

“When the Gospel Light Grows Dim”
John 7:1-5
(Preached at Trinity, July 10, 2019)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 7** opens “After these things.” Jesus was nearing the end of His Galilean ministry. Our minds are taken back to **Verses 65-66** of the previous chapter.
John 6:65-66 NAU - "And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." ⁶⁶
As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore."
2. John’s Gospel is unique from the Synoptic Gospels.
 - A. Matthew, Mark, and Luke do not record many of the events of **Chapter 6** nor do they include the largescale abandoning of Jesus.
 - B. Most of **Chapter 7** is also unique to John’s Gospel.
 - Only here do we find Jesus’ intentional avoidance of Jerusalem.
 - Only here do we find Jesus’ secret trip to Jerusalem
 - The teaching of Jesus in this chapter is also unique to John’s Gospel
3. It had been around six months since the feeding of the 5000.
At the beginning of **Chapter 6** Jesus had crossed the Sea of Galilee and was ministering to the multitudes in this region. This great multitude had come to hear the teaching of Jesus and to witness His miracles. Jesus taught them plainly, but they did not believe in Him.
 - A. Jesus had spent the Passover in Galilee ministering to the people of the region. This would have been the second Passover of our Lord’s ministry. His crucifixion occurred during the third Passover.
 - B. Despite all the opportunities they had to follow Christ, all of the preaching and teaching of Christ as He walked and lived among them, they hardened their hearts and turned away.
John 6:66 NAU - "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore."
4. Now we read that Jesus is “walking” in Galilee, but His work in Galilee was largely done. His ministry at Galilee had come to an end with so few converts.
We are reminded of the words of Jeremiah:
Jeremiah 8:20 NAU - "Harvest is past, summer is ended, And we are not saved."

5. A. W. Pink notes: “It appears as though the Lord was reluctant to leave Galilee, for it seems that He never returned there anymore. It was useless to work any further miracles, and His teaching has been despised, nevertheless, His *person* He would still keep before them a little longer.”¹
6. It reminds us of children who grow up in the church. They are saturated with the Gospel week after week. The light of the Gospel has shown brightly upon them, and yet they preferred to continue in the darkness of their sin. As they enter adulthood the light of the Gospel grows more and more dim. The problem is not with the Gospel but with the blindness of their own eyes.
 - A. John wrote in **Chapter 3**
John 3:19-20 NAU - "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. ²⁰ "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."
 - B. Its like the seed sown among the thorns in the Parable of the Sower. The affairs of this life simply choke out the Gospel
Matthew 13:22 NAU - "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."
7. Jesus was “walking” in Galilee, while at the same time He was refusing to go down to Jerusalem. John tells us it was because, “the Jews were seeking to kill Him.”
 - A. While those in Galilee simply turned away in unbelief, the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem were in open hostility. They had hardened their hearts against the Gospel and now God had hardened their hearts. The grammar expresses they were continually seeking to kill Jesus.
 - B. Jesus purposely and willfully refused to go to Jerusalem. He withheld Himself from them.
 - C. Our Confession speaks to this terrifying reality the hardening of the human heart: London Baptist Confession of 1689 – Chapter 5, paragraph 6 – “As for those wicked and ungodly men, whom God as a righteous judge, for former sin doth blind and harden; from them he not only withholdeth his Grace, whereby they might have been inlightened in their understanding, and wrought upon in their hearts: But sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had, and exposeth them to such objects as their *corruptions* makes occasion of sin; and withal gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass, that they harden themselves, even under those means which God useth for the softening of others.”²

¹ Arthur Walkington Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, (Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot, 1923–1945), 369.

² W. J. McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, (Philadelphia; Boston; Chicago; St. Louis; Toronto: American Baptist Publication Society, 1911), 236–237.

8. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. It will accomplish its perfect work. But it is a dangerous thing to turn away in unbelief. Matthew records that in the hometown of Jesus, although they knew Him well, Jesus did no work among them because of their unbelief.
Matthew 13:57-58 NAU - "And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his *own* household." ⁵⁸ And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief."
9. Matthew Henry: "Gospel light is justly *taken away* from those that endeavour to extinguish it. Christ will withdraw from those that drive him from them, will hide his face from those that spit in it, and justly shut up his bowels from those who spurn at them."³
10. In **Verse 1** we are told Jesus was walking in Galilee, but He was walking in the midst of a sea of unbelief. Then we are told he was unwilling to go to Jerusalem because of their vicious opposition. But in spite of the vicious opposition in Jerusalem, Jesus still went and taught.
John 7:14 NAU - "But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and *began to teach*."
- I. Jesus is a gracious Savior
- A. Jesus invites all to come
John 7:37-38 NAU - "Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"
1. Jesus taught and invited sinners to the end of His life. He is continually calling all men to turn from their sin. The Gospel isn't an invitation but a command—a command for all men to repent and receive Christ as Savior. Those who turn to Christ will be saved.
 Jesus boldly declared in **Chapter 6**
John 6:37 NAU - "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."
 2. God is compassionate, but He is also holy.
 Nahum's words continue to stand as a warning:
 The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, And the LORD will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished.
- B. Some are blessed with a particular measure of God's Gospel grace
1. In the history of humanity most have lived their lives in the absence of the light of the Gospel.
 - a. Think of the multitudes outside of Israel in the Old Testament.
 - b. Think of the multitudes in modern history who have not heard the Gospel.
 2. The United States has been greatly blessed with the Gospel light
 - a. Our nation was largely founded as the result of the Puritans seeking a place to serve and worship God without the restrictions of the government supported church

³ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1957.

