

John 7:32-38 "Will You Come to Where I Am?"

In this section of Scripture we've been dealing with one of the feasts in Israel which reminded the Jews of how God protected and provided for His people. This of course is the feast of Tabernacles or feast of Booths.

It was at this feast where Jesus was teaching the people that He is the One sent from the Father. And as usual, the people reject this proposition. But the Lord continues to reach out to them in love and as we saw last week some of the Jews actually considered Him to be the Messiah.

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?"

And this brings us to our text this morning.

JOH 7:32-38 The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him. 33 Jesus said, "I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me. 34 You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come." 35 The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? 36 What did he mean when he said, 'You will look for me, but you will not find me,' and 'Where I am, you cannot come'?" 37 On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

In many societies around the world it is against the law to have different thoughts than the prescribed thoughts of the leadership. We saw this in Afghanistan when the Taliban ruled with the gun there. People were put to death because they spoke words which were not in alignment with the teachings of the Koran.

This was not uncommon in the former Soviet Union where communist leaders would not allow people to have different views which were contrary to the communist line. And so, if you thought differently there you either kept it to yourself or you shared such thoughts in secret, not in public.

Communist China continues to put people to death today for having views and thoughts which are contrary to their party line.

And unfortunately, even in our country here in the USA, it is increasingly common to have your speech squelched simply because your ideas do not conform with the ideas of those in charge, be it in schools, government or workplaces.

These practices have always existed and in the case before us in our text the Jewish leadership felt inclined not to allow Jesus to speak words which were contrary to their misguided view of what God's word said. And they frowned on the people accepting Christ's word.

Part of the reason was that they sought to "protect" the flock of God from outside influences which could harm the people of God. That sounds quite noble, but the truth of the matter is that this was not the reason for their actions. The bottom line was that it was their authority and position in Israel which was being threatened by Jesus.

It was for selfish reasons that they sought to silence this man who taught the truth of the word of God. And if you're the one in authority you have the ability to wield that power.

JOH 7:32 The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him.

The last thing the leaders of Israel needed were people being convinced that this Jesus was actually the Messiah. Forget that Jesus was miraculously healing the sick. Forget that He had miraculously fed thousands of people. Forget that His teachings were taken straight out of the word of God.

All of these facts had to be put to the side in favor of seeking a selfish ambition to remain popular with Roman rule and the masses than to seek the One true God who was standing in their midst. So, how do you solve this mess? You simply eliminate the opposition. And so, the Jewish rulers send the temple police to arrest Jesus.

Of course, this is not the first time our Lord would find Himself in danger from the authorities, and He responded in a variety of ways during the course of His ministry. There were times when He would simply avoid arrest by fleeing. Other times He would simply walk right past those who would try and harm Him. In all

of these cases they could not lay hands on Him because His time had not yet come.

And it is true in this case as well, but knowing that the temple guard is on their way, in this case, Jesus doesn't flee. He continues to teach.

JOH 7:33-34 Jesus said, "I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me. 34 You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come."

It's interesting that Jesus would say these words because in essence He is saying that what the Sanhedrin desires to do right now by putting Him to death, after He is arrested, He will not allow at this time. But there will be a time in which He will allow it.

As we've said before the time in which all of this is taking place is a mere six months before the crucifixion of our Lord. And what Jesus is doing here, in making this statement, is warning the people that the plans of God are such that the Messiah will be cut off. They are limited in having the Son of God in the flesh in their midst.

But He is saying more than merely that He is with them for a short time. He goes on to say where He is going. "I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come."

The important part of this statement is, "I go to the one who sent me." Time and time again Jesus taught that He was sent from the Father to accomplish the will of the Father. The very fact that He came from the Father tells us that He came from heaven, which makes Him equal with the Father, thus making Him God.

This is why Jesus could say some of the things He does.

JOH 5:21-23 "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so *the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.* 22 Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted *all judgment to the Son,* 23 that *all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.* He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him."

JOH 5:36 "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me."

JOH 6:37-40 "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. 38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

Now remember, Jesus is speaking to the Jews. He is making these very bold statements regarding His mission as He is sent from the Father, the very Father whom the Jews claim to be the only true God.

Unless you're not paying attention there is no way not to come to the conclusion that Jesus is saying that He is the Son of God who came into this world to redeem sinful men. And by necessity this makes Him God, since only God can forgive sin.

