

66. The Gospel of John—7:14-39

“A Word for the Thirsty Soul”

(3/24/19)

John 7:14-15 (AMP)

¹⁴ When the Feast was already half over, Jesus went up into the temple [court] and began to teach. ¹⁵ The Jews [religious leaders] were astonished. They said, How is it that this Man has learning [is so versed in the sacred Scriptures and in theology] when He has never studied [‘been trained’]?

Up until this point, Jesus’ enemies (religious leaders) had been attacking the things He *did*—ministering and healing people on the Sabbath.

But in particular, this goes all the way back to chapter 5 where Jesus healed a man who had been crippled for 38 years and told him to **“Rise, take up your bed and walk”**—we read in verses 9 and 16:

John 5:9, 16 (NKJV)

⁹ And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath...¹⁶ For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.

Jesus’ enemies are still ‘stewing’ about this as we come to chapter 7—we know that because the Lord mentions it—

John 7:21-23 (NKJV)

²¹ Jesus answered and said to them, "I did one work, and you all marvel. ²² Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. ²³ If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?

Jesus is saying to these religious men, that they were also ‘guilty’ of violating the Sabbath by circumcising baby boys on the Sabbath (if it fell on the eighth day after his birth).

The point Jesus is making is that—if they could ‘*remove*’ flesh on the Sabbath, then why was it wrong for Him to ‘*restore*’ flesh on the Sabbath?

In Mark’s gospel, Jesus said—“*the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath*”.

In other words, God gave the Sabbath to be a blessing and not a curse to His people—and therefore, it is always right (and legal) to do good on the Sabbath—

Matthew 12:11-12 (NLT2)

¹¹ [Jesus]...“If you had a sheep that fell into a well on the Sabbath, wouldn’t you work to pull it out? Of course you would. ¹² And how much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Yes, the law permits a person to do good on the Sabbath.”

But these religious leaders didn’t care about hurting people—all they cared about was their legalistic obsession with the Law and how their meticulous adherence to it made them look so righteous.

John 7:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ **Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."**

Their traditions had blinded them to God’s truth and caused them to judge Jesus based on what ‘appeared’ to them to be right—but was not a righteous judgment.

Isaiah 11:3-4 (NKJV)

³ His delight [Messiah] *is* in the fear of the LORD, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; ⁴ But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. (Comment)

And so, up until this point Jesus’ enemies were furious with Him because of what He *did*.

However, at this point in the narrative, Jesus began to teach openly in the Temple precincts, and so now His enemies directed their anger at Him for what He *taught*—His doctrine.

First of all, they were taken back because He taught with such authority and power (Luke 4:32)—He never quoted the rabbis to add weight to His teachings as the scribes and Pharisees did.

John 7:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ And the Jews marveled, saying, "How does this Man know letters, having never studied?"

One author put it this way—

"The Jews were amazed at what He taught because He did not have any credentials from their approved rabbinical schools. But since He lacked this "proper accreditation," His enemies said that His teachings were nothing but private opinions and not worth much."

But Jesus made sure they knew that His teaching didn't come from man and therefore He didn't need any human accreditation for His teaching to be authoritative—

John 7:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.

The word '**doctrine**' means *teaching*—in Jesus' case, 'the Word of God'!

John 12:49-50 (NKJV)

⁴⁹ For I have not spoken on My own *authority*; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. ⁵⁰ And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak."

But then Jesus added a promise—

John 7:17-18 (AMP)

¹⁷ If any man desires to do His will (God's pleasure), he will know (have the needed illumination to recognize, and can tell for himself) whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking from Myself *and* of My own accord *and* on My own authority. ¹⁸ He

who speaks on his own authority seeks to win honor for himself. [He whose teaching originates with himself seeks his own glory.] But He Who seeks the glory *and* is eager for the honor of Him Who sent Him, He is true; and there is no unrighteousness *or* falsehood *or* deception in Him.

Verse 17 is the secret to knowing God's truth as opposed to false doctrine.

If a person's heart truly wants to do the will of God (unconditional obedience) and desires to live for the glory of God (v.18)—Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will illuminate their understanding so that person will absolutely know and be sure what is written in the Bible is truly God's Word!

The British preacher F.W. Robertson said that—“*obedience is the organ of spiritual knowledge.*”

And this explains why these religious leaders (who were highly educated in the Jewish Scriptures) did not understand what Jesus was teaching and rejected His doctrine.

