

Time Is Short  
John 7:32-36

This whole chapter is a fascinating chapter that takes place during the Feast of Tabernacles where Jesus teaches the masses that are gathered in Jerusalem. And we have seen two interactions with Jesus thus far. We have seen his interactions with the crowds which would have been the pilgrims from Galilee who accused Jesus of even having a demon. The big thing that they took issue with is that he healed a man on the Sabbath and because the Law prescribed no work on the Sabbath they concluded that he is from Satan or at least a delusional man. Jesus gives them a lesson on the Sabbath and that mercy always trumps every thing on the Sabbath. There are some laws that take precedence over others. They knew that even with their laws of circumcision.

Next he has a debate with the citizens of Jerusalem. They ask among themselves if this could be the Christ because the religious authorities have not laid a hand on him. But they quickly discount that idea because they know where he came from, and they have faulty thoughts that Messiah would arise from nowhere. Jesus corrects their faulty evaluations of Messiah, that he knows where he comes from, and they sought to arrest him because of what he spoke but were unable because his hour had not yet come. In other words it is not time for him to give his life as that perfect lamb, that perfect sacrifice. That would wait for Passover.

And look at verse 31 the conclusion that many made, **“Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, ‘When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?’”** Many came to the obvious conclusion. And you will see that light and darkness throughout this whole chapter. There is so much rejection and opposition to Jesus in this chapter but it is mixed with light such as we see here in verse 31. We will see more of that light when one of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus will defend Christ, and when the guards go to arrest Jesus but do not because no one spoke like this man. In the midst of so much darkness God’s light is always penetrating!

And as we come to verse 32 and following we come to the third encounter and this group is different from the last group. This group is the religious leaders in Israel. Look at verse 32, **“The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him.”** They heard the “muttering” of the crowd and how many had come to the conclusion that Jesus is the Messiah. I do not think that we can comprehend the tension in this passage of Scripture especially with all these various groups assailing Jesus at this time. Even the crowds that have believed on Jesus mutter, the meaning is soft tones and whispers because they recognize the opposition and hatred of the religious leaders that are watching all of this take place. And now the religious leaders take the lead and move in with the temple police to arrest Jesus.

And it is amazing to look at the opposition that Jesus encountered, along with the disciples after him, and Paul and other faithful believers. And we learn so much by looking at his life and the need to endure in doing the will of the Father because we live in a Christianity that is full of emotional and fragile quitters. When the going gets tough

we are ready to give up. Pastors leave their pastorate when times gets tough. God is calling me somewhere else. Or people jump ship and go to another church rather than seeking to endure in love even when it is tough to love others or when they do not get their will. And with the unsaved, we leave the gospel at the door because we are just not willing to engage in the hassle that it might cause in making Jesus's known. Here Jesus engages with these various groups, and the one before that we will look at tonight is the most hostile, and yet he keeps extending the grace of God to every group. He will not deviate from the path of God or give another message. And what I want to look at is two things tonight. I want us to see the warning to the religious leaders, and then I want us to see their response. And it is incredible to see that those who do not want to believe on Christ will always come up with some misunderstanding of his words, either on purpose or for some other reason.

1. We see Christ's warning. Vv. 33-34.

There are a couple of things that have to be pointed out here. One is that everyone always assumes that grace will be available to them tomorrow, and that they will have a tomorrow. And God is glorious and grand and abundant in his grace, and holds that grace out to sinners daily. But there is coming an end of that grace. We understand from texts such as Heb. 10:30-31 says, **"For we know him who said, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."** One of the missing doctrines in Christianity today is that there is an awful day of judgment where God's full wrath and fury will be placed on guilty sinners. Either that or if it is taught it is the most ignored doctrine because I always have tomorrow. But it should be obvious from this text and warning from Christ that time runs out.

The other thing that this text indicates is something we saw last time we were together and that is God is the one who determines our seasons and times of our lives, but also the events of our lives, what comes in and what doesn't. Nothing can come into your life that has not been ordained by God. Therefore we need to trust in him with all the events of our lives. We can hold fast that there are reasons and purposes for all the events and sufferings and seasons that our God sends us through, and we need to apply that truth to whatever we are going through right now.

