

*The Great Sayings in the Gospels*  
*Message 87*  
*If Any Man Thirst*

John 7:1-24

- 1 After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.
- 2 Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.
- 3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.
- 4 For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.
- 5 For neither did his brethren believe in him.
- 6 Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready.
- 7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.
- 8 Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.
- 9 When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee.
- 10 But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.
- 11 Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he?
- 12 And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people.
- 13 Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.
- 14 Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.
- 15 And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?
- 16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.
- 17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.
- 18 He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.
- 19 Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?
- 20 The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?
- 21 Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.
- 22 Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.
- 23 If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?
- 24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. KJV

**Intro:**

What we have here is the beginning of the last phase of Jesus' earthly ministry. Scholars vary somewhat but generally agree that this begins either the last six months or year and a half of Jesus' life on earth.

He had been ministering in Galilee for well over a year and had brought that time to a close, demanding absolute commitment to Him from those who followed Him. We saw in the last message that He chose to return to Judea through Samaria, something none of the other Jews would have done. Therefore, his journey went unnoticed by the general Jewish population and He did not show Himself until the middle of the week. Notice how John skims over the Galilean ministry in v.1. It is obvious from his writing that he knew that this ministry had already been covered by others.

The occasion was the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles which was one of the feasts ordained by God in the Law of Moses.

Lev 23:39-44

- 39 Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath.
- 40 And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.
- 41 And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month.
- 42 Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths:
- 43 That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.
- 44 And Moses declared unto the children of Israel the feasts of the LORD. KJV

Attendance was required, at least of the men, for this feast. It served as a time of Thanksgiving for two reasons. First of all, it was after harvest and there was rejoicing for God's provision for the year. But it was also a time to rejoice over and remember gratefully the Providence of God which had kept Israel through the years when the nation was delivered from Egypt and lived in tents for 40 years.

A part of the ceremony was that everyone constructed for himself a temporary shelter, something like a tent and stayed in it for the week. These tents were also called 'booths' and they get pretty fancy today for those Jews who celebrate this feast. They were probably pretty simple affairs in Jesus' day, reflecting the simple life of the Jews who lived as nomads for 40 years. (Except, possibly for the Pharisees who always tried to outdo everyone else in matters of religion.)

This feast was observed in their seventh month, which roughly corresponds to September/October on our calendar. You will recall that their year began with Passover ever since their deliverance from Egypt, roughly our month of April.

So, there is a massive collection of Jews in Jerusalem, an ideal time for Jesus to begin to press forward in His ministry, which will ultimately infuriate many to the point that they call for His death. You will notice that His seeming absence itself called attention to Him among the people and caused them to be discussing His whereabouts. His sudden appearance in the middle of the week provoked, then, much attention.

#### **I. His message: Repentance.**

Jesus's comment to His brothers bears notice, v.7. "I testify to the world that its' works are evil." How far the Evangelical Church has come from the message of repentance that Jesus preached! One would search in vain in most cities to find even one church that spoke plainly concerning sin and the need for repentance.

For all of the millions being spent to promote "Christianity" the message of Jesus Christ is not being proclaimed to our world. Sin is any violation of the Law of God, either in doing what is forbidden or in not doing what is commanded. God is merciful to the repentant, those who turn from sin to obedience. But His only mercy to the determined rebel, he who either by defiance or neglect or wrong theology refuses to obey God? The only mercy for them is that they are not in Hell yet and still have an opportunity to cry out to Him for mercy.

Those who would follow Jesus must bear witness to the fact that the course of the world is an evil course. That can be done in many ways other than carrying a sign on the street saying "Repent, the end of the world is at hand." :-) We bear witness by not participating with those who do wickedly. We bear witness by living Godly lives, by letting it be known both publicly and privately that we follow Christ and make our decisions on the basis of what is taught in the Word of God. We bear witness by living consistently with what we profess, having no secret lives or hidden and ungodly behaviors. We bear witness by committed faithfulness to Christ's church, to the times of worship and study from the Word, and to the times of prayer. And..... when God provides the opportunity.... we speak to people about sin, righteousness and the certain coming Judgment of God upon all sin and rebellion against Him. Even then, such conversations can be gentle and loving, not haughty and condemning.

There is an interesting issue brought forward here by John concerning the manner by which Jesus came by His teachings and doctrine:

#### **I. The Origin and Source of His Message: The Deity.**

The Jews questioned His authority and, thus, His capacity to teach. He had not been trained in any of their schools, did not subscribed to their theology, had no credentials from any of their learned ones, was from Galilee, and so, thus, could not possibly have anything of value to say.

Jesus's response was that His message was from the Ultimate Authority. "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent Me." We know that He had God the Father in mind as He said that.

Have you ever looked at the New Testament, the Life of Jesus, the history of the Christian church and wondered if God could not have done better? "This is His plan?"

