

JOH 7:26-31 Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Christ? 27 But we know where this man is from; when the Christ comes, no one will know where he is from." 28 Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, "Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, 29 but I know him because I am from him and he sent me." 30 At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come. 31 Still, many in the crowd put their faith in him. They said, "When the Christ comes, will he do more miraculous signs than this man?"

On the surface this appears to be an odd exchange between Jesus and the crowd. The crowd has concluded that they know something about Jesus that the leaders of Israel don't; namely that they know He is not the Messiah because the Messiah will appear on the scene mysteriously, without any knowledge of His origin.

As we saw last week this conclusion is based on a judgment they made which was founded on either tradition, a wrong view of Scripture, or a combination of both.

The danger of this wrong judgment is that it can have eternal consequences as it did in this case to where their wrong judgment actually kept them from embracing the Christ who had revealed Himself in the Scriptures and was now revealing Himself as the One who was fulfilling these same Scriptures.

But in addressing the statement that they knew where Jesus was from our Lord then answers them in a way that seems to agree with their assessment of Him, and yet He doesn't.

JOH 7:28-29 Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, "Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, 29 but I know him because I am from him and he sent me."

To answer this seeming contradiction we need to put verse 28 and verse 29 in its proper placement.

Let's look at it in this light. "Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. but I know him because I am from him."

What is Jesus saying? He is saying that you don't know Me at all. And you don't know where I'm from.

They were once again proving their inability to see with spiritual eyes. They were saying that they knew where He was from, in that He came from the region of Galilee; more specifically Nazareth. Jesus was agreeing that they had the geography regarding His birth as correct, but not His true origin.

And what was true of Jesus' time here is true of our day as well. How many people acknowledge that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem and lived in Israel, and yet most of these same people will not acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the One true God and Savior, sent from the Father?

They understand His earthly connection, but not His eternal and spiritual connection. They admit that He was a good man, but not the Almighty God in the flesh. They will say He came on a spiritual mission, but that His mission was not unlike the mission of so many other people, be they Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius or others, who were mere men.

And to this Jesus would say to people today who hold to these truths, "yes, you know where I was born, and where I grew up and what I spent My life on earth doing, but you really don't know Me or know where I came from or why I came."

This is why most Americans, when polled about their religious affiliation, can say that they would consider themselves Christian, when in fact they wouldn't know the real differences between Jesus Christ and the false prophet Mohammed.

Their spiritual understanding is practically non-existent. In fact, what I find amazing is how God can associate spirituality with the most godless of people who claim to know Him and yet obviously don't.

2TI 3:2-5 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God - 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power.

How can a person demonstrate all of these godless qualities and yet said to have a form of godliness? Well, just consider the lives

of people all throughout the year, and then see where many of these same people end up on December 25 and Easter morning.

Many of them are in church doing their yearly spiritual exercise. How many of these same people give to charities, or do good in their community when asked to walk for the babies, or urge their community leaders to do something for the homeless?

There appears to be a form of godliness even among the most godless, but they deny true godliness which can only come from God as one has a real relationship with God through faith alone in Christ. This is what Paul spoke of to the Corinthians when they struggled with what it meant to be true spiritual people in Christ with lives of love and obedience.

1CO 2:4-5 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

It is the power of God working in and through our lives in Christ which shows true spirituality, because it is a power and life which is given by the Spirit of God as we subsequently place our faith in Christ.

And this was the problem with the Jews of Christ's day as He spoke to them concerning Himself as the Messiah. They claimed to be spiritually astute, having grown up with the Scriptures and the law and the sacrificial system. And yet, they demonstrated that when it came to true spirituality they were blind as bats.

They had a form of godliness, but it was not the real thing. There was no power in their lives to please God because they were depending on their own wisdom and their own ability to approach God on their terms, not His.

This is what Jesus meant when He was agreeing that on the one hand that they knew of His physical existence, but not His spiritual origin, which is to say, His deity.

JOH 7:28-29 "..... I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him 29 but I know him because I am from him and he sent me."

Of course what Jesus is saying is that He was sent here by the Father. And as much as they may protest, they did not know the Father. They did not know the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

They said they did, but Jesus makes it clear that they don't. Again, they had a form of godliness and religiosity, but it had nothing to do with substance, or the true thing.

And this is precisely what Jesus tells them later in this gospel in chapter eight.

JOH 8:42-44 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. 43 Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. 44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

Again, keep in mind that Jesus is speaking to the children of Israel, the chosen people of God. How can Jesus say these things to His chosen people? Because it's the truth and He wants them to be shaken out of their complacency and lies and come into a relationship with the Father of truth, not to stay bound to the father of lies.

Time and time again, Jesus told the Jews of His day that He was sent from the Father, and time and time again the Jews rejected Him. But that didn't stop Him from loving them and going to the cross to die for them and all who were given to Him by the Father, which Jesus had said to them earlier in this same letter.

John 6:37-39 ³⁷ *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.* ³⁸ *"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ ***"This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.****

But they couldn't handle the truth. Jesus in our passage points out how their rejection of Him was a rejection of the Father. But instead of repenting they want to kill Him.

JOH 7:28-30 "..... I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, 29 but I know him because I am from him and he sent me." 30 At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come."

It's interesting here that verse 30 makes it clear that they made a real effort to seize Him. In other words, the leaders of Israel

planned to capture Him with the express purpose of killing Him. This was not just a thought in their minds, it was an effort to send the temple guard to look for and bring Jesus back to the Sanhedrin.

And yet, for all their efforts they could not bring Him back. There were other occasions where Jesus slipped away and could not be found. We also know that they simply could or would not lay hold of Him for fear of the Jews, or because they were not able to for the reason of divine intervention. The bottom line is that God Himself thwarted them from carrying out their plans.

But in this case we know precisely why the temple guard did not arrest Jesus, and it's found a little later in this chapter.

JOH 7:45-47 Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why didn't you bring him in?" 46 "No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards declared. 47 "You mean he has deceived you also?" the Pharisees retorted.

The temple guard went out with the express purpose of taking Jesus by force and yet what happens?

They begin pushing through the crowds who are listening to the teachings of Jesus. As they get closer and closer they too begin to hear what Jesus is teaching concerning the kingdom of God. With one thing on their mind they surround Jesus to arrest Him.

But a strange thing happens. As they listen to what Jesus teaches about the kingdom of God and the Messiah they stop in their tracks. And instead of pursuing their plan, they become fascinated with what He says.

They had been told all this time that Jesus was a heretic, that He was a threat to the nation of Israel. But when they hear His words for themselves they cannot but be struck with the fact that what He speaks is truth. They don't hear a man trying to push a new religion, but a messenger from God who loves them and desires to see them come to God by faith in the Messiah who stands before them.

They are so amazed at what they hear they not only cannot arrest Him they actually are compelled to go back to the Pharisees without their prisoner and question the order they received.

JOH 7:46 "No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards declared

We sometimes have a tendency to think that we could never share God's word with someone because in our own minds we know they will never receive the truth. And we may be right.

But I can guarantee you that every person in that crowd who was listening to Jesus, who saw these soldiers of the temple coming closer and closer, knew without any doubt that these men were going to march right up to Jesus, throw Him to the ground and cart Him away to jail.

Not a person in that crowd would ever have guessed that these faithful servants of Israel, who were loyal to the leaders of that nation, would ever have given Jesus an extra moment, to not just listen to what He said, but to actually be touched and moved by what He said, that they would disobey a direct order by the Sanhedrin.

And yet, what do we see? We see the Spirit of God arresting these temple guards in their tracks. We see the Spirit of God speaking to them as the word of God goes forth in power and truth and love.

Does this mean that because they didn't arrest Jesus that they all must have become believers? Not at all. But it clearly demonstrates that the word of God is not just some words in a book. They are God's word to people. They are words that are spirit and truth and they are alive as they are able to speak to the hearts of people as God takes those words and makes them come alive.

HEB 4:12-13 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

On the day that these temple guards came to arrest Jesus the word of God was certainly living and active. It was certainly penetrating the spirits and souls of these men, and it certainly judged the thoughts and attitudes of their hearts to such a degree that they couldn't arrest Him.

Would we have guessed before-hand that Christ's word would have touched them in this way? Absolutely not. In fact, if it were up to our own wisdom we probably would have kept our mouths shut.

And unfortunately, this is the way we sometimes assess people who come across our paths. We either know these people, and how they have reacted in the past, or we assume that if we shared with a stranger that they would never be interested in the truth.

And so, instead of simply giving them the truth in love we hold back and hope that someone else will be able to get through to them. This happens more so with family. We grow up with brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, uncles, aunts and cousins and we know they'll never be open to the gospel or God's word.

Or at least we think we know. Or maybe we've tried in the past to give them the truth and they wouldn't accept it. But I think we need to be careful to distinguish between being witnesses for Christ and opening the hearts of people to accept Christ as Lord and Savior.

As a witness for Christ we are obliged to simply give people the truth of who Christ is and why He came and then leave it up to the Holy Spirit to make that word come alive and active.

That is different from trying to force someone into the kingdom of God in our own effort. That is different from trying to make people see a spiritual truth when they don't have eyes to see. That is different from compelling people to listen to something you can clearly hear because of God's Spirit in your life, when they don't have ears to hear.

Rather, we should take the attitude that if God has given us an opportunity to share the truth, then He will have to take that truth and do something with it in the life of that individual. He may not do it right away, but we know that His word will not return void. It may be a seed that we are planting as a relative of ours may look at us with that look, as though we've lost our minds.

