



Sunday, January 10, 2021

Gospel of John Series, Sermon #26 "Divine Timing"

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John 7:1-13 (King James Version)

Today, we return to the Gospel of John. I love the Advent and Christmas seasons, but I'm ready to get back into this book. When you preach expository sermons (verse by verse), you can only handle so many verses at one time. I'm moving as quickly as I can but doing so carefully so you and I can understand the Word of God. I'm learning just as you are!

The Gospel of John is the account of Jesus' life through the disciple, John's eyes. He lived the longest of the disciples—probably into his nineties. He walked with Jesus in His earthly ministry probably in his late twenties or early thirties. God gave John fifty years to ponder and streamline the story of Jesus' life. When John was older, God moved on his heart to write these words under the inspiration of the spirit. Remember, John himself says this is an account of high water marks of Jesus' life and ministry. If all the things He did in His thirty-three years were written down, the world could not contain all the books. Chapter 6 (the longest in this Gospel) is the "preacher's chapter"—we saw the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus walking on the water to His disciples during a storm, Him being the Bread of Life—to name a few. The sermons just flow from that Chapter. Chapter 7 is a bit different—it doesn't grab your attention like 6 did but it's very important because it leads us step by step to the cross that Jesus would endure for the sin of the world, including yours and mine.

The major point I want you to take away from the sermon today: Every day of Jesus' life was on a divine timetable. God Almighty, the Father, set Jesus' life on a course. Every meeting, activity, miracle, word, and sermon was according to a divine timetable set before Him by His Father God. We know God's plan, calendar, and cross could not be rushed nor altered. Jesus was to follow His Father God in every step of His earthly life, and He did.

¹After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. ²Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. ³His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. ⁴For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. ⁵For neither did his brethren believe in him. ⁶Then Jesus said unto them, **My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready.** ⁷**The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.** ⁸**Go ye up into this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.** ⁹When he said these words unto them, he abode *still* in Galilee. ¹⁰But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. ¹¹Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he? ¹²And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people. ¹³Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews."

Note that John sets a time frame; refer back to Chapter 6:4. “And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.” Chapter 7 occurs at the Feast of Tabernacles. Passover coincides with our Easter; Jesus was killed on the cross during Passover. The Feast of Tabernacles is in October. Between Chapters 6 and 7 is a six month span of time which John does not record. The Feast of Tabernacles is the Jewish holiday that remembers the Israel’s journey in the wilderness when they were released from slavery in Egypt. It not only celebrates freedom from slavery but the time of harvest. As Jerusalem celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles it filled up with people from all over the world; it was very crowded with those worshipping God and taking part in the festivities which lasted seven days.

While Jerusalem is celebrating at the start of this Chapter, Jesus is not in a festive mood. It’s a difficult time for Him; His ministry is facing more and more opposition. Pressure is building against Him as the Man of God and Savior of the world. He’s not accepted freely; refer to John 6:66 “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” Jesus’ heart was broken from losing them. Refer to John 5:16 where the plan started against Him from healing of the crippled man at Bethesda: “And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus and sought to slay him...” People began plotting to rid the world of this one who was bringing words against their sedentary lifestyles, challenging them, calling them evil. In Chapter 7, Jesus now had to guard His life. We’ve been guarding our lives during this COVID pandemic. Jesus is not going to Jerusalem because that’s where the death threats are the strongest. He’s up north in Galilee; the Feast of Tabernacles takes place eighty miles south. He knows if He goes there His life would be in danger; He also knows it’s not His time to die yet. Near the Sea of Galilee, Jesus’ biological brothers approach Him—James, Joses, Simon, and Jude—they’re His half-brothers.

Look at John 7:5. These brothers were lost; they did not come to Jesus as Lord and Savior. Although they grew up with Him, and heard about His birth, the manger, etc. they could not come to Him as Savior. Their unbelief fulfills Old Testament prophecy: Psalm 69:8 “I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother’s children.” We know James and Jude did come to Jesus; we have word of their salvation in the two letters that bear their names. In today’s passage they taunt Him and bring opposition—Hey Jesus, go on down to Jerusalem and pull out a few of your miracles. Show them You are God; don’t sit up here in Galilee in secret. They’re belittling Him; not believing He’s the Son of God. Read verse 6. Jesus says He’s not hiding, not scared of men or a death threat—it’s just not God’s timing for Me to go to Jerusalem yet. Read verse 7. The world does not hate lost people; in a majority sense, the world is led by lost people. If you’re opposed to Him, the world agrees. Jesus tells His brothers the world can’t hate them because they’re living like them. The world hates Me, My word, and when I call “evil” evil. The world hates it when I tell you the truth about what sin is and what it means to be away from God the Father. It’s still true today. If we stand up and rightly preach, teach, and live God’s Word against the evils of the world this day, don’t think Clifford Baptist Church would get an award for it. The world is going to hate and oppose anyone who represents Jesus the Christ and stands with Him.

In verse 8 He tells His brothers to go on down to Jerusalem. They do go there, but Jesus tarries and waits behind in Galilee. Read verse 10. Did Jesus change His mind about going? Absolutely not! God just tapped Him on the shoulder and said now’s the time. So Jesus obeyed His Father and was not fearful; He arrived in secret—no fanfare. Remember at this point in time, Jesus’ ministry was extremely high profile.

He performed miracles, preached the Word of God, fed multitudes, and thousands of lives were touched by the Savior of the world. No one knew He was in Jerusalem, yet they were talking about Him—“murmuring.” I defined this word for you a few sermons ago—murmuring is when people talk quietly amongst themselves so as not to be heard by others. As Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, some people loved Him, some tried to figure Him out, some were almost ready to accept Him, and others downright hated Him and wanted Him dead. Everyone knew He was a “wanted” man. Everyone knew there was a price on His head and that the Jews wanted Him dead and were seeking to kill Him. In verse 13 people avoided talking about Him for fear of being heard, being associated with Him, and being punished like Him.

