



Sunday, January 17, 2021

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Gospel of John Series, Sermon #27 “The Reality of Knowing Jesus”

John 7:14-31 (King James Version)

Good morning! Glad to have everyone here—in person or via media. I told the early service that my two grandsons don't know this as Clifford Baptist Church but call it “Papa's Church!” (That has a nice ring to it!) But this is neither my church nor yours; it's Jesus' church. He gave His life and is risen from the grave to establish this church, give it life, guidance, ministry, and a future. Today we give honor, praise, and glory to the One who deserves it—Jesus Christ, the Savior. We're thankful to have the honor and privilege to be part of His outreach into the world. Just as Jesus established a ministry, we are part of His ongoing ministry He started over two thousand years ago. As we gather here today, turn in your Bibles to John 7.

This account of Jesus' life was written by John, the disciple who lived the longest. He was there when Jesus' earthly ministry began and was called to walk with Him. He was there to see Him as the Son of God. He was there to see Jesus as the greatest preacher the world has ever known or ever will know. He was there to walk with Him to see the miracles—even raising someone to new life. He was there to see Jesus as one of the greatest loves of the world but also to see Him as one of the most hated men who ever lived. He was there to see Him die on the cross, to see Him in resurrection. God allowed John to be part of Jesus' life and Jesus' life to be part of John's so he could write this description of His life. He gave us the high points of Jesus' life that we might know Him as our personal Lord and Savior; it's a witnessing tool.

In my last sermon, Jesus is far north. If you remember, there's a division in the Holy Land. Far north is the Sea of Galilee; southward is Jerusalem and Bethlehem. There's about 80-90 miles between Galilee and Jerusalem. Jesus is in Galilee talking to His brothers. Interesting but sad—His earthly brothers with whom He grew up were not believers. Some did come to believe—two letters in the Bible, James and Jude, bear their names. When we see His brothers speaking to Him early in Chapter 7, they taunt Him, challenge, and speak negatively to Him. They say, “Jesus, the Feast of Tabernacles, one of the High Holy Days of the Jewish faith, is taking place right now in Jerusalem. You need to go there and pull out a few of your fancy miracles and show those people who you are!” The brothers do go to Jerusalem, but Jesus does not accompany them. He goes according to God's timing, about mid-week during the seven-day Feast. Much of the world is in Jerusalem; a High Holy Day causes them to gather there. Residents and religious leaders who know Jesus but hate Him are there. They don't know He's coming to Jerusalem.

Today's Scripture is very challenging. This church belongs to Jesus Christ, Amen? and this Word belongs to Him! Every word is important, and when a preacher gets to a difficult passage we just don't want to go to a sweeter one. We're going to tackle this one today and see how it speaks to us; it has a great message we need to hear. Jesus arrives in Jerusalem secretly; His own brothers don't know He's arrived. I'm reading today's passage in sections. First are verses 14-19: ¹⁴Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught. ¹⁵And the Jews marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? ¹⁶Jesus answered them and said, **My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. ¹⁷If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. ¹⁸He that speaketh of**

himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. ¹⁹Did not Moses give you the law and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?"

So Jesus makes a very public appearance—going right to the center of the temple; He went from secret to the most public place He could be. He teaches the Word of God to any who will listen—the Jewish leaders, community members, etc. The Jewish leaders with all their education say among themselves “How can this uneducated man, who’s never been to a school like us, teach the Word so incisively, so correctly?” Sadly, these Jewish men were teaching the Word of God out of their education and head knowledge; they had no “heart” connection with Him. These men hated Jesus, but He did not hate them in return. I believe He had a holy sorrow for them. I’m a firm believer in education; it’s very important. But book learning cannot replace a heart that’s on fire for the Word of God. It can help us understand but it can’t replace the connection with our Savior wanting us to have a passion in preaching His Word and give us the truth. My prayer throughout the week and especially Sunday morning is “God Almighty, please lead me to preach Your truth. Do not allow me to speak one word that could mislead someone to understand Your truth.” I believe a heart connected to Jesus Christ is the beginning of good teaching—be it a Sunday School class or to a mission group. These teachers of the law did not have that heart.

