

WHAT A DIFFERENCE JESUS MAKES

John 7:25-39 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

There are times in each of our lives when we are stretched to the limit. There are times when we sense we are waiting for the next shoe to drop. There are times when we feel we have no more in us left to give. God knows just what we need. He ordained this message I am preaching today to be preached today, not seven months earlier. Why is that? We began this series in John's Gospel on the last summer Sunday of September 18, 2022, and we concluded the first five chapters with our text of John 5:31-47 on May 21st of last year, 2023. ending at John 5:47. Sickness and death came to our church as believers we loved God called Home. On July 26th, I shared Maren Kneeland's Graveside Service at Riverview Cemetery in Green River; on August 19th, Janell Huff's Memorial Message; On August 20th, I brought a message in both services remembering Pastor Larry Johnson—entitled, "Jesus Loves Even Me;" the next day, August 21st, there was a Memorial Message for Pastor Larry at the Fairgrounds, followed by a Graveside service for him in Plankinton, South Dakota on September 2nd; and on September 23rd, there was the message entitled "Prayerful Lifter of Holy Hands," at John Blatter's funeral. Those were very heavy days of grieving, as I preached for three months messages to help us all heal, After a seven-month hiatus, we returned January 7th of this year 2024. I knew in my soul from the Holy Spirit that I could not just plod on into John 6.

As David said to God in Psalm 31:15, "My times are in Your hands." John 7:25-39 illustrates a fascinating feature of John's writing related to time. John 1:1 begins in eternity past, saying, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John's Gospel focuses over and over on certain days in the life of our Lord, drawn out, protracted days. This text today happened on two days of Jesus' life, one in the middle and one at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles six months before the cross. Jesus preached two messages, one in the middle of the Feast and one at the end. At the sermon # 1, Jesus told the crowd that many of them did not know Him. Then, John 7:31, "many believed in Him."

At the end of the great seven-day Feast, called the Great Day of the Feast, Jesus spoke again to the same divided audience. Some of the Jerusalem inhabitants were thinking He might be Messiah; many pilgrims believed in the middle of the feast, while many others were rejecting Him and seeking to kill Him. As the muttering of the divided crowd was heard by the Pharisees, they saw Jesus was gaining part of the crowd, so they acted quickly. Standing in that divided crowd now were officers sent by the chief priest and Pharisees, under orders to arrest Jesus. These officers were waiting for the right moment to arrest Him, but Jesus captured their attentive hearts too. Jesus concluded His message calling everyone, including His enemies, including them, to come to Him and drink. What was eternally at stake for this multitude in Jesus' two messages? Many would believe in Him, but the crowds were growing that did not believe in Him. What a difference was ahead for them depending on whether they would believe or not! I see two responses that ought to awaken our five senses today. These two responses are what Jesus said first in the middle of the week. He spoke (1) of what happens to those who never come to

know Jesus. In Jesus' second message on the great day of the Feast, Jesus stood up (2) and cried out an invitation telling the multitude what happens to those who come to Jesus and believe. What a difference Jesus makes!!! Look at these stark words of Jesus first, and these gracious words of Jesus, secondly.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO NEVER COME TO KNOW JESUS?

(I.) Come with me to the text and observe the divided multitude. Notice in verses 25-27. "Some of the people (living in) Jerusalem therefore said, "Is not this the man whom they (their Jewish leaders) seek to kill? And here He is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to Him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? These (some) were not the pilgrims, but people in Jerusalem who knew their leaders were after Jesus, but were confused because Jesus was teaching openly, freely, and the Jewish leaders were not stopping Him. In their confusion, they wondered if the rulers knew Jesus was Messiah, but they thought, "We know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where He comes from." Jesus cried out to them, v.28, We read, "proclaimed," but the Gk. word, **krazo** means to cry out in a public proclamation. Jesus cried out, "You know Me, and you know where I come from? you think I came from Nazareth. Now Jesus continued, "But I have not come of My own accord. He who sent Me is true, and Him you do not know. I know Him, for I come from Him, and He sent Me."

Jesus was saying His Father sent Him, and that, v. 30, is why they were seeking to arrest Him. Yet surprisingly we read, "no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come." Wonder of wonders, we read in v. 31, "many of the people believed in Him." They then testified, "When the Christ appears, will He do more signs than this man has done" Who were these people who believed? Jerusalem was filled with multiplied thousands of pilgrims for the three great Jewish feasts, Jews from Jerusalem, Samaria, Galilee, Perea, and Decapolis. Also, thousands of Jews living outside Israel were there and doubtless from that crowd, came many of this many who believed. Hearing the muttering about Jesus and who He was, led the Jewish leaders, the chief priest and Pharisees, v. 32, to waste no time to send off officers to the temple, John 7:14, where Jesus was, to arrest Him.

