

EXPOSITION OF JOHN

Message #36

John 7:37-53

I know of one of the great Bible teachers who has long since gone to be with the Lord, who was hated by some of the people in his massive church. This man truly could open up the Word of God and make it come alive in a remarkable way. Serious people of the Word were drawn to his ministry, but there was a contingency of people who despised him. They would say they didn't like his personality, his wife, his children. I am convinced that was not the real issue. The real issue was the power of his true teaching. These people didn't just quietly leave, they stayed in the church and tried to negatively influence others through their behind scenes phone calls and gossip. I would hate to be them, when it comes time to face Jesus Christ.

The true teaching of God does cause division. It will cause division in one's own soul, in one's home and even in one's church. If you really proclaim true doctrine you will have your share of serious opposition. Martin Luther said for a true teacher of God's Word there will only be "judgment, condemnation and scorn." Any true teacher of God's Word will, at some point, get into serious trouble because he sets forth the truth of God. People can criticize his face, his personality, his clothing, but the bottom line of why a minister who communicates truth is not accepted is because he is proclaiming truth and there is Divine power in that.

That was certainly true in the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ would have always had the right look because He was God. He had the perfect personality. His clothing would have fit the occasion and culture perfectly - yet He was hated. Why? Because He proclaimed the truth of God.

There is a lesson to be seen from these verses and it is this:

WHEN JESUS CHRIST TAUGHT THE WONDERFUL TRUTH OF GOD IT CAUSED A GREAT DIVISION BETWEEN PEOPLE AND EVEN THOUGH A FEW BELIEVED IN HIM, MOST DID NOT BECAUSE THEIR FALSE ASSUMPTIONS.

Preaching God's Word will divide people, not unite them. There will be a minority who will be united because they want the pure truth, but most will not. Most will criticize, question, judge, hate and even try to destroy the one who proclaims the truth. They use the Bible, but misinterpret it. That was true with Jesus Christ. Now there are two main parts to his section of John:

PART #1 – The wonderful teaching of Jesus Christ. 7:37-39

On the last day of the feast, Jesus Christ stood up and cried out some wonderful truth. This is eternal truth, this is freeing truth this is exciting truth. I want to point out something about Christ's preaching and teaching. The verb "cried out" (7:37) means that Jesus Christ was using a very loud and emotional voice. In fact, this particular word means He was somewhat "screaming" (Smith, pp. 255-256). This is not quiet, soft-toned wimpy sharing, this is loud, emotional preaching and teaching with great power and authority.

There is a threefold message that Christ communicates:

(Message #1) - Any who have a spiritual thirst may come to Christ and get that thirst quenched. 7:37b

Jesus Christ promises a person a full and abundant, satisfying life if he comes to Him. If you are tired of looking for meaning and fulfillment, go to Jesus Christ for He will fulfill what you are looking for. The criteria at stake for going to Christ is recognize the thirst. This is precisely the problem with the Jews - they did not recognize how sinfully parched they really were.

What is interesting is that the invitation is to “any” person who thirsts for life. It doesn’t matter who the person is or what the sin is, if one recognizes the spiritual lack and sin in one’s life, one may go to Christ. Christ stresses that life is only found in Him. So a key to being drawn to Christ is that a person recognizes a thirst or hunger to be right with God.

(Message #2) - Any who believe on Christ will have the thirst quenched. 7:38a

The key to having life is to believe on Jesus Christ. The participle “believe” is present tense, meaning one who has truly believed on Jesus Christ will continually believe that Christ is the only way to have life.

(Message #3) - Any who believe on Jesus Christ will eventually receive the Holy Spirit. 7:38b

The Holy Spirit was operative during the life of Christ, but it did not permanently indwell any believer (John 14:17). That did not happen until Pentecost in Acts 2, after Christ was glorified. So Christ predicted that any who would believe on Him would enter an entirely different relationship with God based upon the Holy Spirit. This is the body of Christ - the Living Family of God, the Living Church. This is the universal called out Church.

What a wonderful message to be preaching. One would think people would love this message, but that was not the case.

PART #2 – The division among the people that Christ's preaching caused. 7:40-53

Christ’s preaching was explosive. It did not create an atmosphere of one big happy family. Truth is, very few actually responded. Christ’s preaching was very divisive. Let me point out what Christ’s preaching actually did. It divided people at least seven ways:

(Division #1) - Some thought Jesus was “the” prophet. 7:40b

This would have been the prophet predicted by Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15), who would be “the” prophet of God. Moses predicted that God would raise up a Jewish prophet that eventually they all would listen to. This, was in fact, that prophet, however they didn’t really get it. They did not know who they were dealing with.

(Division #2) - Some thought Jesus was the Messiah. 7:41a

Some were convinced that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed of God. They did think there was a possibility that He might be the King, the One who would rule and reign. Yet even thinking this way, they had not come to terms with their own sin and with the fact that He was their only Savior.