In verses 16-19 the teachers criticize Jesus but He answers them: “What I teach is really not my word. I’m teaching you the word that God the Father has given me to bring to you.” Read verse 16. He says my teaching doesn’t belong to Me; it belongs to God the Father who sent Me to teach you His word. We know that God the Father sent His Son from heaven in order to bring us the holy word God wants us to know. Jesus teaches us what God would have us to know. Read verse 18. Remember, Jesus is in the temple and all these religious leaders are surrounding Him and this is a statement toward them. In sorrow He says if you teach God’s word to your honor, to get rich, to wear the fancy robes and get saluted in the market place, you are not teaching the Word of God. You’re teaching something selfish and directed to yourself. This still applies today: People can teach the Word of God to their own honor. I know there are preachers throughout this country who make millions preaching the Word of God—but whose honor are they seeking? To me, there’s something basically wrong with a preacher who lives in a million dollar mansion preaching about Jesus who didn’t have a home of His own! Several months ago I happened to see on TV a plea from a preacher asking for money to replace his jet! Jesus says in verse 18 that He sought no fame for Himself; He didn’t seek to make money. He only had one set of clothes to wear. His life was about lifting up the Father. “My life is about making sure you understand the truth of what the Father is teaching through me.” Read verse 19. He says “You teach the law but don’t live the law. You preach but don’t practice what you preach. You give to the people but don’t live it yourself; you have no desire to have that holy connection with God. You’re breaking His law and seek to kill Me because I’m bringing you the truth.” Here, Jesus is in the temple saying all this and the hatred among the leaders grows because He’s calling them out. He says “You’re fat, lazy, living out of the will of God, and making a living on falsity in preaching His word.” Read the next section:

²⁰The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee? ²¹Jesus answered and said unto them, **I have done one work, and ye all marvel. ²²Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers) and ye on the Sabbath day circumcise a man.** To paraphrase: Jesus said “I healed a man on the Sabbath (Chapter 5) at the pool of Bethesda. He was crippled for many years and then he took his bed and walked; it was a miracle of a medical healing. The Jewish leaders didn’t

praise God because the man was healed but accused Me of healing on the Sabbath. They said You cannot work on the Sabbath but you performed a medical miracle; therefore, You have broken the law and we want to kill You.” The religious leaders take this one instance out of Jesus’ life and give Him a death sentence. Jesus rebuts with this: “In the Bible, God gave Israel the mark of circumcision. When a male Israelite child is eight days old, you take that child to the temple and he’ll be circumcised there—it’s a medical, surgical procedure. For every baby born on a Friday, that next Saturday eight days away, the parents take the baby to the temple and you take care of that baby medically by the law on the Sabbath day. You’re breaking the same law you’re accusing Me of breaking!” Jesus sees them as being hypocritical—having a double standard. Next read verses 25-27: ²⁵“Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? ²⁶But, lo, he speaketh boldly and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? ²⁷Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.” So everyone in the temple hears Jesus coming against and speaking boldly to the Jewish leaders. The people think—don’t they know who He is? They figure it out—this is the Son of God! He’s teaching us the truth and speaking the Word of God. Don’t these religious leaders know we’re hearing the Word of God directly from the Son of God, the Savior? Now read:

²⁸“Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught saying, **Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.** ²⁹**But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me.** ³⁰Then they sought to take him but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. ³¹And many of the people believed on him and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?” What I want you to picture is an intense, overpowering desire of Jesus to make Himself known to the people who are searching for the Savior. He says “Yes, I’m the carpenter’s son from Nazareth but God Almighty sent me to you. By the plan of God, I stepped out of heaven. God the Father sent me to the manger and allowed Me to live on this earth a sinless life. I came from God the Father to you; I came that you might know His love and salvation. I came that you might have a living, growing relationship with Him through Me, the Son of God. That’s why I’m here.” Jesus has this burning desire for people to see Him as the Savior. Why? Because the cross is getting closer, and closer, and closer. Jesus wants to make Himself known far beyond a young boy as being the Son of God. As Jesus tells them this truth, guards come to subdue Him but God wouldn’t allow them to touch Him. It was not His time for the cross, not His time to die as a sacrifice yet. He’s on a holy divine timetable, and God is in control of every second of Jesus’ life. Many in that moment believed Him. While the religious leaders hated him more, many at the temple came to Him as Savior.