As the officers made their appearance into the temple outer court, Jesus finished His invitation to the crowd who turned to Him, and turned to the many not believing to say, in vs. 33-36, "I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to Him, (the Father) who sent Me. You will seek Me and you will not find Me. Where I am you cannot come." The Jews started mocking Jesus, saying, v. 35-37, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find Him. Does He intend to go to the Diaspora, the Dispersion, (where many Jews lived among the Gentiles in other countries), among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? What does He mean by saying, "You will seek Me, and you will not find Me, and where I am you cannot come." Think with me about Jesus' words. They are sad, stark, true words. Jesus was telling the rejecting crowd, "I am going to the Father who sent Me, but you are rejecting God the Father by rejecting Me. Where I soon am going, after a little while—after 6 months) when He would be crucified, you cannot come. In the presence of the Father, there is no room for those who refuse to receive His Son.

Jesus was warning this rejecting crowd that their time was short to receive Him. The rejecting crowd was getting larger. After Jesus' bread of life message, in John 6:66, we read, "After this, many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him." We know from John 7:5 that Jesus' family, "even His brothers did not believe in Him." The rejectors included the Jewish leaders—John 7:1,19. Now, many more in the multitude hated Jesus because He testified about them that their deed were evil, John 7:7, and a growing number of them said Jesus had a demon, John 7:20. Picture the scene. The harvest was past. Gold was tinting the tree leaves, and for tens of thousands of them that day, their spiritual day to be saved was past.

Jesus was telling them the doors of heaven were soon to be shut to them forever. It is possible to seek Jesus too late. In hell, millions will discover the truth too late. They will seek Jesus in torment and not find Him, for Jesus will be with His redeemed. Those who have not believed in Him will not be able to come to Jesus. Hell is the eternal home of millions with eternal regret who are without hope or any remedy. John MacArthur once said, "Hell is not where Christ is forgotten, but where Christ is unavailable." Jesus spoke His words to different kinds of people. Some were out to kill Him. Some were confused or undecided about Him; but He told them all a time was coming and is still coming today, when seeking Jesus will come too late. Whether confused or openly rejecting Jesus; Jesus never separated them regarding the coming judgment. He excluded them all who would not believe. What happens to those who don't believe is eternally stark and grim.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO COME TO JESUS AND BELIEVE?

(II.) Notice John 7:37-39. "On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, (This second time Jesus cried-v.28/37-and Jesus is still crying out His invitation today). "If anyone thirsts/is thirsty, let him (her) come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his heart, literally (belly, heart, innermost being) will flow rivers of living water. Now this He said about the Spirit (Holy Spirit), whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for as yet, the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." Oh, the difference it makes in our lives if we believe or do not believe. Now within six months of Calvary, in the looming shadow of the cross, Jesus began pulling out the stops in this glorious invitation. On this last day of the feast, the crowd was transfixed, even the officers were powerless to arrest Jesus. Everyone was undone. Jesus knows how to penetrate our hearts and speak to our souls as well as to our spirits. Our souls were created to live and drink from God, to be filled and satisfied forever. It is our souls that get thirsty, and without God, our souls are dry. Jesus was making it clear. I am the well, the water, the spring of living water, the fountain that will never run dry. He was telling them and telling us all we were born to drink from Him. Coming to Jesus and drinking from Him is His picture to us of what believing in Him is all about.

The timing of Jesus was perfect. All was going as usual at the Feast of Tabernacles. On the seven days of the Feast, a golden flask, pitcher with a spout was filled with water from the Pool of Siloam and was carried in a procession led by the high priest back to the temple. As the procession would approach the Watergate on the

south side of the inner court, three blasts from the shofar would sound announcing the joyful procession. While the pilgrims watched, the priests proceeded around the altar with the golden flask, and the temple choir sang the Hallel—Psalms 113-118. When the choir sang Psalm 118, every male pilgrim shook a **lulah**, willow/myrtle twigs tied with palms in his right hand, while in his left hand he raised a piece of citrus fruit, a sign of the ingathered harvest. Then everyone, men and women all cried, “Give thanks to the Lord,” three times. Then the water in the golden pitcher was offered to God at the time of the morning sacrifice, along with the daily drink offering of wine. The wine and the water were poured into their respective silver bowls and then poured out before the Lord. The Jews thanked God for the water God gave them from the Rock in the wilderness, (of whom Paul said in I Cor. 10:1-4 that the Rock was Christ). The Jews thought of Joel 2:28-29 saying, “It shall come about in the last days that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants, in those days, I will pour out My Spirit.” The Jews knew the pouring of water and the Spirit, spoke of the coming of Messiah, as Isaiah 44:3-4 prophesied, “For I will pour water on the thirsty land, or on him who is thirsty, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit upon your offspring, and My blessing on your descendants. They shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams.”

