

John 7:8-13 "Seek the Proper Time"

JOH 7:8-13 "You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come." 9 Having said this, he stayed in Galilee. 10 However, after his brothers had left for the Feast, he went also, not publicly, but in secret. 11 Now at the Feast the Jews were watching for him and asking, "Where is that man?" 12 Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, "He is a good man." Others replied, "No, he deceives the people." 13 But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the Jews."

Last week we saw how our Lord's brothers encouraged Jesus to go up to the feast of Tabernacles with the express purpose of revealing Himself to the world in a dynamic way so as to become the celebrity that any deliverer should be.

Of course, Jesus had no intention of becoming a celebrity or revealing Himself to the world at this time and so He responded in JOH 7:6-7 "..... 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."

In revealing Himself to the world, as He was born of flesh and lived among men, Jesus Christ knew that men would hate Him. And the reason for this is because being a holy God and servant of the Father He testified, in what He said and how He lived, that the world is evil.

And quite honestly the world doesn't like being exposed. People don't coddle up to the notion that they are inherently evil and sinful. If given a choice of listening to someone who is exposing their sin, or listening to someone who tickles their ears with the idea that man is basically good and wonderful, people will, in most cases, opt for the latter.

But what we need to keep in mind in Christ's case is that He wasn't generally going about the country side ripping people and calling them dirty rotten sinners. He was simply stating the fact that all men are guilty before God because of their sin, but that there was hope of being redeemed by the Messiah the Father sent into the world because He loved the world.

It isn't an either/or proposition; that of stating that men are sinners, or that we should only speak of God's love. You can't speak of

God's love without stating the true condition of men's hearts who are offered God's love, in spite of their hate for God.

This is what makes God's love so amazing. To consider that all men are guilty before a holy God and that none deserve eternal life and that the wages of our sin is death, only magnifies the grace being extended to mankind through Christ, as Paul puts into perspective when writing to the Romans.

ROM 5:10-11 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! 11 Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Our Lord Jesus, the apostle Paul, and all of the faithful saints down through the ages have been hated because they spoke the truth concerning man's condition; lost in their sin and without hope in themselves. But they always balanced that truth with the truth that God wants so much to reconcile us to Himself. The catch is that that reconciliation only comes through Jesus Christ and His death for the penalty of our sin and resurrection for our life.

The world will love you if you avoid the truth that they are sinners in need of a Savior. They will even love you if you use the name of Christ but infer that His mission was not to save us from sin, but save us from our lack of self-esteem.

This is why the Robert Schuller's of the world and the Norman Vincent Peale's of the world can be so popular. They have an aura of spirituality, but their message is one devoid of truth which should lovingly show people their true need; salvation from sin, and then point them to a Savior who sacrificed His life to redeem us from that sin.

I guess my point is that no matter how much you love people in this world, if you are teaching and preaching the truth of God's word and His gospel, which not only reveals sin, but more importantly gives the solution to sin, the world will still hate you.

That doesn't mean we stop loving the world with the truth, it simply means we approach such a ministry of reconciliation with our eyes open and aware that simply because people are blind to the truth it doesn't mean we don't trust that God can't open their eyes.

But the opening of the eyes of the blind is always in conjunction with the word of God.

When Paul was recounting to King Agrippa how Jesus Christ physically blinded him on the road to Damascus and then opened his spiritual eyes to his need for the Savior, he then recounted for the King what his ministry would entail. Jesus told Paul....

ACT 26:16-18 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. 17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them 18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

But then Paul immediately explains how that was to manifest itself in terms of speaking this truth to the people and how the people reacted to that truth.

ACT 26:19-21 "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. 20 First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. 21 That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me."

These were fellow Jews Paul was speaking to. Paul loved his fellow Jews and would have done anything to see them come to their Messiah. But he didn't exclude what it is they needed to do to accomplish that. They needed to repent, that is to turn around from trying to reach God by the law in their case, and turn to God through faith in Christ.

Both elements were present in Paul's approach to the gospel; man's sinfulness and need for a Savior, and revealing the love the Savior has for them whereby they need only receive His gift of eternal life by faith.

And yet, not even the half-brothers of Jesus could see this. Their only concern, at this time, was to see their brother hit the big-time by becoming a celebrity and having all of Jerusalem love Him as He draws men to Himself through miracles and maybe even a little lunch here and there as He multiplies loaves and fishes for an encore.

And so, they encourage Him to go up to Jerusalem for this very reason. But Jesus responds in our text.

JOH 7:8-9 "You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come." 9 Having said this, he stayed in Galilee."

The brothers of Jesus wanted to roll into Jerusalem with Jesus on their arm. They wanted to make a big splash as people ran up to the Lord seeking a miracle or a glimpse of this man who was the topic of discussion among everyone at the time.