So look at what Jesus says here, **"Jesus then said, 'I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me.'"** This is the fourth dialogue that Jesus has in this chapter. And the thing that happens to be different here from the other three is Jesus is the first to speak. And he says that what happens to him and when that happens is not ultimately depended on the temple police or the religious authorities, whom these words are spoken to. It is God who determines what happens to him. And certainly for those who have eyes to see what Jesus is talking about know it is his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension into heaven to the right hand of the Father on high. His ministry has almost run its full course. He will return to the one who sent me. And I love that statement because it reminds us that Jesus came first and foremost not to die for sinners, although that is true, and he did do that to purchase our redemption, but that was just a means to an end. The end was doing the will of the Father. It was to glorify the Father by accomplishing his full will.

And we all have been given a short time. Our lives are like the breath on a cold day that quickly comes and quickly goes. It is like the summer grass or flower that is only here for a short time. But what are we doing with our time? What is our main goal in life? What do we want to accomplish? There is nothing greater that we could accomplish than to do the will of God, to seek to have him glorified by having that single-minded focus that all of life is about him. So many think they have so much time, and they say I will give God tomorrow, I will learn of him, serve him, follow him tomorrow, and life simply vanishes away. There is no greater life that you and I could ever live than the life that is patterned after Jesus Christ. Jesus knew his days were numbered and every moment of every day he chose what is highest and best and that is to do the will of his Father in heaven.

Listen as Jesus continues, **"You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come."** This is a statement of identity and destination. It is a statement of identity in that Jesus says "You will seek me." And the meaning here is the religious leaders made up here of the Pharisees and chief priests, this would have been the ruling Sanhedrin, would profess that they are seeking God and they are seeking the true Messiah, but by rejecting Jesus they were rejecting the key - the cornerstone of the whole foundation of God. And therefore if Jesus is going away and they have not trusted in him they will not come into his paradise or his kingdom or his heaven. And he states it as an impossibility. You cannot come. There cannot be anymore stark warning of the religious leaders to the words of Jesus.

So when Jesus says these words he realizes that the cross looms in the not too distant future. He knows that he will soon return to his Father above. He is indicating to the religious leaders that they are not ultimately in control. He indicates that if they reject him they reject God and there is no hope for them but only judgment. And he says those haunting words, "I will be with you a little longer." The time is short for all of us also. How much longer will God be patient before he unleashes his wrath on a world that constantly rejects and scorns his Son we do not know. Jesus is coming back in judgment and none of us know the day or hour, but we do know that it is closer than it has ever been. None of us know the day of our departure from this world, but we do know that it is closer than it has ever been, where we will come before an awesome and holy God. Listen to the words of Isaiah 55:6, **"Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near."** The time of grace time is coming to an end. Call upon him today - today is the day of grace. Never assume that you have tomorrow. The time is short, shorter than it ever has been.

## 2. We need to see the response of the religious leaders. Vv. 35-36

It is amazing to see the response to Jesus' words throughout the gospel of John. Whether to Nicodemus that you must be born again, or to the Samaritan woman that if she drinks the water that he gives her she will never thirst again; because so often his words are misunderstood - words that should be easy to understand but those who hear just do not have the ears to listen and perceive. Or the crowds of the last chapter when Jesus says you must eat of my flesh and drink of my blood, walk away from Jesus wanting nothing to do with him. So often people take the words of Jesus and make them mean something that they were never intended so that they might ridicule and demean and reject him. And although the religious leaders would not

know the full impact or meaning of his words, they are not interested in trusting in Jesus or understanding him. So his words are just mocked and their response is full of sarcasm. This is the response of the grace extended by Jesus and warning of Jesus.

So look at verse 35, **“The Jews said to one another, ‘Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?’**” These words are not even directed toward Jesus but among themselves, and remember the term “Jews” more often than not throughout this is not talking about all the people but the religious leaders. And when they discuss the words of Jesus it is not to understand what he says but used as a further reason to reject him. They no doubt take the words of Jesus and think that he is about to flee from them either because they are seeking to arrest him or because they have rejected his message, so he going to hide and bring his message to someone else. Maybe he intends to go into the Dispersion. This means to seek Jews who would listen to his message in other places outside of Israel, outside of Judah and Galilee. Maybe he would even go and teach non-Jews or Greeks and that would be abhorrent to the Jews, and would be the worst blasphemy and certainly make that person unclean before God. They were the chosen people of God and if he went to Gentile lands it is further evidence he is not from God.