This celebration re-enacted in Nehemiah 9:15,20, had the priests saying, “You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger and brought water for them out of the rock for their thirst...You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, and did not withhold Your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst.” Picture the scene. The water from the pool of Siloam has been poured out when Jesus appears on the scene in the temple in Jerusalem, His second appearance. Jesus jumps into the scene and shows He is Messiah, declaring Himself to be the Living Water, that the water in the golden flask represented. As the prophet Isaiah in 55:1,2, declared, “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price,” now Jesus cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, “Out of His heart will flow rivers of living water.”

The huge harvest festival feast was now over. It was time to break down the makeshift booths and travel back home. We’ve all been to conventions and conferences, but the time comes to leave. Now Jesus stood up before the multitude who were now thinking, “Is the Feast over so soon? Is this all there is to coming here and fulfilling the law of God? The question Jesus asked about anyone still being thirsty was on point with them. He had their full attention. I ask us today, “Have you been in church for years and find you are still thirsty? Jesus wasn’t inviting this multitude to come to Him for truth or righteousness. All He said was “Come to Me.” There were no restrictions to the offer. He was asking, “Anyone here without peace, hope, joy, patience, or happiness? All people seek happiness. Many seekers are looking for love and happiness in all the wrong places. But Jesus is saying, “No matter what you are thirsty for in your soul, come to Me.” Hear His

invitation. Are you full of resentment, pain, are you far from God and deeply unhappy? This invitation is for you. Are you in the grip of sin and shame, in the grip of lust, envy, greed, addictions, and you have a deep void in your heart. Come to Me and drink.” Wow! Who did Jesus exclude? Just those who say, “I am completely satisfied, fulfilled and happy as any person could ever be.” Not for you.

Do we long for unfulfilled dreams, joy, contentment, and satisfaction? Jesus didn't say, “Come to My teaching, training, or to My church.” All Jesus offers us is Himself. Do we hate our life, our job, and where we are in life? Jesus satisfies the deepest thirst of any soul. How do we receive this satisfaction? Just come to Him and drink. Come as you are. As a child comes running if we say, “Come to me,” Jesus is saying, “Move towards Me in your mind, will, heart, soul, and spirit. This is the essence of believing. Jesus is calling us to Himself. He's the inexhaustible Fountain of Living Waters. Jesus lives in us by His Spirit. Jesus was prophesying of what was soon to come after Pentecost, after His upcoming death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. He said come receive all I will accomplish for you at Calvary. How much peace, joy, happiness, and love can we receive? Only as much as we can drink. This drinking is no one time event. It's not just a swallow. Now the River Maker is in our souls, and we daily have rivers of living water flowing out of us. It is the pattern of our daily life. Tied to His invitation is Jesus' amazing promise. “Out of your heart will flow, not a river, but rivers of living water. This allows us to use for others what we daily drink from Him, because the Fountain of Living Waters lives in us. We are a means of grace to others as we keep drinking.

In our inexhaustible Lord, there is more grace and love to give others than any of us have ever fully received. Do you want to be a better husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter, leader, or disciple? Then drink more of Jesus. Do you need more peace, joy, hope, patience, or love? Drink more of Jesus. Jesus was talking about believing in Him and receiving the Holy Spirit. Then, the Holy Spirit was yet to be given after Pentecost. Now He has come to us. We are either becoming more and more thirsty, or more and more satisfied. Are we becoming satisfied vessels the Lord is using to pour through us? What we drink and what comes into us is all that will flow out of us. This is the secret to real authentic ministry for Jesus. Real believers don't come to church to put on an act. All our ministry is the overflow of the Spirit in us. To the degree we receive from Jesus as our soul's fountain, we are His means of pouring out to our spouse, family, church, community, and our world.

On the Last Day of Judgment, there will yet be two kinds of people. Those who are forever thirsty, and those forever satisfied. Do you remember Jesus telling about the rich man and the poor man Lazarus? When the poor man died, God sent His angels to carry Lazarus to Abraham's bosom. When the rich man died, he woke up in torment. What was he begging Lazarus for? One drop of water to cool his tongue. Jesus took hell for us all at Calvary. What did He cry on the cross? “I thirst.” He bore our forever thirst on the cross as His thirst so that the unending joy He paid for and now enjoys in heaven, will be ours forever. The deepest pain in hell is thirst, for hell has no Fountain. In Heaven, there is no hunger and no thirst. Let's read Rev. 7:16-17. What a difference Jesus makes. Read Rev. 22:17. Amen.