

John 7: 25-36 - Him You Do Not Know

Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, "Is not this the man whom they 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? But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from." So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I come from. 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. So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, "When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?"

The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him. Jesus then said, "I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come." 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? What does he mean by saying, 'You will seek me and you will not find me,' and, 'Where I am you cannot come'?"

We are continuing our series in the gospel of John this morning, and we pick up in John 7 with Jesus at the feast of Booths, or the feast of Tabernacles, the purpose of which was to celebrate God's faithfulness to the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings.

And Jesus, despite facing mounting threats and opposition, and even people who want to kill him, has decided to attend the feast in Jerusalem.

And when he gets there and starts to teach, he is basically met by a split crowd. There are those who are impressed by his miracles and who believe in some of the things he is saying, and there are those who are angered by his claims and the fact that he is healing people on the Sabbath day, and who desperately want to kill him.

v.25-27

Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, "Is not this the man whom they 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? But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from."

So there is a lot of talk and interest about this Jesus of Nazareth. He is doing miracles; he is teaching with learning and authority that is very compelling; he is kind and compassionate, but not unwilling to stand up to the religious authorities.

And the question arises...could this be the Christ? Could this be the promised Messiah that we have been hoping for so desperately? Is this the one we have been waiting for?!?!

But some of the Jews response is that Jesus cannot be the Christ, because they know where Jesus comes from and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he has come from.

The reason for this is that many of the rabbis taught that when the Messiah, or Christ appeared, he would arise out of total obscurity and nobody would know where he came from.

This was a popular teaching in Jewish culture and many of the Jews believed it even though it was contrary to the Scriptures and contrary to what Jesus himself said!

For example...

Micah 5:2

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

When King Herod asked his scribes where the Messiah would be born, in Matthew 2, they responded by quoting this passage from Micah.

But the Jews said, no, that doesn't fit what we've been taught and what we believe.

So, notice what's happening here. This is important!

Some of the Jews are deciding to believe cultural teachings and beliefs, over what the Scriptures teach and over what Jesus said about himself!

The Bible may say this, but we are choosing to believe this about Jesus instead.

This isn't a new phenomenon. The Jews were doing it 2000 years ago.

200 years ago Thomas Jefferson created "The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth", more commonly known as the Jefferson bible.

Jefferson didn't believe in miracles, and he didn't believe in the divinity of Jesus. Instead he saw Jesus as a great moral teacher and example to follow.

So he used a razor and glue to cut and paste the gospels into a version that left out all miracles and all mentions of the trinity and the divinity of Jesus, including his resurrection.

Now, Jefferson may have gone to the extreme (most people aren't creating their own versions of the Bible), but the reality is that this is a huge problem in the church today.

Jesus says or does things that don't fit with our cultural beliefs and ideologies, so we ignore them or make subtle changes.

Or maybe we take something the Bible says and we change the meaning so that it fits with our cultural ideologies and viewpoints.

Let me give you an example...**GOD IS LOVE** (1 John 4)

We could spend an entire year preaching on this one phrase. Pastor Marc and I once read an 850 page book with that title.

The meaning of this statement is huge and magnificent, but popular culture has taken it to mean that God accepts us and tolerates us the way we are.

Our sin doesn't matter; our lifestyle doesn't matter; what we treasure and value doesn't matter; our sexual practices and gender identification don't matter; how we spend our money and our time doesn't matter...

None of it matters because God is love! He accepts us, and being a Christian means we accept and affirm everyone no matter what.

We've just about made it to John 8, and the chapter starts with a very well known story about a woman caught in the act of adultery. The religious authorities drag her before Jesus and say that according to the law she should be stoned (they were testing him).

Jesus bends down and starts writing in the dirt, and the Pharisees continue to ask him for his verdict. Eventually he stands up and says that whoever is without sin should cast the first stone.

He bends down and starts writing again and after a while he looks up and everyone is gone. He asks the woman, "Did no one condemn you?"
No one, she says.

And Jesus says, neither do I condemn you...then end.

Is that how it ends? Jesus says, "Go, and from now on sin no more".

I've been in the church all of my life, and I've heard dozens of sermons on this story. And just about every sermon is about "neither do I condemn you".

I can't remember any sermons on "go and sin no more".

Listen, because God is love, he doesn't accept you the way you are! God forbid that he would accept us the way we are. The Father sent Jesus to die for you so that you don't have to be the way you are...so that you can be made new!

