



Sunday, January 24, 2021

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Gospel of John Series, Sermon #28 “The Failure of Part-Time Faith” John 7:32-44 (King James Version)

Good morning, it’s great to be together today! The last couple of Sundays have been the best attended in since COVID began. We’re glad to be able to open and read our Bibles freely and trust the Word of God.

We continue our series in the Gospel of John. He was one of Jesus’ most trusted friends and disciples. He was called to walk with Him three years in His earthly ministry. After that ministry was completed and when Jesus went to the cross, rose from the grave, some fifty years passed before John recorded these words under the inspiration of God. He did not give us the full account of Jesus’ life, just the “high water” marks. John himself said if all those things were written about Jesus’ life, it would fill the world with books. This is John’s witnessing tool to bring the people of the world to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

As Chapter 7 opens, Jesus is in Galilee—far north in the Holy Land. He’s having a conversation with His biological brothers, but there was a breakdown in their relationship as found in verse 5: “For neither did his brethren believe in him.” They did not believe Him as Savior and that His words were total truth, so Jesus was concerned about His own unsaved family members. How many of us have unsaved family members we’re concerned about? Jesus’ own brothers taunt and tease Him; they suggest He go to Jerusalem about eighty miles away for the Feast of Tabernacles and “show off” some of His miracles to the multitudes there. The cross is looming large and coming soon. Jesus’ ministry is picking up passion, force, momentum; He feels the weight of the cross every passing day. Jesus is on a divine time schedule, set by God the Father. He was not going to be early nor would He be late to His cross. Jesus does leave Galilee, travels to Jerusalem, and arrives at the Feast of Tabernacles discreetly and quietly mid-week of the seven day feast. At this point, His ministry had gained a lot of traction and His popularity was increasing. Believers were coming to Him and professing their faith. The number of people knowing Him as Savior was growing exponentially. On the other hand, a group of detractors was against Him, particularly the religious leaders of the Jewish faith—the scribes, Pharisees, leaders of temple worship. They not only disliked Jesus, they hated Him and were devising a plan to kill Him and remove Him from the face of the earth. Why did they hate Him so much? Because Jesus was exposing them as fakes. He was saying the religious leaders are teaching Scripture out of their heads but there’s no connection to God in their hearts. There’s nothing spiritual about them; they wear their fancy robes, have their diplomas on the wall, get saluted in the market places as religious leaders. But they’re fake, they’re phonies, they’re actors! Jesus would not die one second before God’s will was carried out and fulfilled in His life.

Before I read the passage, know that Jesus’ message, invitation of salvation, and His warning about hell is getting more intense each day because the cross is coming. He’s calling people to faith but is also acknowledging those who reject Him because hell is going to be a true place for them. He’s being honest, truthful, and passionate about the message of salvation. His voice is rising now—higher and louder—to call people in to the truth of God. In our terminology, Jesus is saying there’s no time to be “wishy-washy.” You either choose Me or reject Me; there’s no middle ground. It’s all or nothing! Let’s read:

“³²The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him. ³³Then Jesus said unto them, **Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go unto him that sent me.** ³⁴**Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.** ³⁵Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles and teach the Gentiles? ³⁶What manner of saying is this that he said Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come? ³⁷In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, **If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.** ³⁸**He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.** ³⁹(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given: because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

In verse 14, Jesus makes these statements very publicly on the temple grounds at the Feast of Tabernacles. The world is listening to what He’s saying, proclaiming who He is, and calling them to put their faith and trust in Him as the Son of God. In verse 32, the religious leaders say Jesus is becoming too popular in the temple. They call the guards to take Him out so His voice will no longer be heard. God would not allow that to happen. The guards couldn’t touch Him; no one could drag Him out because God Almighty said it’s not time to have my Son removed from the scene. Jesus was able to stay because of God’s permission, not man’s. Read verse 33—He says I won’t be here much longer. He says if you reject Me now, there will come a time when you’ll never find Me again. You won’t be allowed to enter the place I will be. You’ll be lost and forever separated from Me. I’m giving you an opportunity now that won’t be repeated forever. Decide now! Read 37-38. The high point of the Feast of Tabernacles among the Jews is remembering back in the days of the exodus when Israel was released from slavery in Egypt. God provided water to them as they wandered, even in the desert, that they might live. During the Feast, the priests would go through the crowds and sprinkle water symbolic of the water God gave to Israel. Jesus then speaks out to say if you come to Me now, I’ll give you “living water”—water of eternity, life, of forgiveness. This is what He said to the woman at the well in Chapter 4. Drink My water, and you’ll never thirst again; drink My water, and you’ll have purpose, satisfaction, eternal peace. Verse 38 reminds me of Psalm 23...“my cup runneth over...” When we drink the living water of Jesus Christ, He gives us so much joy, peace, grace that it flows out of us to witness to others to know Jesus as Lord and Savior.