It was because their hearts were hardened, and they had no desire to obey God—or to put it in the O.T. vernacular, “*they were stiff-necked and rebellious*” and therefore couldn't understand Jesus' doctrine when they heard it. (Acts 7:51)

Warren Wiersbe—

“*Is our Lord suggesting here a “pragmatic test” for divine truth? Is He saying, “Try it! If it works, it must be true!” and thus suggesting that if it does not work it must be false? This kind of a test would lead to confusion, for almost any cultist could say, “I tried what the cult teaches, and it works!” No, our Lord's statement goes much deeper. He was not suggesting a shallow “taste test” but rather the deep personal commitment of the person to truth. The Jews depended on education and authorities and received their doctrine secondhand, but Jesus insisted that we experience the authority of truth personally. The Jewish leaders were attempting to kill Jesus, yet at the same time they claimed to understand God's truth and obey it. This proves that an enlightened and educated mind is no guarantee of a pure heart or a sanctified will. Some of the world's worst criminals have been highly intelligent and well-educated people.*”

John 7:32-36 (NKJV)

³² The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things concerning Him, and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him. ³³ Then Jesus said to them, "I shall be with you a little while longer [roughly 6 months before His crucifixion], and *then* I go to Him who sent Me. ³⁴ You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come." ³⁵ Then the Jews said among themselves, "Where does He intend to go that we shall not find Him? Does He intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? ³⁶ What is this thing that He said, 'You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come'?"

Well, obviously He was talking about going back to heaven after His death and resurrection—a place these hard-hearted unbelievers (Jewish leaders) would never see—

John 8:21 (NKJV)

²¹ Then Jesus said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come." (Comment)

"The next time they shall behold Him will be at the Great White Throne. Whither He had gone they could not come, for 'Except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God.'"

As far as people not being able to follow Him to heaven—He said the same thing to His disciples later on—

John 13:33 (NKJV)

³³ Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so now I say to you.

John 14:2-3 (NKJV)

² In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

Now, that brings us to the climax of John 7—which began by telling us that the Feast of Tabernacles was at hand (v.2).

John 7:37 (NKJV)

³⁷ On the last day, that great *day* of the feast...

The Feast of Tabernacles was one of the seven feasts that God gave to Israel talked about in Leviticus 23.

As I said last week, it was a seven-day feast that began on the 15th day of the seventh month—Tishrei (September/October) and continued through the 21st.

The first day and the day after the feast referred to as the ‘*eighth day*’, (known as *Shemini Atzeret*) were considered sacred assemblies or *Sabbaths*—no work of any kind was permitted on those two days.

And so, in accordance with God’s command in Leviticus 23, His people made “*booths*” or tabernacles out of palm branches or with the boughs of other leafy trees—and for seven days they moved out of the comfort of their homes into these makeshift huts.

As we said last time, the Feast of Tabernacles was both an agricultural and a historical feast.

As an agricultural feast it celebrated the great fall harvest when God had blessed His people with an abundance of crops—which is why it was also called *the Feast of Ingathering*.

But it was also an historical feast commemorating Israel’s forty-year wilderness wandering where they lived in tents (temporary housing) and how God sustained them all those years providing bread from heaven and especially water from the rock.

Now later, a few centuries before the time of Christ, a ceremony was added each day to the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles called—the Water-Libation Ceremony.

During Jesus’ lifetime, the feast started each morning at the time of the morning sacrifice where the High Priest took a golden pitcher and led a procession of priests down to the Pool of Siloam.

The pitcher was then filled with water and was carried in procession back to the temple mount.

As the procession came to the Watergate, three trumpet blasts were made to mark the joy of the occasion and the people recited Isaiah 12:3, "*With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.*"

At the temple, while onlookers watched, the priests would march once around the altar of sacrifice with the water pitcher while the temple choir sang the Hallel Psalms (113–118)—the water was then poured out on the altar as an offering (a water libation) to God.

This was done each day for the first six days of the feast reminding the people how God had provided water in the wilderness to satisfy their ancestor's thirst.

The seventh day of the feast was a great day of celebration. (The eighth day was one of "*solemn assembly*"—Lev. 23:36; see Num. 29:35).

This seventh day was known as "*The Great Hosanna*" and climaxed the feast.

The previous *six* days the High Priest had marched around the altar once each day before pouring upon it the water from the Pool of Siloam.

But on the seventh day, the *great day* of the feast he marched around the altar *seven* times before pouring out the water on the altar. (Comment)

I believe at the very moment that the High Priest was pouring the water on the altar, at the very moment the feast reached its climax—Jesus stood on a rock or table and cried out saying—

John 7:37 (NKJV)

³⁷ ..."If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

In verse 37 we have the most succinct gospel presentation in all of Scripture, built around 3 key words: *thirsts*, *come*, and *drink*.