And there is such an irony in this passage in that this gospel is written by John who is a Jew, and the main message of this gospel is that it is a gospel for all irregardless of who you are. The universal nature of that message is carried in verses like John 3:16, **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”** It is not limited by ethnic, origin or culture or anything else that divides individuals. It is for all sinners irregardless of who they are. The other irony is that John is probably writing this gospel at a late date from Ephesus, and there is a thriving church in that town, and the gospel has already gone through all of the Roman Empire and even beyond, and the vast majority of those who are believers in Christ are actually non- Jews at this time. It is amazing to look at the wisdom that these men thought they had as they mocked Christ, and how God turned it into foolishness. It is another example how the wisdom and ways of God are so much higher than that of man. God’s purposes can never be thwarted and when those purposes come to pass all we can do is praise him.

And listen how their mockery continues in verse 36, **“What does he mean by saying, ‘You will seek me and you will not find me,’ and, ‘Where I am you cannot come’?”** They repeat the same thing and you can almost imagine them chuckle as they say these words to one another. But it is also noteworthy how often words of Scripture or Jesus, the statements of God have been a haunting reminder to those that hear. So often they hear and they mock but in those times when they are by themselves and they have time to think these words or Jesus’ words will haunt them. They will see the words of Christ come to pass. They will witness the death of Jesus and even revel and mock him while he hung on the cross. But they will also hear, and maybe some of them will even visit that empty tomb. They will hear of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. They will witness the foundation of the church, and the rapid spread of that gospel message. And because they will defiantly and proudly and arrogantly keep rejecting him, they will hear, “You will seek me and you will not find me.” “Where I am

you cannot come.” It is another testament of the hardness of the human heart that individuals would rather be haunted by the truths of Scripture than bow the knee to Jesus and have the promise of life eternal in him.

And I want you to realize the core problem is pride. Before you can ever see Jesus and the need of him you need to see you sin and the eternal cost of your sin. The gospel always humbles. If you do not realize this there is no need of the Jesus of the Bible. And this is what the religious leaders were like. They expected the Messiah to come and pat them on the back and say - well done, you have earned your place in my kingdom. They expected him to damn all other people and nations. But they did not see their sin. People who see their sin and the wrath of God are the ones that come to Christ. Luther explained it this way, **“God works by contraries so that a man feels himself to be lost in the very moment when he is on the point of being saved. When God is about to justify a man, he damns him. Whom he would make alive he must first kill. God’s favor is so communicated in the form of wrath that it seems farthest when it is at hand. . . . When he believes himself to be utterly lost, light breaks. Peace comes in the word of Christ through faith.”**

But even after the warning of Jesus they chose to mock and ridicule him. This is not the Christ they wanted. And you can see that even today. Because man has such a high view of self, they have turned Jesus into something he was never meant to be, and in the end they hate Jesus. There are those who turn Jesus into a political figure, either for liberalism or conservatism. And when the political system does not go their way they are frustrated at Jesus. Jesus is the Saviour of health and wealth. And when I do not get the health and wealth that I think I deserve, then there is anger at Jesus. Or Jesus is the Saviour of my marriage. I will just follow him and I will have the most happy marriage. But when problems and difficulties arise, this is not fair, I don’t deserve this! Then there is anger at Jesus.

And the thing that unites all of these forms, and false ways of Christianity is a failure to see our need, a failure to see sin. Those who even believe those false ways many times mock those who are true believers. The question becomes: what are you believing about Jesus? What are you believing about God? Are you believing the truth about your desperate need? Are you willing to believe on Jesus who saves us from God’s just wrath? There is only one Jesus, and he has stood up and made himself known even through great opposition. It is now time to not only understand his words but trust in him. Don’t let his words haunt you but because your trusted in him they have become such a source of comfort and joy.

And for believers, let us make the most of the stewardship of time. Let’s us seek in whatever situation, circumstance we are in to make much of the Lord by following him. Let us follow in the footsteps of Jesus. God is so good in giving today to live for him.