- b. The Gospel has sounded loudly from coast to coast. Sadly, however, the bright light of the Gospel has grown progressively dim due to the hardness of the hearts of men.
 - c. Today, we are a thoroughly secular society. The segments known as Millennials born between 1980-1994 (25-39 year olds) and especially Generation Z born between 1995-2015 (4-24 yr. olds) are largely void of Christianity. They have been thoroughly indoctrinated by a Christless society.
 - d. God is not allowed in public life. It is amazing to see a restaurant banned from an airport simply because they openly profess to be Christian.
3. Like the people of Galilee and the Jews in Jerusalem those today who will not follow Christ will be held to a high accountability.

II. It is a dangerous thing to deny the claims of the Gospel

A. Those who will not have Christ as their King find themselves forsaken

- 1. We can see this with King Herod
 - a. Herod's heart was hard as stone. He refused to heed the warnings of God's prophet. He had John the Baptist beheaded.
 - b. Herod was hard, arrogant and proud. He wouldn't bow before Jesus. Like the people of Galilee, he was only interested in seeing Jesus do some miracle before him.
Luke 23:7-8 NAU - "And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time. ⁸ Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him."
 - c. When Herod sought a word from Jesus he received nothing but silence
Luke 23:9 NAU - "he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing."
- 2. In **1 Samuel** Saul sought a word from God and found nothing but silence.
1 Samuel 28:5-6 NAU - "When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was afraid and his heart trembled greatly. ⁶ When Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets."

B. God may depart at any time from a sinner. His heart can become so hard and he can become so blind so that the Gospel is withheld from him

- 1. This is a fearful thought to become forsaken by God
Bunyan spoke of the man in the iron cage – a man left in his sin.
"I sinned against the light of the word, and the goodness of God; I have grieved the Spirit, and he is gone; I tempted the devil, and he is come to me; I have provoked God to anger, and he has left me: I have so hardened my heart, that I cannot repent."⁴

⁴ Bunyan, John, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell Publishing), page 27.

2. Scripture often speaks of those whose hearts are hardened beyond repentance. Esau who sought repentance with tears yet found it not **Hebrews 12:15-17 NAU** - "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; ¹⁶ that *there be* no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a *single* meal. ¹⁷ For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears."
3. Matthew 16 speaks of Jesus departing from the Pharisees **Matthew 16:4 NAU** - "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah." And He left them and went away."
 - a. Literally, He abandoned them
καταλείπω – "to leave behind, to depart from - to forsake, to abandon"
 - b. Jesus abandoned them to their sin
4. God isn't to be trifled with – He calls us to repentance today **Hebrews 4:7 NAU** - "Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts."
Isaiah 55:6 NAU - "seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near."

Conclusion:

1. God is full of grace and mercy, but His forbearance is not permanent. Today is the day of salvation! Today is the day to repent and turn to Christ! There is great urgency in the call of the Gospel. Now is the time to receive the grace of the Gospel.
2 Corinthians 6:1-2 NAS - "we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain-- ² for He says, "At the acceptable time I listened to you, And on the day of salvation I helped you"; behold, now is "the acceptable time," behold, now is "the day of salvation "
2. God graciously sends His Gospel into the world. It is a dangerous thing to deny it's claims upon your life. It will only grow more and more dim as your heart grows more and more hard.
Dale Ralph Davis writes: "If you despise God's word he will take it from you. If you persistently refuse to obey God's speech you will endure God's silence."⁵
3. The wonderful blessing of this passage is found in **verse 14**. The Jewish leaders hardened their hearts against Christ and Jesus abandoned them. But He had not abandoned His mercy to the multitudes. He entered Jerusalem and continued to teach.
John 7:14 NAU - "But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and *began to teach*."
4. In spite of the multitudes who would not come to Christ, grace was still offered to those who would hear. All in Galilee had forsaken Him, yet He found still walking in Galilee. The religious leaders in Jerusalem were seeking to kill Him, yet He still went into the Temple to teach.
Praise God, in spite of living in a God-hating world, God has not abandoned His redemptive purpose. He is still saving His own.

⁵ Dale Ralph Davis, *I Samuel: Looking on the Heart*, Focus on the Bible Commentary, (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 293.