

“Opportune Time”
John 7:1-9
(Preached at Trinity, August 7, 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. As we’ve seen, **Chapter 7** opens “After these things.” **Chapter 6** was in the context of the 2nd Passover of our Lord’s ministry. **Chapter 7** is six months later during the Feast of Booths. Jesus was nearing the end of His Galilean ministry.
2. The Feast of Booths was one of the three obligatory festivals and every adult male within 20 miles of Jerusalem was required to attend. Jesus’ brothers were pressing Him to attend.
3. It was as if His brothers had appointed themselves in charge of Jesus’ public relations. It seemed incredible to them that if Jesus was the Messiah He wouldn’t proclaim it openly and boldly.
John 7:3-4 NAU - "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. ⁴ "For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be *known* publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world."
4. Jesus’ response was firm and resolute:
John 7:6-8 NAU - "So Jesus said to them, "My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune. ⁷ "The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil. ⁸ "Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come."
5. It reminds us of the words of Jesus to His mother during the wedding at Cana.
John 2:4 NAU - "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come."
 - A. Jesus rebuffed Mary’s approach knowing His earthly ministry had only just begun. Too much publicity early in His ministry might fan the flames of enthusiasm and bring His work to an untimely end. Jesus always made it clear that everything in His earthly ministry was in accordance with the will of the Father and there was a stipulated moment for everything.
 - B. Now Jesus is nearing the end of His ministry. It is the end of September and the Feast of Tabernacles has begun. The following April Jesus would share His final Passover Feast just prior to His crucifixion. His hour had not yet arrived.
John 7:30 NAU - "So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come."
John 8:20 NAU - "These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come."

6. But Jesus uses a different word here as he addresses His brothers.
John 7:6 NAU - "So Jesus said to them, "My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune."
 A. The word for hour is ὥρα in **Verse 30** refers to a fixed hour, an hour chosen by God. It was God's plan and unavoidable. Jesus received it without question.
 B. In **Verse 6** Jesus uses the word καιρός which refers to a particular time. It can also refer to an opportunity. It refers to the best time, the opportune time, the most suitable time.
Galatians 6:10 NAU - "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."
 C. Jesus is not saying here that His appointed hour had not come; He is saying this was not opportune time for Him to go to Jerusalem. It wasn't the right setting.
7. In **Verse 1** we are told that Jesus was tarrying in Galilee because the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem were seeking to kill Him.
 A. John is drawing our attention back to **Chapter 5**
John 5:18 NAU - "For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."
 B. Although it had been over six months since Jesus healed the paralyzed man at the Pool of Bethesda, their hatred of Jesus had not cooled.
8. As I've pointed out, the Feast of Booths was the most popular of the Jewish Feasts. Multitudes would have been in Jerusalem.
 For Jesus' brothers, they could not comprehend why Jesus wasn't using this Feast to boldly announce that He was the Messiah. This was an excellent opportunity for Jesus to promote Himself—for Him to receive exaltation.
 Jesus is saying this was not the right occasion. It was not the right time.
- I. The Feast of Booths was a feast of celebration
 A. Everything about it was full of rejoicing—it was a season of enjoyment
 1. It was a rabbinical saying: "The man who has not seen these festivities does not know what jubilee is."¹
 2. It came at the end of harvest—labors were complete and it was time to enjoy the fruits.
 3. It was a celebration of God's provision in the Exodus. They built small shelters or tabernacles to commemorate their dwelling in the wilderness. It was a great enjoyment for those who gathered; like a nation-wide campout.
 4. The brothers of Jesus thought this to be a wonderful time to reveal Himself in all His glory. But it was not yet time for His exaltation. It was not yet a time for joy and feasting. That time would come later
 B. Jesus had not yet given Himself for the sins of His people
 1. There had to be suffering and death; Jesus had to spill His blood before there could be celebration
 2. The Passover was the Feast suitable to the purpose of Christ. The cross had to come before the exaltation.

¹ J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, John Vol.2* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2007), Page 6.

