatly distressed you would think that Paul would ream these people out when given this opportunity. You would think that Paul would hurl condemnation upon their heads for worshiping false gods and declare that God was going to grind them to dust if they didn't repent. But what does Paul do? He doesn't condemn them, but in a sense, he commends them as he takes them to the next level of truth regarding the one true God.

ACT 17:22-33 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. 24 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. 25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. 26 From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. 27 God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 28 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' 29 "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone - an image made by man's design and skill. 30 In the past God

overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." 32 When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." 33 At that, Paul left the Council.

This is an amazing look into the mind of Paul as it relates to his perspective on people who are different from him and who believe differently. He knew that idolatry is an abomination to God, but he takes that which is evil and actually uses it to commend these people with the express purpose of disarming them and then teaching them the truth.

He's not commending their idolatry. He's commending their tenacity to seek that which is outside of themselves, and that which is greater than themselves. But then Paul moves to correct their false thinking, not by trashing their belief system, but by giving them the truth about a God they recognize but don't know; The Unknown God they identify with a separate idol.

And that's where Paul segues into revealing who this unknown God is. But notice that even though he is very tactful and sensitive with these people and their belief system he does not fail to challenge them to consider this one true God and their need to reach out to Him.

ACT 17:30-31 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but ***now he commands all people everywhere to repent.*** 31 For ***he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.***"

And with this very statement every single one of them fell to their faces and asked Paul, "what must we do to be saved?"

Well, not exactly. Like Christ, once Paul revealed their need to turn from their sin unto the one true God, they showed forth their hate. But Paul could not know which of these would believe or not believe, only that they could not have faith unless they heard the truth.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. But we know God did speak to some people that day.

ACT 17:33-34 At that, Paul left the Council. 34 A few men became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

Will all people that we share the gospel with come to Christ at that moment? Probably not. Should we therefore grab them by the throats and threaten them with immediate destruction as we explain how God will probably strike them with lightning? Probably not, but we do need to treat each person as an individual who has needs and looks at the world from a different perspective than we do.

But, like Paul, we need to take the time to educate them as to who our God is and the Messiah He sent into the world to redeem His people because He loves them.

We may be able to do this the moment we meet them. It may take more time with others. But we need to be willing to love people with the truth even if that means that they may not like us once we share the truth of their need which results from their sin, along with sharing the solution, who is Christ.

At that point we leave the results in the hand of the One who is God and Lord and Savior. That's a good place to leave any burden. May our God bless us and use us to reach a dying world and may He be pleased to bring many into His kingdom through us. And may we always give Him the glory for all that He does.