And so, when Jesus says in our text that He is going back to the One who sent Him, it should have been clear that Jesus was saying that He was going back to the Father after He accomplished the Father's will.

If one has eyes to see and ears to hear this should have been the normal response. But of course that would assume one had the spiritual ability to understand what Jesus was inferring.

This is why, as I've always said, salvation is not simply an intellectual proposition. Now, obviously the intellect must come into play since we are told that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. But if it were only a matter of hearing with our physical ears and logically concluding with our minds that Jesus is Savior, then the smartest people in the world would all be saved.

But this is not the case. And the reason for this is that salvation is primarily a heart proposition. And the heart of man is that which does not want God on God's terms. This is why the prophet Jeremiah could say, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (JER 17:9)

Well, the answer is that God can understand it. But not only does He understand it He can also change it as only God can. When speaking of the future of the nation Israel, and by implication all men, the Lord says this.

EZE 11:19 I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.

Early on in the life of Israel the Lord made it clear that He would be the One to turn their hearts to Himself.

DEU 30:6 The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.

This is why it is so important to pray that God would turn the hearts of people and give them spiritual ears to hear as we then bring them the very word of God which their physical ears can hear. And as we are faithful to be those witnesses of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, God will be faithful to turn the hearts of sinful men.

But in the case of the Jews in our text the only thing they heard Jesus say was that He was going away and where He went they couldn't come. And so, their response was only natural.

JOH 7:35-36 The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? 36 What did he mean when he said, 'You will look for me, but you will not find me,' and 'Where I am, you cannot come'?"

They literally thought that since the Jewish leadership was seeking the life of Jesus that Jesus was going to capitulate and flee the area of Israel and continue His ministry among a group of people that might not be so biased; in this case those who live among the Greeks.

Now, by implication, what this means is Jesus was going to Jews who didn't live in Israel but lived among the Greeks in places like Greece or that area we know today as Southern Europe, or even Turkey, which in those days was made up of regions like Galatia, Cappadocia and Bithynia.

This is what the NIV means when it says in verse 35, "Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks?"

Other translations put it this way. "He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He?" (NASB)

The word dispersion was a word used among both Jews and Christians explaining how such people were forced, in many cases, to leave Israel and go to foreign lands. In the case of Israel, the Greek word *Diaspora*, which is where our English word for dispersion, did not always mean a forced exile.

Keep in mind that by this time in history there were Jews living all over the known world, which would have included all parts of the Greek speaking world. Remember, that as far back as 722 B.C. the Assyrians had taken part of Israel into captivity. The Babylonians as early as 586 B.C. took more Jews into captivity. Later Pompey took Jews to Rome as slaves. (Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible -- Diaspora)

But by the time Jesus comes onto the scene many Jews have voluntarily migrated to other parts of the Greek speaking world which was conquered by the Romans. Even the apostle Paul was a Roman citizen by birth, growing up in a Greek speaking city known as Tarsus, which is located on the southern coast of modern day Turkey.

The whole point of this observation, that the Jews in Jerusalem thought Jesus was going to the Diaspora, or to the Jews dispersed among the Greek world, was that, since He couldn't crack the strictest of Jews living in the heart of Israel, He was going to give up on them and try to influence the less informed and the less committed Jews in the Greek speaking world.

They saw this as a defeat for Jesus. They saw this as a way for Jesus to continue His ministry without the threat of the Jewish leaders who lived in Jerusalem, not in some remote part of Italy, or Asia Minor.

But again, they missed the whole point that Jesus was making. He was speaking of spiritual realities and they were not seeing or hearing with spiritual faculties.

Jesus is talking about going back to join the Father in heaven but they think He's taking a trip to Athens. And since they weren't willing to leave Israel it only made sense that they could not go where He was going.

But Jesus is not deterred from His mission to continue to teach the people about the kingdom of God and the Messiah, despite their hard hearts and ignorance of the Scriptures.

JOH 7:37-38 On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

Of all of the things Jesus could have said on the last day of the feast this statement is really instructive and in the context of this feast really made sense.

Again, a little history helps. The feast of Tabernacles lasted eight days.

LEV 23:34-36 "Say to the Israelites: 'On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the LORD'S Feast of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. 35 The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. 36 For seven days present offerings made to the LORD by fire, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present an offering made to the LORD by fire. It is the closing assembly; do no regular work.

Now, it was traditional throughout the first seven days of the feast to start each day with a ceremony known as the water-pouring.