But Jesus tells them to go ahead up to the feast without Him. And the reason He gives is that His time has not yet come. What He means by this is that His time table is determined by the Father, along with what the will of the Father is. And the will of the Father is not to parade into Jerusalem with His brothers.

And so, Jesus stays in Galilee. By the way, the expression, "my time has not yet come," is one which speaks of events surrounding His public ministry as it relates ultimately to His crucifixion, which by the way is the culmination and focal point of His entire ministry.

JOH 7:30 At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come.

JOH 8:20 He spoke these words while teaching in the temple area near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his time had not yet come.

Timing is everything. Have you ever wondered why Jesus came some 2,000 years ago as opposed to today? Or for that matter why didn't He come right after Adam and Eve sinned as He could have been born into this world as the first human being born of Adam and Eve?

No. Instead, our Lord waited for the perfect time, according to His will by coming when He did. In fact, the phrase that is often used for such things is the "proper time."

There is a proper time for all things related to God's sovereign will and you can't speed that up or slow it down from an eternal perspective. Now from an earthly perspective it may appear we can, be it through prayer, God's reaction to our rebellion, or any number of events played out in our lives.

But even through these means and events, as we perceive things changing all around us, it is still the proper time according to God as it relates to His will. For example, the very birth of Christ had to happen when it did because according to God, and His written word, it was the proper time. There could have been no other time in history when Jesus could have come. Paul points this out to the Galatians and Timothy.

GAL 4:4-5 But *when the time had fully come*, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

1TI 2:5-6 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all men - *the testimony given in its proper time*.

What this means is that in the eternal counsels of God He has planned out all things according to His will and that every moment of time is directed by His will to His glory. Even those times where we are given the opportunity to seemingly change God's will through the means He has provided; prayer, teaching and preaching of the gospel.

In other words, we are given the privilege to participate in His eternal will as it relates to people and this world. But it also brings into focus that God is not out of control or winging it as He does things in this world. He is still sovereign and will do all things that please Him at the proper time.

This should give us comfort, not only for today, but also for our futures. Because according to God's eternal will there is a proper time for your today, and a proper time for your tomorrow as well as a proper time for this church today and tomorrow. This is what Paul meant in Galatians.

GAL 6:9-10 Let us not become weary in doing good, for *at the proper time we will reap a harvest* if we do not give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

What is the proper time where we will reap a harvest individually and corporately? Well, it just so happens that I know the answer to this. Are you ready?, because this is profound. The proper time is the proper time.

Whatever time God decides is the proper time. Should we not then pray and seek God for Him to work in our midst? Of course. But

after all is said and done, God will decide when and how He will move. That is the proper time from God's perspective.

In other words, the proper time may not be according to our timetable, but it is always right on time according to God's timetable. And what this means from a practical standpoint is that we must trust God and live by faith each moment of our lives. But the promise remains, if we will remain faithful God's will will be accomplished at the exact moment He has planned.

There are so many things going on in the lives of God's people at any given moment. But God is with us in the moment. And at the proper time He will accomplish His will in our lives to His glory. This should not cause us to view life in a fatalistic way, but should encourage us to discover what His will is as we live in His will according to His word.

As we come back to our text we find that the proper time for Jesus to go up to Jerusalem for the feast is after His brothers leave for Jerusalem. Again, keep in mind that it is the Holy Spirit who is revealing this to us here. It is the Spirit of God who is making it a point that the proper time for something as benign as to when you walk from one city to the next is still inside of the will of God and should be sought of God.

JOH 7:10 However, after his brothers had left for the Feast, he went also, not publicly, but in secret.

Here we get a glimpse into why Jesus left after His brothers went up to Jerusalem. Remember, it was His brothers who wanted Jesus to make a public display as He triumphantly came into Jerusalem. Here in verse 10 we're told that He didn't want to make that public entry, but in a sense a secret entrance.

Not secret that no one knew He would be there, (He didn't wear a disguise), but secret in the sense that He didn't go up to Jerusalem to make a spectacle of Himself.

By the way, there would be a proper time when Jesus would make a public display and entrance into Jerusalem and it will be found six months from this time in our text when Jesus makes, what is referred to as His triumphal entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, as He is received as King and honored with Hosanna's in the Highest.

But right now He just wants to fulfill His duty to love and obey the Father as He participates in the feast of Tabernacles.

JOH 7:11-13 Now at the Feast the Jews were watching for him and asking, "Where is that man?" 12 Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, "He is a good man." Others replied, "No, he deceives the people." 13 But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the Jews.

Now as we come to verse eleven it says that the Jews were watching for Him. When the word Jews is used here in our text it is not necessarily all inclusive of every Jew but to individual Jews, specifically the leaders of Israel.