3. So, Jesus did not go to Jerusalem feasting, not in celebration, not in exaltation but in secret. The time will come when Jesus will return in clouds of glory and every eye shall behold Him. In this season, however, Jesus went up to Jerusalem in secret.

II. Jesus also saw the need for prudence in going to Jerusalem

A. The Jews were out to take His life

1. Jesus was not fearful for His life. He was not afraid to go to Jerusalem. In fact, He did go. But He went at the opportune time. He knew the benefit of prudence. He didn't go to Jerusalem for feasting but for teaching.
2. He didn't go in an open, self-exalting manner, but He went in obedience to His duty as a Jewish male, and as teacher, to proclaim the words of the Father.

B. This is a good lesson for us

1. There have been countless martyrs throughout history, and we should be willing to die for the faith. But we should avoid it if at all possible. We cannot deny the faith, but it would be prudent to avoid situations that may put us in harm's way.
2. At work, there may be a time to speak, and a time to be silent. This is also true at family gatherings.
3. There is nothing unspiritual about avoiding unnecessary conflict. Jesus provides us with our example. He fulfilled His duty to God by appearing at the Feast, but He did so in secret, as to avoid unnecessary conflict.
4. We must never fear to speak when we must. We must never court the favor of men by telling them what they want to hear. We must never fear to uphold the great name of our Savior and to speak on the side of righteousness and justice. But we must also be wise and prudent. It takes great discernment to know the difference.
5. We must also never forget, even while we seek to avoid conflict, it will be inevitable, nonetheless. When we live holy lives in this Godless world we will be hated, and it will bring conflict.

Matthew 10:34-36 NAS - "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ "For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶ and a man's enemies will be the members of his household."

III. This also gives us guidance in other areas of our life

A. There is always a danger for us to leap forward without careful consideration

1. Just because we *can* do something doesn't mean we should. Just because it may *seem* to be a good idea doesn't mean it is.
2. Not every season is the opportune season.
Perhaps God would want you to postpone marriage
Perhaps this promotion isn't the one you should accept
3. Few in our generation can appreciate the principle of delayed gratification. It seems that everything must be "now"

4. This is not to encourage procrastination, but sometimes waiting is the wise course
- B. Just as feasting was not the opportune course for Jesus, we should understand the nature of our own life
1. While we must maintain proper seasons of rest and leisure everything must be in proper proportion. Now is not the time to seek our pleasure and rest. That time will come later.
 2. While material goods are a wonderful blessing from the hand of God, this life should not be seen as our reward. The blessings of our eternal rest will be the place of reward.
 3. The Feast of Booths was a time of rest at the end of the harvest. But our rest has not yet come. The harvest is not yet in. The laborers are few. We must concentrate upon the work in this season. This is the opportune time.
 4. For Jesus' brothers their time was always before them. For the worldly man this world is always before them. It is always the time of feasting.
 - a. But not so for Christ, and not so for us
Colossians 3:2 NAU - "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."
Philippians 3:20 NAU - "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;"
 - b. And for the worldly man, he is at home at all times. He has no fear of offending his fellow worldlings.
John 15:19 NAU - "If you were of the world, the world would love its own"
 - c. William Barclay wrote:
 "It made no difference when Jesus' brothers went to Jerusalem. Any day would do for them, for no one would notice that they were there. Nothing whatsoever depended on their going to Jerusalem; they could go in their own time, and it made no difference. But if Jesus went it was a very different thing. Why. Because Jesus' brothers were part of the world; their sympathies were with the world; they did not make the world uncomfortable and the world had no quarrel with them. But Jesus enters with a disturbing dynamic power. His very presence is a condemnation of our way of life. His very coming is a challenge to our selfishness and lethargy. Jesus had to choose His moment, for when He arrives something happens."²

² Barclay, William, *The Gospel of John, Volume 1*, (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1956), Pages 241-242.

Conclusion:

1. Our life and the lives of the people of this world are vastly different. Our motives are different. Our goals are different. Our priorities are different. Jesus and His brothers had entirely different reasons for going to Jerusalem.
2. This will often put us on a collision course with the world. We must shine forth with Christ and resist the temptation to conform to this world.