This is a tough Scripture; it’s not easy to explain. I hope God has given me the clarity so you could understand it. What’s the main point of today’s passage? There’s a huge, mighty! difference in knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus. I believe that can be used by Satan as one of the greatest deceptions that will give hell to people by surprise. The Pharisees were deceived; the teachers of the law were deceived—all they needed to do is get their education, put their degree on the wall, and teach the Word of God from their heads, not their hearts. Jesus said you’re deceived and hell-bound because of it! He doesn’t hate them but feels sorry for them. One day there will be multitudes standing before Jesus and say “Jesus, I knew you. I was there in church for Your birthday and resurrection. I know some facts about Your life and some words in the Bible. I’ve tried to keep You on the edge of my life; tried to be good, moral, and kind. Jesus, when You said You loved the world I depended on that. “For God so loved the world...”—I’m included in that group, aren’t I? I thought I was good enough for heaven and have eternal life. I prayed, especially when I was in trouble. I tried

to make up for being bad by being extra good for a bit.” Let me give you Jesus’ words to that from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:21-23. “**²¹Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.**” There’s a great, mighty difference in knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus in a personal relationship. That’s the whole context of what we’ve studied today.

Do you know Him? Do you truly have a relationship with Him—walking with Him, talking with Him, growing with Him? It’s the most serious and eternal question I’m asking you today. I’m not asking if you’re good; I’m glad you’re in church. I’m not asking if you’re moral. I’m asking do you have a personal, saving, growing relationship with Jesus. Knowing Him is not part-time. Knowing Jesus is not keeping one foot in the spiritual world and one foot in the secular world. It’s giving everything you have to Him in surrender. It’s total following and dependence on Him. It’s looking to Him to see how He wants us to live. Knowing Jesus—it’s all or nothing! There’s no in-between; no percentage in knowing Him. You know Him 100% or 0%. The challenge of today’s Scripture is—**Do you know Him?** Do you want to know Him more deeply? It’s total surrender; I say that without hesitation because that’s what the Bible teaches us. “All to Jesus I surrender; all to Him I freely give.” Believer, does this describe your life today? As I stand in this pulpit, I’m not pointing a finger. I’m not perfect in this; I still have a lot of growing to do. There are ways I still need to grow closer to my Savior. My daily prayer and desire is to be on that journey with my Lord. Believers, is that your prayer today? Yes, I want to know You more and love You more deeply. I want to surrender everything I have to you—not just little pieces of my life. I pray we’ll rededicate our lives to this decision.

Today if you don’t know Him as Savior I want to remind you of this: Jesus did come to save you. Jesus did not come to this earth to make a million dollars. He didn’t come to build Himself a huge mansion or have a large wardrobe; He only had one set of clothes. He didn’t come for worldly fame. He came for one reason—to save you, a lost sheep. He came for me, too. He came, laying aside His glory and emptying Himself that He might find you and me. If you need Him today, He came that you might know the truth: That you can be a son or daughter of God by faith in the Savior, Jesus the Christ. He is the Way, He is the Truth, He is the Life.

Let Us Pray: Our Father, our God, thank You for these moments. This has been a challenging Scripture for me; I prayed about it all week long that You would give me the clarity that I lack humanly. I pray, Father, where I have failed You have filled in the blanks and Your truth is made known. Lord, there’s a great difference in knowing about You—trying to live a good life—and knowing You in a personal way with forgiveness. I pray every person here and within the sound of my voice will come to Jesus as Lord and Savior and to have a relationship that will continue to grow with You. Bless us in this precious moment of decision. We love You, and we’re grateful to be in Your presence. In Jesus’ precious name. Amen.