If you and I know Him, we will be a witness for Him. There’s no choice to be made...I’ll make a decision whether or not to be a witness. I’ll make a decision whether or not to represent Him where I live and work. I’ll make a decision whether I’ll speak the name of Jesus. When we know Him, that living water will flow out of us and we will be a witness. We will get off the sofa and will do something for Him in ministry and mission. We will look for opportunities to reach out. Our desire together is to honor and serve Him in all that we do. It’s important to realize these words are for each individual believer—that we’ll do what God calls us to do in our lives. We want the living water to flow from this church into the world to reach the lost. One of the most accurate tests to determine if you’re truly a believer is: Do you have a passion and desire for people to know Jesus as Lord and Savior? If you don’t care, that says where the Holy Spirit is with you—it’s not there. When the Holy Spirit lives in us, that living water coming from us will flow to see people saved. Do you want to see your family saved? Your circle of friends saved? Your classmates saved? Do you want others to know the love of Christ like you? These

questions define our faith in Christ. I love to see young people saved and baptized; children coming to Him as Lord and Savior. Church, remember that moment in their lives is the beginning of a journey. As a church and families, we need to build them up and teach them what it means to allow the living water to be stirred in them so they can touch the world for Jesus Christ. It pains my pastor's heart when I see parents bring children to church, they get baptized, and then the family just disappears. It's sad; we need to be training those children in godly living and teaching them the Word of God. We need to be mentoring them as a church in the faith so they will develop as witnesses. Even a six-year old can understand and be a witness for Christ. As generations come and go, they'll take my place and yours also. We want to leave witnesses behind, don't we? We have a holy charge as a church to help our youngsters understand the living water that flows through them so that they can touch the world. Our stand for Christ and His word is crucial right now for the future.

Scripture also says today that Jesus is laying all this on the line—you either follow Me, in total surrender and faith with no compromise, or you don't follow Me at all. It's an all or nothing invitation. You cannot come to Me where I am if you don't follow Me completely. Read verse 39. As Jesus speaks these words in today's passage, He's speaking to a crowd who doesn't know the cross is coming or the resurrection three days later. He speaks these words before Pentecost when the church is born and the Holy Spirit is given to the church. They don't have the spirit the church will receive in days to come. But we have a huge advantage today as we read these words because we're on this side of the cross and resurrection. We have the Holy Spirit of God living in us as He gave it to the church. We understand that Jesus Christ can change the heart and the world. We're part of that arm of outreach that goes into the world to change it in love of Christ. So Jesus sums it up: You accept Me or reject Me. You'll come live with Me or never see Me again. He warns of hell and an eternal separation from Him that will never end. There's no such thing as part-time commitment. We give Him all, or we give Him nothing.

How do the people at the temple react to this? As with us today, their reaction was mixed. Let's finish the Scripture: ⁴⁰Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. ⁴¹Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? ⁴²Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David and out of the town of Bethlehem where David was? ⁴³So there was a division among the people because of him. ⁴⁴And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him." According to verse 40, many people believed He was a prophet and had a connection with God. The word He speaks is a word of truth coming from God, but they hadn't quite taken that last step to receive Him as Savior. The other group of people said "This is the Christ"—they had accepted Him and had the living water and followed Him as saved individuals. They're secure in their belief and who He is. Then another group was full of doubts and questions; they didn't even know where He was born and the lineage of David. So many people let doubts make their decision about Christ. Doubt is one of Satan's many tools. He raised doubt in Adam and Eve's minds: Did God really say He was sovereign? Don't you think if you disobey you could become more like Him? You can doubt God's word. Satan used that right here in Chapter 7. He puts in people's minds to think why doesn't God let me live the way I want to without all these guidelines. If Jesus is real, why do I still have troubles? Why doesn't He deliver me from life's hardships? If He's totally forgiving, why doesn't He give forgiveness to everybody? If Jesus wants to give me true freedom, why live His way?

Here's the truth if you're seeking Him and wanting to know if He's real or if you've walked away from Him, rejected Him: Jesus wants and will accept no less—He wants to hear each individual say, “Lord, here is my life—sin and all. I lay everything I have and everything I am before You—my talent, possessions, family, work—in faith and in trust. I believe You did go to the cross to take away my sin, even if I was the only person on earth because You love me that much. I want to invest my life in You; give You my heart and witness for You. I want to live in total commitment Your way—lay aside my will so Your will can be done in me. I don't want to live half the week in the world and then on Sunday be in church. All of me belongs to You, all the time. Believers, this is what He wants to hear from us. I want to continue to grow in that path and give everything I have to Him. I want His will to be my will and my will to be gone! I want to be with Jesus, do you? I want to be with Him now and for eternity! I want His living water to roll out of me as a witness—I want it for you and our church.

If you've never come to Him as Lord and Savior, He wants you as His son or daughter. He wants you to come today and lay it all down before Him and say “Lord Jesus, all of me will belong to You.” Wherever you are today and if you've never given your heart to Him, tell Him that you want His will to be yours. I love the hymn we sang “I Rather Have Jesus than anything this world could offer.” What a great follow-up to this sermon. When it's all said and done, can that be our final statement—I rather have Jesus? We all follow something—politics, etc. but whatever we do in life, Jesus is the key to everything we do and everything we believe. I pray we'll rededicate our lives to Him today and accept His living water that will flow out of us to reach someone else.

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Let Us Pray: Our Father, our God, thank You for these moments. Jesus challenges all of us from hearing today's Scripture. I pray we will take His message today—follow me, it's all or nothing. As a believer, I don't want to play a game nor keep a foot in the world and one in the church. I want all of me to belong to You. I want living water to flow from me to witness to You and draw others to the Savior I have. Lord, daily, give me the strength, wisdom, and Your Word that I will fully and completely belong to You. Father, if there's one here today who hasn't made that decision to need You as Lord and Savior, I pray he or she will come and say “Lord, I want to belong to You. Here's my heart; I want You to be my Savior. Help me, Father, to follow You every day and give my life to You.” Bless us as believers, seekers, those who need to be saved as people of God to follow You. In Jesus' name. Amen.