We know this because of the context where in verse thirteen these Jews are distinguished from the common Jew. But no one [of the common Jews, the guy on the street] would say anything publicly about him for fear of the Jews. [The leaders who had authority to punish them]

And so, the intent here is that the leaders in Jerusalem had every intention of laying hold of Him with the authority they possessed. And this is emphasized through the word watching. The Jews were watching for Him. This word watch in the Greek is *zeteo* and it means to seek in order to find.

In other words, they had a plan to not simply look for Jesus but they expected Him to show up so they could put their plan into motion. They were asking people, where is that man? In all likelihood they probably asked the brothers of Jesus where He was. And as far as the brothers were concerned Jesus was not coming until He decided to come.

But they knew something about Jesus that gave them the assurance that He would show up. They knew Jesus was a teacher of the law and a faithful follower of the law. Therefore they knew that He would not stay away because that would be out of accord with God's will.

Now, the common Jew had mixed opinions about Jesus and it ranged from sympathy to rejection as we see in our text.

JOH 7:12 Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, "He is a good man." Others replied, "No, he deceives the people."

Now the question that should be raised here is how can there be such divergent opinions about an individual? How can one group of people say He is a good man, and yet others call Him a deceiver? Did one group not have an opportunity to see His

goodness? Did one group not see His miracles and how He taught with authority from the Scriptures?

No. Both groups saw and heard Jesus and yet both groups are firm in their convictions. And don't forget that what is happening here in Jerusalem at this time comes after Jesus fed thousands of people with the fish and the loaves. But it also comes after His teaching where He claims to be sent from the Father and spoke of people eating His flesh and drinking His blood to have eternal life.

You can see why there would have been such deep division. On the one hand everyone recognized that Jesus was doing these miracles. That couldn't be denied. And yet on the other hand some concluded He was speaking blasphemy by declaring Himself to be God as the one everyone must trust to have eternal life.

And so, by the time He comes to Jerusalem there are groups of people who have got an opinion as to what these miracles are all about. Some suggest that no one can do these miracles unless he is sent from God, while others acknowledge these miracles but attribute them to deception to fool and mislead the masses.

This was evidently the opinion of the leaders in Jerusalem. And yet, these same leaders didn't want the kind of discussion that was going on among the crowds in Jerusalem. Now, you would think that they would want a portion of the population to side with them to make it easier to find Jesus. But notice what verse thirteen says.

JOH 7:13 But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the Jews.

Evidently, the leaders had made it clear that they did not want any discussion about Jesus upon some sort of penalty inflicted upon them. And there were probably a variety of reasons for this; from not wanting to give any validity to this itinerant preacher, as they were jealous of Him, to not wanting to give any reason for the Roman government to step in and stop them from secretly dealing with Jesus.

But there's something in this little statement in verse thirteen that is chilling. It was the job of the leaders of Israel to teach the people the Scriptures. It was the job of these leaders to encourage the people to seek their God and it was the job of these guides, if you will, to lead the people to the Messiah.

They were given a job by God. And yet, what are they doing? In a sense, they are forcing the people to stay away from Jesus. They



are spreading lies about what our Lord has been doing by calling Him a deceiver when they know He only teaches the truth and they will not even let people talk about Him publicly.

In other words, they are doing everything they can to keep the Messiah away from the very people He came to die for. I would not want to be one of these leaders and have to stand before the Lord in judgment. And by the way, our Lord has rebuked these very types throughout the Old Testament.

MAL 2:7-8 "For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, and from his mouth men should seek instruction - because he is the messenger of the LORD Almighty. 8 But you have turned from the way and by your teaching have caused many to stumble; you have violated the covenant with Levi," says the LORD Almighty.

We as believers in Christ Jesus have an obligation to bring people to Christ, not to drive them away from Christ with what we say or do. But I think there is a message here for leaders in the church today who claim to be teachers of God's word.

On the one hand some of them are calling themselves God's servants and yet as Malachi records God's very word many of them have turned from the way and by their teaching have caused many to stumble.

God takes this personally and He loves His people too much to allow these false teachers to hurt the very one's for whom Christ died. And we have an obligation to make sure that we don't fall into such false teaching, by being in the word of God ourselves and studying to show ourselves approved.

Whether we are leaders or not our Lord wants us to love His word and live His truth in the power of the Spirit. And in this way we bear testimony with our lips and our lives that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God.

And it is always the proper time to bring glory to our God. Our Lord loves us so much and desires that we love this world with the truth of who Jesus Christ is and why He came. We don't want to do this in secret. We haven't been called to be undercover Christians.

May our lights shine in this world and may we declare that Jesus Christ is the only Savior of the world. In Him is life, an abundant life that is meant to be shared and lived.