Jesus' half-brothers certainly questioned the methodologies.

- 4 For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.

Rome was the governmental and religious center of the world. Israel was hardly even noticeable on the world stage. The Son of God, the King of Kings, chose this little insignificant place and these insignificant men to introduce Himself? Certainly that is not a plan that you and I would have chosen.

And, even there, He ignored the great minds of the day, the scholars and the powerful orators of the Jewish religion? Rather than spend most of His time in Jerusalem, He spent in the countryside, speaking with ordinary people?

Truly, when we look at God's methodologies here we are left with many questions. If we are honest about it, there are many preachers who think that there are better plans and better methods for influencing people into the Kingdom of God.

But God's plan is that human beings, having been rebuked by their sins through the simple declaration of God's word, would humble themselves in faith and full repentance before God, surrendering their lives to Him completely and take up a life of faith and obedience to the Law of God as revealed in and through Jesus Christ.

His plan, also, is that from this group of repentant humans, some should become so committed to Him and so burdened for His Glory that they would give themselves as special servants to study the Word of God and declare it to others. The key ingredient in their effectiveness would not be human credentials but a life spent in search of the enabling, the Empowering of God, the Fulness of the Holy Spirit, that God might speak powerfully through them to the sinners they encounter so that the process might replicate itself in every generation.

Humanly speaking, this plan has been as ineffective as the plan to introduce Himself to the world through the little 3 ½ year ministry of Jesus Christ. But understand this, God has a plan and His plan will be accomplished with not one of His sheep being lost and not one goat making it into Glory.

Rev 7:9-10

- 9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

- 10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. KJV

If ever there is a Restoration of the True Church, an Awakening and a Revival of the kind that has visited the church throughout the centuries, it will come through people returning to the methodologies of Christ, men empowered by the Holy Spirit testifying to the world that its works are evil and calling men to True and Complete Repentance.

### I. **And His Appeal: “Come to the Water”**

John 7:37-39

- 37 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.  
38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.  
39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) KJV

Jesus has already spoken on this issue of “thirst” in regard to the issue of one’s relationship with God.

Matt 5:6

- 6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. KJV

In this passage, He added some “meat” to the teaching and some context for us.

- 17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

John 7:17

- 17 If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. NKJV

To “will to do His will” is to have a sincere desire to serve, worship and obey God. It is the very opposite of the will with man is born, the Will To Do His Own Will. It is a complete reversal of course, a deep and abiding desire to put his own self interest completely aside and serve only the interest of God.

***This is the person*** that Jesus was inviting to come to Him for the Living Water, the person who has come to that place of repentance where he sees his own will and the craving for his own desires and the headlong pursuit of his own lusts as being ***the problem*** in his life and has an earnest and abiding desire to live a different kind of life than that.

So, the question is, ***“How does a person come to the place that his abiding desire and purpose is to do the will of God?”***

Obviously some radical and permanent change must happen to him, but how? Where does the desire come from in a person who only lives to serve himself? Can he muster up within himself the desire to turn from everything that he desires and desire a whole new set of goals and principles?

The scriptures say “no.”

Jer 13:23

23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil. KJV

The question, of course, is rhetorical. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin and the leopard cannot change his spots. If they could, Jeremiah says, then those who only serve themselves could convert to the principle laid down by Jesus.

And if one cannot do good, cannot “change his spots,” then only Someone Else Who has access to the inner workings of his mind and soul can change their course. And, the only One Whom we know of who can do that is God Himself. Thus, the New Testament introduces us to the notion of Divine Regeneration carried out while the man himself is still in the bondage of his own will to sin.

Eph 2:1-10

1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;  
2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:  
3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.  
4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,  
5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)  
6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:  
7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.  
8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:  
9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.  
10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. KJV

My friend the thirst for God, the “will to do His will,” is a thing that comes to us by the Grace of God and not through our own efforts.

Preachers today are asking the wrong question. They ask, “do you want to go to heaven when you die?” But they should be asking, as Jesus did in many ways, “do you want to do the will of God?” “Are you hungry and thirsty for righteousness?” “Do you mourn over your sins and long to put them away in Christian repentance so that you might serve God?”

I am pretty sure they would have fewer respond to their invitations if these were the questions. In fact, many of them, I am sure, would have happen to them that which happened to Jesus, “and many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him.”

**Conclusion:**

If you are thirsty, if you will to do the Will of God, if you will turn from all your purposes to please your self, Jesus invites you to a life of plenty, a life of abundance, richness and blessing, a life free from the guilt as well as the power of sin.

He invites you to come to Him, to take up your cross and follow Him. He promised to provide you with all that you truly need and to enjoy the River of the Water of Life flowing through you and out to His glory and to the blessing of others.

There is no life like the one to which He calls those who truly thirst.