

## Sermon- The Voice from The Eye of the Storm

Scripture: John 7: 25-31

Sunday, June 10, 2018

Today we will resume our journey through the Gospel of John. As you know, the beginning of John 7 starts with the discussion between Jesus and his brothers about going to Jerusalem for the Festival of Shelters. Even though at that time Jesus told his brothers in a very cryptic manner that his time had not yet come to go to Jerusalem, we know from what Jesus actually does that what he meant was that His real intention was to go a little later in disguise so that he could choose the time and place when he would be revealed to the people. And reveal himself he does right in the middle of the temple, the epicenter of the Jewish world, where he starts to teach and preach to the people there. What Jesus preached is described for us from verse 14 onwards. In the first segment of Jesus' teaching in the temple we looked at how Jesus throws light on the Mind Games the Enemy plays on us that are aimed at hiding what both the enemy is doing and even what God is doing so that the Devil can have the upper hand in the spiritual battle. In today's segment I am going to focus on a different aspect. The very direct approach that Jesus uses in speaking to the people in this sermon. In terms of the flow of today's sermon, I am going to be starting with the details of our text and then distill principles that Jesus is using and see how then would be broadened to where it applies to us as well. So look for these stages as a way of keeping track of where we are going this morning.

Ok lets get down to the details. Let me start by reminding you that what you are looking at in this passage of scripture is Jesus standing and preaching among a sea of religious leaders in the temple in Jerusalem, at the height of one of the most important Jewish festivals. This was also a time when Jewish authorities were looking for him with the

express purposes of putting him to death. To think of a parallel in our world, imagine this scenario. Remember in the years after 911 when the US was applying all its resources to locate Osama Bin Laden? Now imagine if at that time, if suddenly Bin Laden appeared as the key note speaker at the Republican convention. Now because I dislike so much using Bin Laden in this example, I want to if possible refine the example in your mind by offering a less known but closer example in situation. Imagine instead of Bin Laden, Brother Yun, one of the most wanted Chinese evangelists who government officials were looking for everywhere turning up at the Communist party Convention in Beijing as a key note speaker. You see the effect it would have on people? That is exactly what happens here. The people were all confused by the speaker of the day and were asking themselves, what this man is doing here. Quoting John 7, the people were saying, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? <sup>26</sup> Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him."

The next few verses capture the thoughts of the people as they are trying to process what they are seeing. Some were saying, "how come nobody is doing anything about Jesus standing there and preaching?". They wonder, "Is it because the authorities have found out that he really is the Messiah?" On the other hand some are saying, "but how can Jesus be the Messiah?" Because in verse 27 the argument they make is that, "we know where Jesus comes from", but their understanding is that when the Messiah comes, he will simply appear, and no one will know where he comes from. Now I need to explain this to you a little. You may be asking, what is this Messiah requirement about "not knowing where he has come from?" Well, if you look at the OT there is a verse in Dan 7:13 which says, "<sup>13</sup>*In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man,<sup>[a]</sup> coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. <sup>14</sup>He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting*

*dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*

In that passage do you see the requirements that the Messiah will come on clouds from heaven. Now to interpret the Daniel 7:13-14 passage correctly first of all you have to know all kinds of scripture. Ultimately we know that Daniel 7:13-14 is talking about Christ's Second Coming. If you were a person living in those days and you looked at this piece of Scripture and applied it to the Messiah figure who was to come you would be confused about Jesus. The thing is there are numerous Messianic passages, referring to all kinds of his first coming events but honestly, no one would be able to figure out then how it would all happen, before it happened. Also scholars tell us that most people were not really thinking of Daniel 7:13 because the people there would not have that deep a knowledge of scripture. Scholars tell us that what was more common knowledge was a folk tradition about the Messiah. And we know about this folk tradition because it was recorded in a second century document written by the well known Christian apologist Justin Martyr called the Dialogues. And in the Dialoges a man called Trypho<sup>1</sup> the Jew argues that when Christ comes even he would not know that he is the Messiah. Then Elijah would return, anoint him and that would initiate the long Messianic reign. Of course this folk tradition was something that got made up by someone and then it spreads like a grandmother's tale and after sometime the idea has spread to everybody's mind but no one really knows where the original idea came from.

Moving on from what the people were saying, we go next to the details of how Jesus handles the crowds and the intense speculations around him. Consider the words out of Jesus' mouth, "Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from". Now what is missing from this response is the tone that these words were uttered in. When you send emails and text messages, this is one thing you have to be very careful about because it is very difficult to convey tone with just written words. In a written text, the tone is really up for speculation. So if the other side speculates wrong, that will give rise to a lot of

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<sup>1</sup> Borchert, G. L. (1996). [John 1-11](#) (Vol. 25A, p. 286). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

misunderstanding. You all know that right? Because the tone conveys so much meaning, the different Biblical scholars<sup>2</sup> have worked hard to figure out what tone Jesus was using to get a real idea of what Jesus was saying. The first speculation is that Jesus was using an interrogative tone. One that says, “do you guys know me, and where I come from?” Some scholars speculate that the tone is more a charge that they do know who Jesus is and where he comes from but they deny what they know to be true in their hearts. Others believe that the tone is actually one of irony. Now my personal opinion based on what I have seen of Jesus’ words is that Jesus was using the “ironic” tone. Because the ironic tone conveys this message, “yes you know where I come from but that very knowledge is your stumbling block because it is preventing you from knowing where I really come from, because you really don’t know where I really come from”. That is what I believe Jesus is conveying here.

