

**Gospel of John #10**  
**Feast of the Tabernacle:**  
***Stop Judging by Appearances***  
**John 7a:1-24**

3-3-24

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It was hard for me to distill this message to a main point. There is a lesson for us about how God invites us to be empowered by him and know the truth in addition to so many other things. This reminded me of a time before I was a Christian. . . . my next door neighbor had a vinyl record which we would listen to over and over of the movie Jesus Christ Superstar. There is a line from a song that says “One thing I’ll say for him, Jesus is cool.” This is really what we see throughout this gospel. Jesus knew his time, mission, and authority. I cannot do justice to this but I invite you to allow the Spirit to help you experience it.

A review from last week: Jesus said he was the bread of life.

When Jesus talks about “his hour” he is pointing to the cross. This is still about 6 months away in this passage. But he is going to Jerusalem and he knows what awaits him. John invites us to see it as well.

**John 7:1-24**

**1** After this, Jesus went around in Galilee. He did not want to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him.**2** But when the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near,

The feast of Tabernacles (or booths of tents) is a picture of God’s provision: people who celebrate this feast live outside for a week in a SUKAH, a booth to sleep in:

The first Sukkah?



Sukahs today might look like this:



This feast was bigger than Pentecost or Passover: *everyone* would go. Jesus's brothers wanted him to go but their reason is unclear. It may be that they wanted him to show off his miracles. The other possible reason was that they still didn't understand Jesus and thought he needed more followers. They wanted him to show himself to the world. Here, *the world* means not just the earth and its inhabitants but also the rebellion against God and his purposes:

**3** Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do. **4** No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." **5** For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

What Jesus's brothers wanted was similar today to a big church which wants to attract large numbers. John wants us to notice that even Jesus's own brothers didn't believe him. (Later, however, James became a leader in the church.)

**6** Therefore Jesus told them, "My time is not yet here; for you any time will do. **7** The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil. **8** You go to the festival. I am not going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come." **9** After he had said this, he stayed in Galilee.

There are many words for *time* in Greek; here, Jesus means "hora" which is the same word Jesus used with Mary and the wine. "Hora" signifies the cross: it starts the timer which moves Jesus toward the cross. He initially tells his brothers this is not the right time. If he went at the beginning of the festival, that would have invited a Palm-Sunday situation. Instead, he later quietly goes to the festival in obedience to God, not his brothers.

**10** However, after his brothers had left for the festival, he went also, not publicly, but in secret. **11** Now at the festival the Jewish leaders were watching for Jesus and asking, "Where is he?"

**12** Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, "He is a good man." Others replied, "No, he deceives the people." **13** But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the leaders.

"Jews" in this passage actually means Judeans, the people of the Jerusalem area. Sometimes it's the crowd or the leaders against Jesus. It doesn't mean *all* Jews: it's referring to the authority structures in Jerusalem.

**14** Not until halfway through the festival did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. **15** The Jews there were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having been taught?"

**16** Jesus answered, “My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. **17** Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

This is the dream of all my math students: that they could learn without studying. The Jewish leaders here meant that Jesus could know things without following rabbis. How could you be a faithful and gifted servant of Christ if you didn’t get the right degree at the right seminary? Of course, we have Scriptural examples:

**Acts 4:13** When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

### **Psalm 25: 8-14**

Psalm 25

- **8 Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.**
- **9 He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.**
- 10 All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful toward those who keep the demands of his covenant.
- 11 For the sake of your name, Lord, forgive my iniquity, though it is great.
- **12 Who, then, are those who fear the Lord? He will instruct them in the ways they should choose.**
- 13 They will spend their days in prosperity, and their descendants will inherit the land.
- **14 The Lord confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them.**
- 15 My eyes are ever on the Lord, for only he will release my feet from the snare.



This is saying if you follow Jesus faithfully, you get to know what is true. This is an invitation to sinners, to each of us, to humble ourselves.

**Matt 11:28** “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Come to me all who are...burden is light.

This is an invitation to learn, not without studying, but not from any particular institution except Jesus.

Note that Jesus’s authority is as the son of the Father, not because he was a great speaker or carpenter, etc. He was obedient to the Father, the source of his authority. We, too, can know whether He speaks truth or not and this comes from obedience.

Some time after I trusted Christ when I was a senior in college, I was doing sinful things. NonChristians may not, however, have thought they were sinful. I asked many Christians I knew about the things I was doing. They were fearful of scaring me off so they didn’t tell me I was in sin. No one told me that the Bible makes this clear and that it’s not right. One person, however, asked me, “Do you want to obey God in whatever he says?” When I came to a place of deciding

that whatever God says is what I wanted to do, the fog was gone. There was no question about right and wrong any longer! That is what this passage is saying: if your desire is to **DO** God's desire, then you will know the truth. This is a gift from God working alongside our willingness to obey.

A non-sequitur alert: Sometimes Jesus inserts something seemingly different in the middle. But there is context here:

**18** Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him. **19** Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?"

**20** "You are demon-possessed," the crowd answered. "Who is trying to kill you?"

Could this be an accusation that Jesus has demonic power to do his miracles or that he is a bit crazy? Jesus brings it back to the context: He is referring to this...

**21** Jesus said to them, "I did one miracle, and you are all amazed.

**22** Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a boy on the Sabbath. **23** Now if a boy can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing a man's whole body on the Sabbath?"

Is he finding a loophole in the law? He is ready to defend his actions! In the Jewish mind, bringing someone into the covenant through circumcision is actually healing a person. It brings them into the community of God. Jesus says this practice came from the patriarchs, not the law. Abraham was first given circumcision and Moses was credited with writing it down. We also see that we aren't supposed to skip the sabbath but that there are hierarchies in the Law: being faithful to one thing has precedence over another. He is showing them HOW to obey God. He points out their hypocrisy:

**24** Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly."

This brings us to another truth from the most often mis-quoted Bible verse cited by nonChristians: Judge not that ye be not judged. However, it has been misinterpreted and misunderstood because people think it means not to judge at all. But Jesus says take out the plank from your own eye so you can see clearly. Jesus wants them to stop judgment by *mere appearances*. We are being called to do the same: don't just look on the outside but rather be obedient to God. We are called to judge according to the truth: Not based on what others say but on what God says. John is inviting each of us to see Jesus for who he is: the savior of the world, the one who brings truth and gives his life so we can have life. May God give us all grace not to judge by appearances.

Questions?