What does today’s Scripture teach us about being people of God? I’ve gleaned three predominant truths: **(1)** Jesus lived on God’s divine timetable and was intent on following God’s leading. His birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection were timed to the moment by God Almighty. To quote from J. Vernon McGee with his sense of humor, he said when that little donkey arrived in Bethlehem carrying Mary, he was more on time in God’s will than the best jet airplane has ever been coming into an airport! That was God’s timing for Him to be born, and He lived His life that way. I believe your life and mine also have a divine timetable; I believe God has a plan for every single one of us. Read the opening to the prophecy of Jeremiah—before he was conceived and born, Jesus said He had a plan for him. I doubt Jeremiah was different than any one of us. This plan cannot be enacted until Jesus Christ lives in your heart as your Savior. Until we know Him, our life will meander around in lostness and head to a destination of hell. We spend a lot of time planning for the future. I think we’re all gifted by God to look at the future and plan for it; that’s OK. Remember Jesus’ words in Matthew 6:34 (from the Common English Bible) “Stop worrying about tomorrow because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” Jesus says it’s OK to plan, but don’t put so much stock in tomorrow that you lose the value of today. There’s something we need to be doing for His ministry today! We have to give Him our very best every day because God has a divine purpose for your day today. **(2)** The unsaved world is not a fan of Jesus Christ and the church. I can sense Jesus’ sorrow on His shoulders as He deals with His brothers—being shunned, the disciples He lost who won’t come back, His ministry being opposed, the threat of death. Have you ever been shunned, made fun of as a child of God? Has your circle of friends abandoned you because of unclean jokes or language you want no part of? I think we’ve all been “culled out” as believers of Christ and are treated differently. Stay true to Him, even when the world rejects you, your workplace rejects you, your friends reject you. He knows where you are because He’s been there. **(3)** I believe there are two kinds of churches. First, one that will do all it can to adapt to the world—to bring the world inside its doors. This church wants to stay acceptable, comfortable, conformable, and accountable to the world so nobody is challenged. When folks gather in the sanctuary, their toes are never stepped on. They can perform gay marriages, ordain gay ministers, and the church adapts. Woe to that church that stands in judgment one day; woe to that church that compromises and sugar coats His Word. We need to stand strong, true, and tall on the Word of God no matter what the world throws our way. I believe the church is poised now for much more opposition. There are some areas in the world where preachers are forbidden to preach on certain things from the Word; it’s coming to us. When that time comes to the United States of America, I will defy the law. I know two other pastors who will as well. Praise God! The second kind of church follows God’s thinking, His law, and Word—not the world but the Word. We’re not led by comfort and conformity, but we concentrate on change, commitment, and

sacrifice for whatever the Lord leads us or asks us to do. We'll follow Him no matter the cost. Jesus says the world will not love that kind of church; He says I will not leave that type of church.

If we're going to make an impact and a difference in this world, think of Jesus calling us the "salt of the earth." Salt changes flavor and texture. If we're to be agents of change, we stand on the Word and stand above the world because we represent Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It's easy for us to worship in this room today because we all believe. The challenge comes when we walk out these doors and into the world. We're going to stand on the truth that Jesus Christ has us as His representatives so others can see Him in us, be led to the Savior and His forgiveness and to His kingdom and away from hell to heaven. While the true church needs to be together in this challenge, it comes by individual commitment. I don't have the authority to order this church to be that way. But I, for one, am going to stand on the Word of God no matter what. Will you join me there? When we all say Yes!—that's when we become the church that changes the world! When He jells us together in that good news that we indeed can be His people in this world. Pray for Clifford Baptist Church to be that church! Do your part in that commitment; nobody else can take your place, fill your ministry, has your talents, to fulfill that divine purpose.

If you've never received Jesus as your Savior, I cannot close this sermon until I give you an invitation that doesn't belong to me—it belongs to Him and is given by Him. Jesus said all of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) but I went to the cross and died for you—shed my blood, my body broken—that you might be forgiven. The perfect Lamb of God died in your place on the cross. The third day I rose from the dead to give you eternal life. I forgive you, I adopt you as My son or daughter, and will keep you forever if you make one decision: "Lord Jesus, I'm a sinner and put all my sin at the foot of Your cross. I ask forgiveness and for You to be my Savior. I open my heart and life to You. No matter where the world might go, I will walk with You as You walk with me. I'm going to serve, represent, and worship You. One day when You take me home, I want to belong to You." Make this decision today—publicly come, just as He publicly died on the cross. He'll save you no matter where you are if you'll just say "Yes" to Him. It's an important day.

Let's ask God's blessing: Father God, thank You for these words. When Jesus said the world hates Me, it sent chills down my spine. I realize, Lord, if I'm going to stand for you the world won't like me either. I'll do whatever I can by God's timing, will, and plan for me to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. Am I perfect? Absolutely not! I'm a sinner, a human, and I want to grow every day in walking, talking, and being like You. I want to stand above the world and represent the Word of God. I pray I have brothers and sisters who surround me here and by media who say they want to make that same commitment. Wherever I am and whoever I'm with, I want to represent You because You're my Savior and King and sit on the throne of my heart. I pray we'll recommit our lives to that. When we do so individually, You will jell us and join us as a church so we'll take that message into the world so it might be changed through the love of Christ. If there's one here today who needs You as Savior, I pray today's that day when he or she will say "Lord Jesus, I need You as my Savior. I'm a sinner and need to lay all that down and come to You. Today, Lord, I come asking Your forgiveness through the old rugged cross." Bless us in these moments, I pray. Amen.