1. Thirsts

It's not that those who don't 'thirst' *can't* come to Christ—it's that those who don't thirst *won't* come to Christ.

Just like a person who doesn't thirst for water can't drink—but without the thirst, they have no desire and therefore won't drink.

In John 4, Jesus told a woman of Samaria that she had a 'thirst' in her soul that she had been trying to fill with one man after another, not realizing her thirst (emptiness) was really spiritual in nature—in other words she was thirsting for God and she didn't know it. (finish)

John 4:13-14 (NLT2)

¹³ Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. ¹⁴ But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."

There are many, many people in our society that are empty inside, but have stuffed that void with human relationships, sexual pleasure, material possessions or some other earthly commodity.

And even though they quickly 'thirst' again—it's good enough for them.

I mean, the satisfaction is limited and temporary—but as long as they keep stuffing it with sex, drugs/alcohol, and things from the local 'stuff-mart' they can 'tamp-down' the emptiness so that it's almost bearable.

And the reason is, because they're so gluttoned with the world, they don't really realize the void is a 'God-shaped' void and no amount of earthly 'stuff' will satisfy an empty soul!

Thankfully, many have realized this—that they have a ‘God-shaped’ void in their heart that only a relationship with God Himself thru His Son, Jesus Christ can fill and satisfy.

2. Come to Me

Please take note that Jesus didn’t say “*If you’re thirsty in your soul—‘come to religion’*”—as in, there are many roads that lead to God—pick one, because as long as you’re sincere it doesn’t matter.”

“That’s true—but I go to a Christian church so I’m good right?!”

Well, you would be if Jesus had said “*come to church*.”

Look, as a pastor, I know that coming to church is not the same as coming to Jesus.

This morning, churches across America are packed with people—all of whom have come to church—but few of those same people have come to Christ.

“Yes, but isn’t Jesus in churches?”—Today, not as much as you might think, as Jesus said to one last day’s church—

Revelation 3:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me [we’ll have fellowship with each other].

But even if you go to a good evangelical, Bible believing church—a church where Jesus is definitely there.

Even if that’s true—being in close proximity to Jesus—even coming in contact with Him or ‘brushing up against Him’ isn’t enough—(Mark 5:21-32—her’s was a touch of faith)

And that's exactly why Jesus finished His gospel presentation with the word '**drink**'—

3. Drink

To "**drink**" here means to believe in and receive Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior.

It means to take Him into our hearts as we would take a glass of water into our bodies.

It means believing in Him to the point of commitment. (Explain)

The result is—not only does the believer *receive* blessing, but he *becomes* a blessing to others.

John 7:38 (NKJV)

³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

Then John adds his own commentary sixty years later when he wrote his gospel—

John 7:39 (NKJV)

³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

That outpouring of the Holy Spirit happened on Pentecost when the Church was born.

But with regard to the filling of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life, know this—we were never intended by God to be 'reservoirs' to simply contain the Holy Spirit, but 'channels' through which the Holy Spirit can flow to a lost and dying world.

Let me just end by saying this—not everyone who '*thirsts*' and even '*comes to Jesus*' is necessarily going to wind up saved—I have in mind the rich young ruler when I say that.

The rich young ruler, **'thirsted'** for eternal life—he eagerly **“ran to Jesus** and knelt before Him, and asked, *'Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'* ” (Mark 10:17)

But in the end, he went away *'sorrowful'* (v.22) with his thirst still unquenched—because he was unwilling to take the next step and **'drink'** of Christ—that is receive Jesus into his heart by faith as his Lord and Savior.

There are many people in churches all across America at this moment, who like the rich young ruler, are thirsting in their soul—so, they come to church.

They 'run' to Jesus—but leave empty because they haven't really gone all the way where they have received Him into their heart as their personal Lord and Savior.

They didn't drink and therefore weren't filled and satisfied—because they weren't saved.

Eventually, they'll grow tired of church when it doesn't fill the emptiness inside them—and they'll be off trying to fill the void with something (or someone) new.

The 'day of grace' will eventually come to and end for them and the 'dark night' of a Christ-less eternity will begin—but will never end.

Isaiah 55:6 (NKJV)

⁶ Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near.

2 Corinthians 6:2 (NKJV)

² ...Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.

Hebrews 4:7 (NKJV)

⁷ ...*"Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts."*