But who knows, maybe sometime down the road that word will be used by God to open their eyes and ears.

This should do two things when we realize our role in the kingdom of God as witnesses, which by the way is what Jesus was doing with these Jews. He was witnessing to the truth of who His Father is and what His Father had done in sending Him into this world.

It should take all of the pressure off of us when we do share the truth. Why? Because the results are no longer up to us. The results are up to God. The results are up to the Holy Spirit who is

able to open the eyes of the spiritually blind as we give them the truth.

2CO 3:6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant - not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

You and I cannot give life, we can only testify to the life that God gives. We are witnesses to the life in that sense.

1TH 1:5-6 our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. 6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the One who empowers the message of the gospel, not us. But we must give the message as we are commanded by Christ.

But the second thing we can learn from all of this is that if it is the Holy Spirit who empowers the word, as He opens the eyes of the blind, then we should be confident in giving the word, whether people accept it or not. Because whether they deny the word or not it is still the living and active word.

People can deny that the world is round, but that doesn't change the truth. People can deny that God created the world, but that doesn't change the truth. People may deny that Christ is the only way to heaven, but that doesn't change the truth. It may aggravate us, but it doesn't change who God is or what He has done

I was once told a story of a man and woman who were asleep in bed and were awakened in the middle of the night by a robber. And this robber stood at the foot of the bed demanding that they show him where their jewels and money were located.

As the robber was talking the husband slowly pulled his gun from underneath his pillow. As he cocked the revolver and pointed it at the robber he said I have a gun and I will use it if you don't leave.

At this the robber said in somewhat of a condescending manner, "I don't believe in guns." This robber was an unbeliever in guns. But what do you think would make that robber a believer in guns?

If the husband who pointed that gun pulled the trigger, do you think the robber might become a believer? More than likely. Or at least would respect the words the husband spoke concerning guns.

The point is that we have the word of God. It is living and active. It is loaded. But instead of being fearful that it may not accomplish God's will we need to just be willing to pull the trigger. Just share the word. You don't even have to be a good aim. Just pull the trigger. The noise alone will get their attention.

Let God direct the bullet. Let God direct the word to the hearts of people. Again, if someone doesn't embrace the truth don't worry because it's not your word, it's the Lord's and He is more than capable of making that word alive in His timetable. We just need to be faithful in giving the word.

But someone might say, but I've shared the word and the gospel with my family and friends and they're not willing to listen to me. Two things need to be said about that. If your family and friends are not willing to listen to the truth then find a stranger.

But the second thing is if someone is not willing to listen to the word, allow them to see the word in your life.

2CO 3:3 You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Sometimes we may not get the kind of opportunity we'd like so as to share the gospel and so we only have the option to live the gospel, being that living letter from Christ. But don't underestimate the power of God. Simply because they have rejected it in the past does not mean God can't open their eyes and ears today. A little gentle nudge now and then may show that family and friends may be more open to the word than you think.

This is often true when a believer is married to an unbeliever. It's one thing to share with family who lives on the next block, city or state. But when you live with a person day in and day out you have a tendency to calculate your openings. And there is something to be said for that. In fact, Peter has something to say about this situation.

1PE 3:1-4 Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. 4 Instead, it

should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

In other words, when in this case, the husband sees the reality of the love of Christ in the life of his wife, the Spirit of God can use that to get his attention and soften his heart, and direct him to the truth of the gospel, either through his wife or someone else.

The point is to remain faithful in being that witness in both word and deed; not neglecting either the word or godliness.

And in fact, it was both the love of Christ and His word which evidently spoke to some of the Jews as we see in our text.

JOH 7:31 Still, many in the crowd put their faith in him. They said, "When the Christ comes, will he do more miraculous signs than this man?"

Again, it's not clear that the faith of these people was necessarily a saving faith, but the seed was certainly planted among some in that crowd. They could not deny that Jesus not only talked the talk, but He walked the walk.

And the Spirit of God used that to impress upon some that maybe this is in fact the Christ. And it's the same for us today. If we will continue to walk the walk as we talk the talk of the truth, some will have to conclude that our faith in Christ is real and that maybe they need to consider their position with God.

The Christian life is more than rejoicing in our personal salvation. If that's all it was it would be a very selfish thing. We certainly want to rejoice on a personal level, but in rejoicing we want to invite the world to rejoice with us for all eternity as we extend the way to God through faith in Christ.

He is our only hope and the only hope of the world. Most people are without hope and you just might be surprised to find that in sharing your hope they may also come to place their faith in the God who loves them so much that He would send His Son to die for our sin and rise from the dead defeating sin and the grave. That's a hope worth sharing.

ROM 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let that overflow spill out on to family, friends, and yes even strangers. Remember, all of us were once strangers to each other

and the God of hope. But someone loved us enough to share Christ
and we are no longer strangers to each other or God.

May He be praised forever!