According to F.F. Bruce in his commentary on John he points out that this water-pouring, though not mentioned in the Old Testament Scriptures, was practiced by the Jews for at least two hundred years before the time of Christ, and probably went further back than that.

"This ceremony, which was intended to acknowledge God's goodness in sending rain and to ensure a plentiful supply for the following season, was enacted at dawn on the first seven days of the festival.

.... A procession led by a priest went down to the pool of Siloam, where a golden pitcher was filled with water, and returned to the temple as the morning sacrifice was being offered. It appears that the ceremony was not enacted on the eighth day, although a prayer for rain was recited."

And so, what makes our Lord's statement so important here is that He is saying that as much as the Jews depend on God for rain to water their crops and create an abundant blessing for the nation, and satisfy their thirst, Jesus comes along and says, "I'm the only one who can truly satisfy your thirst."

JOH 7:37-38 On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

Now, the first thing we notice here is that this is probably one of the most intense times in the ministry of Jesus. His life is being sought. The temple guard have been sent to arrest Him. And yet, instead of timidly speaking to the crowds, He stands up and in a loud voice makes this proclamation.

Like one who climbs a mountain and shouts to those below Jesus fulfills His mission to bring the good news of one who can be satisfied with spiritual water.

ISA 40:9 You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!"

Jesus Christ is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the Jews would not accept it. No matter how loud He shouted they would not listen. But He continued to give them the message right up to His death on the cross. Along with David, Jesus would fulfill His ministry as He taught the children of Israel.

PSA 40:9-10 I proclaim righteousness in the great assembly; I do not seal my lips, as you know, O LORD. 10 I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and salvation. I do not conceal your love and your truth from the great assembly.

In one sense, it did not make any difference to Jesus if the Jews rejected the truth or Him. His mission did not depend on what they accepted from Him, but on what the Father told Him to say and do.

EZE 2:3-5 He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day. 4 The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says.' 5 And whether they listen or fail to listen - for they are a rebellious house - they will know that a prophet has been among them."

You and I in Christ have been given a ministry of reconciliation to the world, which is just as obstinate and stubborn as Israel was and is. But we are commanded by our Great Shepherd to lead people to

Christ through His gospel. And metaphorically, or in the case of some, literally, we are to shout it from the mountain tops and not be afraid of their response.

We are to declare the greatness of God and His great salvation found in Christ. And though the world may tempt us to be quiet, we must never stop giving people the truth by what we say and by what we do to bring honor and glory to our God, who says, go into all the world with My message of hope.

Jesus says, [in light of the water-pouring ceremony] "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

The water-pouring is acknowledged by the Jews in this ceremony as coming from the hand of God and now Jesus says, "I want to pour out on you living water to eternal life. This is kingdom language for the salvation that God offers to the world.

This is what the prophet Isaiah records for us and which Jesus may have had in mind when He spoke these words to the Jews.

ISA 55:1 "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

This is the same language He used with the woman at the well.

JOH 4:14 "... whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Jesus always stayed on message whether He was speaking to the woman at the well, or to the Jews who were more interested in their stomachs than their souls.

JOH 6:35 "... Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

Only God can satisfy for eternity. This world may satisfy for a short time, but would you gain the whole world for seventy, eighty or ninety years, and lose your soul for eternity in hell?

The Jews didn't understand the eternal ramifications of their decision to reject Christ. In fact, they were so incensed at the words of Christ that they were willing to arrest Him and kill Him.

And yet, knowing this, Jesus stands up in love and shouts out the truth which can bring them back to the Father.

You talk about the love of Christ. He loves His enemies and is still willing to die for them. Remember, the apostle Paul, who was once known as Saul the Pharisee, was an enemy of Christ and was willing to participate in the death of Stephen. It was after the resurrected Christ came to Saul and gave Him eternal life that Saul began to realize what grace was extended to him. He would later write 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.

To the Corinthians Paul said this.

2CO 5:18-20 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

This is the message of hope we have. This is the living water who is Christ that we shout from the mountain tops. And this is the love of God that even David had to glory in.

PSA 36:7-10 How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. 8 They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. 9 For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light. 10 Continue your love to those who know you, your righteousness to the upright in heart.

If you know Him walk in His life and light in the power of His Spirit. If you don't listen to what our risen Lord Jesus says in Revelation.

REV 22:17 "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life."