Culture says not to worry about sin. God says to kill sin and pursue holiness. Culture says that sin isn't a big deal. Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, if your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out. If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off!

Jesus is not literally advocating dismemberment; he's simply speaking to the absolute seriousness and devastation of sin! Do anything necessary to kill sin in your life, even if it means the loss of something very valuable.

Culture says one thing...Jesus says something else.

Who are we going to listen to?

That's one example of how we have listened more to our cultural ideologies than Jesus, but I could give dozens more.

Culture tells us to pursue health, wealth and security above all things. Jesus tells us to take up our cross, follow him and seek first his kingdom! That to live is Christ and to die is gain!

People all over the world are giving their lives for the sake of the gospel, and we're worried about letting some refugees into our country. We're worried about being made fun of for our faith in Jesus. We're worried about having the latest gadgets and conveniences and living a safe, comfortable life.

Culture tells us our identity is gun-totin', conservative votin', flag waving Texans/Americans. God tells us our identity is crucified with Christ and we no longer live, but Christ lives in us!

Who are we going to listen to? Who are we listening to?

Are we more passionate about our needs and our rights, or about the gospel; about glorifying Jesus?

These Jews were more interested in popular legend and a cultural belief system than in what the Scriptures said and what Jesus said, and Jesus had a harsh response for them.

v. 28-30

So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I come from. 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. So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.

I believe that Jesus is being bitingly sarcastic here. So you think you know me, do you? You think you know where I came from, do you?

You have no idea who I am because you don't know the great I AM! I know him, because he sent me, but him you do not know!

You religious people who have spent your entire lives trying to know God...you don't know God!

Listen, did you know you can spend your entire life in church and not know God?

You can pray and tithe and even work as a leader in the church and not know God.

Some of the most sobering verses in all of Scripture are found in **Matthew 7:21-23**
"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

These are people performing miracles and Jesus says, I never knew you!

Listen, we do not get to decide who Jesus is. We are made in God's image, not the other way around!

There's no such thing as American Jesus, or conservative Jesus, or liberal Jesus, or millennial Jesus...

We either believe who he says he is, or we do not know him.

If your Jesus changes with the cultural fads and ideas, then you don't know Jesus.

A lot of the Jews aren't too happy with Jesus' response, but some of them are still wondering...could this be the Christ?

The Pharisees hear the crowd muttering these things and decide they need to put an end to it. They're going to arrest Jesus and put an end to him once and for all. So they send officers to arrest him, and this is how Jesus responds:

v.33-34

Jesus then said, "I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come."

Jesus first tells them that they don't know God, and then proceeds to tell them that they have absolutely no power and no control over him.

He doesn't fit into their cultural molds and he's going to do the will of the Father and there's nothing they can do to stop him or control him.

He will go to the cross, because it's the will of the Father, not because they put him there.

And then he will be raised from the dead, ascend to heaven and be glorified at the right hand of the Father, and there is nothing they can do to change that.

Jesus is not hindered by cultural misconceptions and the human will.

But he wants us to truly know him!

I want to know him! And I want you to know him!

I really love soccer (the real football). My favorite team is Barcelona and my favorite player is Lionel Messi.

And my kids know that Messi is my favorite player, and Ellie, when she was younger, used to tell me I should call him or go visit him or invite him to come to our house.

And I explained to her that the reason I couldn't do those things was that even though I liked him and watched him on tv and knew a lot about him...I didn't actually know him.

Today we need to ask ourselves, do I really know Jesus?

Do I believe who he says he is, and everything he says about himself? Or do I believe what our American culture says about him?

Do I believe along with the apostle Paul that everything is garbage compared to the unsurpassed greatness of knowing Jesus? Or am I using Jesus to justify my pursuit of less satisfying things?

Even garbage can taste good to someone who's starving to death, but it will never satisfy you!

Allowing culture to dictate to us who Jesus is, is nothing short of idolatry. It's creating God in our image.

And to that Jesus can only say, you don't know me.

Do you know him?

Jesus isn't hiding...he's not unknowable. But you will never truly know him until you believe that he is who HE says he is, and not anyone else.

Some of you here today have maybe been allowing culture to tell you who Jesus is, and today is the day for you to break down those idols and let the word of God tell you who Jesus is...to let Jesus tell you who he is.

Hosea 6:1-3

Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth.