

The Need to Rightly Judge John 7: 14-24

We began to look at this paragraph last time we were together. Jesus goes up to Jerusalem in the middle of the feast of Tabernacles and begins to teach in the Temple. The Jews marvel at his teaching. And there are a couple of observations. It is amazing how many times people not only marvelled at his miracles but also his teaching. His teaching was impeccable and taught that he was from God. But the second thing is who marvelled in our passage. It was the Jews. And the Jews here are the religious leaders and are different from the crowds. And when they asked how is he able to teach when he has no education or no formal studies, it really is a challenge to his right to teach. What gives you the right, an unlicensed teacher that has no credentials behind your name to teach us?

And Jesus defends himself in the next couple of verses. Look at verse 16, **“So Jesus answered them, ‘My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.’”** This is such a classic answer and should be the same answer for all who preach and teach Jesus Christ. We bring a message that is not our own. It is a message that is given from another and that source is none other than the one who has given us the commission to go into all the world and make disciples. He is our authority, and the authority is in the message that has already been given in the Scriptures. Woe to any preacher who would stand in the name of Christ and not give teaching that is not based on the truth of God’s revealed word - his scripture. Woe to any preaching who gives teaching that is his own and not the Lord’s.

Then he indicates why they do not realize the truthfulness of his words or why they do not accept his teaching in verse 17, **“If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.”** And this is an amazing statement, because he says the problem is not with the message or the messenger but the hearer. The reason why they do not receive his message is they do not want to do God’s will to begin with. Those that really do seek God, and there is none - they can only seek him through an act of his enabling grace, they will know that his words are true. But it begins with the heart that truly wants to know God.

And that is where we ended last time, but look as he continues in verse 18, **“The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.”** This is one of the reasons why they rejected Christ is they hated the praise that he received and certainly wanted it for themselves. And this is also the reason why we preach and teach. It is not for our glory but God’s glory. It is also the chief reason for our salvation and living in light of what God has done for us in Christ. Our salvation chiefly is not about all the benefits that we get in this life but it is chiefly about the glory of God. And we should live for that purpose. Matt. 5:16 says, **“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”** And 1Cor. 10:31, **“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”** Life, preaching and everything is not about us. That is a humbling truth. It is about the glory of another who is worthy of that

glory. The more you see the immensity of God the more you see our sinfulness and the need of Christ, then the more you see that it has to be about Christ.

And now we come to a turning point in this dialogue at Jerusalem, in that Jesus turns the tables. After they had asked questions of him and made accusations about him, he turns the tables and asks them questions. And it is amazing passage that talks about judgment and how we judge. And it is amazing how often we judge others. And it is not that we should never judge because we have to make judgments every day, and life is full of judgments. But it is how we judge. So often we never see our own moral guilt but we can see the guilt of others. I read someone who once said for every look at someone else, take seven looks at your own life and heart. And I thought that was such a wise principle. Because so often we downplay the things we do wrong and the sins in our own life, and overvalue even the things that we do right as so extraordinary so that when we judge others it is usually hyper critical and usually not righteous. We need to judge according to God's holy standard and seek to truly glorify Him. So I want us to see two points tonight as we look at our own hearts and our judgments.

1. We need to judge our own hearts through the Scripture. Vv. 19-20.

It is amazing of how high we think of self. Most believers in Jesus Christ do not believe in the doctrine called original sin. Original sin does not teach about the first sin that came into the world, but more importantly that right from birth we were born sinners, conceived in sin. The problem is not that we sin, but we sin because we are sinners. It is the core of who we are. And even as believers who have been given a new nature we can suffer from spiritual blindness. And that is why God gives us his powerful word which illumines our hearts to see things we would never see about ourselves, and we need to let it do its great work in our lives. Heb. 4:12 says, "**For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.**" It is able to go and do and bring change where everything else has fail. And that is to bring that conviction and necessary change in our lives. But we have to be willing to see that sin, and our need of Christ's grace for that daily change to take place.

So look at verse 19, "**Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?**" They are challenging him about his authority and he changes the argument, and he uses the authority that they accept, and that is the Law of Moses. You all recognize this as from God and as an authority over your life. And his argument is against the religious leaders. Yet none of you keep that Law. And that is easy to see just by looking into the royal standard. Paul says in Romans 3:19-20 something similar, "**Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.**" How many are justified in God's sight through the Law? No one. We cannot fathom how shocking this was a statement to the religious leaders, but at the same time with those who want to see - how obvious it is. None are righteous, no not one!

And he even gives evidence - **“Why do you seek to kill me?”** The Jewish leaders were plotting to kill Jesus which was breaking the Law on so many different levels. John has already informed us of that plot against Jesus, but look at the response in verse 20, **“The crowd answered, ‘You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?’”** Now look first of all who is responding because this is so important, “The crowds answered.” This is a different group from verse 15 where it says “The Jews marvelled.” This is the crowd of Jewish individuals that have come up to the Feast, and right here they are defending the religious leaders. And they make a strong accusation against him here, “You have a demon.” We know the religious leaders accused Jesus of doing his miracles through the power of Beelzebub, and here they may have that intention, but it could be more like you have lost your mind. You are speaking lies and irrationalities. And what they are doing is ignoring the obvious. Because, look at what they say, “Who is seeking to kill you?” We already saw in this verse that no one spoke openly about Jesus because of fear of the religious authorities in verse 13. It was well established that they wanted to kill him.

Let me make a couple of observations. One is that the tide has certainly turned against Jesus. It is easy to think that the only ones ever against Jesus were the religious leaders but here we see that the vast majority have turned against Jesus. It is the continuation of the rejection of Christ that we saw in the last chapter when the large band of followers and disciples left Jesus. The difference between the crowds and the religious leaders is evaporating. And very soon, all will stand opposed - the crowds, the religious leaders, the Romans, and even his disciples will forsake him and Jesus will stand all alone as he makes that perfect offering for our sin.

The other observation to see here is the denial of the obvious. There is an unwillingness to accept reproof from either Jesus or the Law. They denied his right to teach no matter how impressive therefore I do not need to listen to him, and now they deny what the very Law says about them. No one is trying to kill you - get real! But let me ask the question, because all of us will admit that we are sinners and still have sin in our lives, and still fail daily. But when the Scriptures rebuke us and they will, what is our response? When Jesus commands us to forgive seven times seventy, or when the Scriptures says look at the opposite sex as your sister or brother and not an object of lust, or when it condemns our anger and says do not let the sun go down on it, how do we respond? It is so easy to deny the obvious sin, or make some excuse that it really is not bad or our sin is justified. But what the Scripture and God call us to do is to repent quickly and to seek God’s glory and grace. The longer we put it off the more entrenched we are in that sin, and the more that we actually deny that very sin in our lives. The more we are unwilling to see our hearts and truly change. This is true of the religious leaders and the crowd. And this even affects our relationships with others. The more condemning we become of others, especially those who keep the Word. We will find something to condemn them.

2. We need to see the grace of recognizing sin in our lives. V. 21-24.

One of the things that we become accustomed to is seeing the sin of others but not seeing sin in our own lives. And sometimes it is because someone’s sin is so obvious. It might be adultery or pornography or a violent temper. We might not be guilty of that so we are quick to judge and should, but our judgment lacks very little

compassion and empathy because we just do not see sin in our own hearts. It might be that we like the attention of a pretty lady or a handsome man. It might be a daydream or whatever, but we realize none of us are above lust or have been guiltless. We might not blow up at others but we stew and steam inside. And even when we confront others, seeing how we struggle with that sin in our own lives helps us go not above someone but as a fellow sinner directing them not to our impeccable lives but to the grace of Jesus.