Jesus then goes on to say, “I am not here on my own authority, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him,<sup>29</sup> but I know him because I am from him and he sent me.”

What Jesus is doing here is presenting the “Divine Messenger Test” he has used now almost every time he speaks about himself. The Divine Messenger Test as you will recall is this. If you really want to know if a speaker is speaking on behalf of God, you have to look at the motive of the messenger. If the motive is to promote oneself, then the message cannot be trusted to be coming from God. But if the motive is to Glorify God, then you know the message is coming from God. When Jesus says, he is not speaking on his own authority but on the authority of the one who sent him, He is communicating that he has no desire to promote Himself and therefore whatever he is communicating is not biased or distorted, based on his personal agenda but is coming from God himself.

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<sup>2</sup> Lange, J. P., & Schaff, P. (2008). [A commentary on the Holy Scriptures: John](#) (p. 250). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

These are the details of the exchange. This exchange as you can see is packed with many themes.

But today what I want to distill out a principle Jesus is using. To do that I want to ask a big question of this passage. And the question is this, when there was a big and powerful tide of public opinion against him, how does Jesus address it? What we see in this passage is that, Jesus uses a core principle to communicate in this situation. The first principle is that He communicates, “core issues as directly as possible”. To address the speculations about himself, Jesus goes to the epicenter of the Jewish world and stands up and speaks directly. Jesus does not talk about the weather or try and massage the big egos in the room by saying, how lovely the Jewish people were to invite him to speak there. What Jesus does is bring to the surface what was on everybody’s mind, “who is this man, Jesus really?” And if he is the Messiah, how come he does not fit our traditional qualifications for the Messiah being a mystery Messiah. Jesus addresses, his identity, as one who knows God, one who came from God, one who was sent by God. Now if you were to look at Jesus’ life, he is not direct in his communication all the time. Sometimes Jesus uses parables. In fact the Gospels records about 46 parables spoken by Jesus. Sometimes Jesus communicated through miraculous signs. There are about 37 miracles that Jesus did, and everyone of them was a message he was communicating. Sometimes through Jesus spoke in very cryptic language. Remember Matt 12:39 where the Pharisees came to Jesus and asked him for a sign. And he replies ..”you will not be given any sign except the sign of Jonah!” Jesus used very cryptic language at times. At other times he used prophetic language. What is Godly and appropriate in one context may not be Godly and appropriate in some other context. But with Jesus, there were times when the most appropriate thing to do was take the bull by the horns and address the core issues in as direct a manner as possible.

So the first principle you see in Jesus' communication is that Jesus is as direct as possible.

The second principle Jesus uses is that along with his direct message he also gives them the key to analyze the validity of his message. And what is that key? If the speaker is doing it for self-promotion he would be distorting the message and the message cannot be trusted to be coming from God.

If we were to take another step back and broaden the principles Jesus is applying, those principles are this. In different contexts and situations, if you and I want to respond in a Christlike way, we have to heavily depend on God, pause and specifically ask God for wisdom regarding the tone that God wants us to use in a given situation. And then we need to ask God to help us function in that style. Some people have personalities that make them very direct. They don't usually think about what effect their words have on the other person. Some people are very sensitive and shy and so afraid of that of what the other person will think that they avoid say anything. In Eastern cultures in different situations people don't like saying no to your face because that is perceived as insulting. So if you invite them for something they will say yes but just not show up! In our International Student Ministry we face this all the time. The thing about being Christlike in our communication though is to not be operating from a communication style that comes naturally to us. Given a situation, what God expects his children to do is ask for God's help in both style of communication and even with the specific words. It is not easy to do this but at its core, this is a simple act. It amounts to a one second pause to ask God to put us in the right communication tone for the situation.

And every once in a while, you will find yourself in a situation like Jesus is in John 7. You are standing in the middle of a strong storm of opinion that is blowing in a particular direction. The opinion of all those around you has a strong momentum in a direction that is displeasing to God. In such a situation, if you look at Jesus' example, the thing to

do is ask God to give you the strength to do what does not come easy to many people, to stand in the center of the action and speak directly to the issues at hand. And where will you get your strength to stand up in such a crowd you ask? Where will the needed weight come for your words? Your strength, my friends, will come from the Lord who make heaven and earth and who calls you to His purposes.

You know what happens at the end of Jesus' message right? By the time we get to the end of the passage, many of those people who thought it was not possible for Jesus to be the Messiah actually start believing that he is the Messiah. In fact they start wondering if it is even possible for Jesus to not be the Messiah! What a transformation!

May God use us when the situation calls to still even the storm of public opinion like our Lord Jesus did, by presenting God's truth with the power of the Holy Spirit, so that His name may be glorified. Let us pray.