(Division #3) - Some did not think Jesus was the Messiah. 7:41b-43

Some were saying - this can't be the Messiah because the Messiah has to be in the Davidic line and must be born in Bethlehem and not come out of Galilee. Truth is, He was born in the Davidic line, He was born in Bethlehem and He was raised in Galilee. Now, of course, there would have been a simple way to resolve this - they could have gone to Christ and asked if He were in the line of David and if He had been born in Bethlehem. But they do not even bother checking the facts before they believe something. How ridiculous is that? They make all of these assumptions without checking the Biblical facts. Truth is, the O.T. predicted that the Messiah would be born in the Davidic line (Psalm 89:3-4; 132:11), which Christ was (Matthew 1:1; II Timothy 2:8); the O.T. predicted that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), which Christ was (Luke 2:4-6); and the O.T. predicted that the Messiah would have a connection to Galilee (Isaiah 9:1-2, 6), which Christ did.

These people are rejecting truth about Jesus Christ because they do not know how to rightly divide Scripture. People do this today, all of the time. I cannot even begin to number the times I have heard people attack the pure grace of God, by using a verse out of James and not even considering what the verse or the context actually says.

(Division #4) - Some wanted to seize Christ. 7:44

Christ's preaching made some of these people very hostile and they wanted to kill Jesus Christ. For what? Why did they want to kill Him? For telling them the truth, for preaching the truth of God. What truth? The truth that their righteousness could not save them, only He could save them. These people were not willing to acknowledge they were dirty, filthy sinners, who could not be right with God on their own. They hated Him for telling them that and they wanted Him dead.

Of course, "his hour was not yet come" and they would not be able to lay one hand on Christ until it was totally and completely consistent with the timing of God. They were accountable for their reaction to and rejection of truth, but they cannot touch Jesus Christ. They could embrace truth, but they cannot act upon their lies.

(Division #5) - The officers did not seize Christ but were moved by His teaching. 7:45-46

Now remember, the officers were the policemen of Christ's day. They were not afraid of crowds like the Pharisees and these officers could care less if people liked them. We may recall from **verse 32** that the Pharisees and chief priests sent these guys to seize Christ.

Here, they not only don't seize Christ, they are impressed with the way this man speaks. They could not find one thing about His teachings that gave them reason to arrest Him.

There was power in His words. What got to them was Christ's teachings. Christ's teachings were not neutral - they moved people in some way. According to verse 15, there was a scholarliness to Christ's teachings and we also know there was great emotion. Even these officers were touched by the teachings of Christ.

When we present God's truth, we make a greater impact than we know. What we say cuts into souls and does cause reaction. True teaching does touch emotions, but that doesn't mean it changes a heart.

(Division #6) - The Pharisees cannot stand Jesus Christ and try to discredit everything about Him. 7:47-49

These Pharisees are rigid in their opposition to Jesus Christ. Nothing He can say or do will stop their satanic opposition. There are a series of three points and inferences that these Pharisees make:

Point #1 - We hope no chief priest has believed in Him because if you have, you have been led astray. 7:47

The only one to ever be on this earth who didn't wander astray was Jesus Christ. All the rest of us, like sheep, have wandered astray. Jesus is the only true way to be saved, and the religious leaders are trying to keep people from this true way.

Point #2 - We hope no Pharisee has believed in Christ. 7:48

In all reality what they are saying is that we hope all Pharisees go to hell like us. But what these loudmouthed Pharisees didn't know is that some had secretly believed (John 12:42).

Point #3 - The multitude, who do believe in Christ, are ignorant people who don't really know the law. 7:49

The truth is it is these Pharisees who don't know the law. The law was given to expose their sinfulness. The law was given to show how depraved every human is compared to the righteousness of God, which then points to the need for Jesus Christ. These Pharisees are criticizing the fact that people are cursed because they don't know the law. The truth is, they are cursed because they don't know Christ. They don't know what they are doing with the law. They are the ones accursed and they are the ones who would die in their sins (John 8:21), trying to keep the law.

I have seen this so many times. So many people don't know what they are doing with the Bible. They misinterpret passages and teach as if they are unlocking reality when they don't even know what reality is.

The only people who really accept Christ's teachings are ignorant people who really cannot think right. We Pharisees know He lives in violation to the law, but they do not.

(Division #7) - One Pharisee realizes the prejudice of the other Pharisees. 7:50-53

Only one saw the truth. Only one had a thirst for God's righteousness and it was Nicodemus.

Nicodemus who met with Christ in chapter 3 said does not the Law teach that before it makes a judgment, the facts are ascertained (Deuteronomy 1:16-17)? Nicodemus said you are making all of these assumptions that Jesus is not lining up with the Law; doesn't every man get a fair hearing from the Law?

The other Pharisees said to Nicodemus, you search the Scriptures and you will see that no prophet comes out of Galilee. Of course the reason He is in Galilee is because of them. They rejected Him and He took His Word to Galilee.

Notice verse 53 - everyone went home. Nothing resolved. Nothing changed. No decision. Jesus, for the most part, was abandoned.

They had heard great teaching, teaching that stirred, but then they just went home and NOTHING was changed. One of the most damnable things one can do is to hear great teaching and then go home and not change. When it comes to teaching about His grace in salvation, you can go home and die in your sin.

Every person must come to terms with Jesus Christ. It begins with a thirst for God's righteousness which is something none of us have. It is only found in Jesus Christ. Believe on Him and you shall be saved.