So look at verse 21, **“Jesus answered them, ‘I did one work, and you all marvel at it.’** Jesus does not respond to the answer that they have just given about their denial that they are trying to kill him, but goes to the heart of the matter, and that is the miracle that he did in chapter 5 when he healed the lame man who was in that condition for 38 years, and their condemnation of that good work because it was done on the Sabbath. Look as he continues in verse 22-23, **“Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well?”** And here is the crux of the matter: they were operating with false judgments about the Sabbath. This is a case study on how they selectively judged others whole not truly seeking the spirit and the glory of the command.

The fourth command was to keep the Sabbath holy, to do no work, but it was to be set aside as a day of rest and refreshment, and to think and dwell on the God of the Sabbath. And the thrust of Jesus’ argument is basically that sometimes in order to obey God, his commands, and seek to love him and others, sometimes some commands had to be broken, because of the greater command to love God and my fellow man. In other words some commands took precedence over others. And what Jesus does is take up the issue of circumcision which was the cutting away of the foreskin of a Jewish boy on the eighth day after birth. But some times that eighth day fell on the Sabbath. Well, obviously one command would have to be broken. Either the boy was not circumcised on that day or he was and there was work done on the Sabbath. And here Moses gave the right to circumcise even on the Sabbath. And circumcision was a mark of the covenant, and also a mark that one day we would be whole. It was a sign that God would heal all our woes and adversities.

Now please do not misunderstand the text. Jesus is not proving here his point in verse 19 that all are sinners. You are breaking the Sabbath. They are not sinning against God because of the greater Law that pointed ultimately to their redemption. Well, if that is true Jesus says, and this points to our healing, how much more the healing of the whole body of this man? What work is more merciful? Some commands are higher and more glorious. That is exactly what we did during this pandemic. We had many commands, like not forsaking the Lord’s day, and not disobeying the governing authorities, and how to love our neighbours as ourselves. Do we not meet for a time so that we can love others and protect them? Do we meet and therefore disregard the laws that have been placed under us? It is so easy to take a stand and say that my way and my sight is the clearest. But there are some commands that do take precedence. Jesus is not an anti-Sabbatarian but holds to the Sabbath and obedience to the Sabbath. The wrong interpretation was the whole basics that covered

up what was already in their hearts and that is the vindication that they wanted to kill Christ. They wanted to commit murder. Well, he is a law breaker.

And over this last time it is so easy to be so harsh in our judgments of others, especially those who disagree with us. Some of the online articles that were well written on both sides has a place where you could write comments, and individuals, born again individuals just wrote the most condemning and inflammatory words that you would never imagine they were written by believers in Christ. There are churches that took a completely different approach than what we took as a church. But as I look at the gospel they preach and the doctrine they hold to - it is the same doctrine and the same gospel. Judgments take over our lives so much that we stop seeing what is going on in the inside of our hearts. We start to look at people as either obstacles at best or as enemies at worst. The Jews circumcised on a day that there was no work. The priests in the Temple, made sacrifices and carried out their priestly work on the Sabbath. No one ever say that this was sin before God.

Jesus was actually asked what the foremost command. And what they meant by that is you had lighter and heavier commands. And listen to the answer that Jesus gives in Matt. 22:37-40, **"And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."** These are weighty commands, and through obeying these two commands we love God and love our neighbour.

And look at verse 24, **"Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."** The meaning of appearances is not just something outside, but it has the meaning of superficial, not trying to think through all of the scripture - both morally and theologically. This is what they did with Jesus. They judged him superficially rather than seeing the exceptions to the Sabbath regulations, and that mercy is so much higher. But they missed the deeper message that Jesus is none other than the fulfilment of the Sabbath. It is in him and him alone that we find our rest. The healing of the lame man was only an illustration of that.

So think through the weightier commands to love God with all my being. Do my decisions promote worship of God, and seek to bring him glory? Or am I just going along with the easiest decision and the one that brings me the most comfort? Also about loving my neighbour. Do the decisions that I make speak of my love for others, their spiritual welfare and even well-being, or do I care only about my comfort? You see it is so easy to judge others but not look at what we are doing and saying and acting. And really not concentrate on how in the circumstances that God has placed us in - how do we best glorify God and minister to others, not stand oppose to the purposes of God and stand opposed to others.