

Ben Libby

Sermon

January 31th, Septuagesima Sunday

In the name of Jesus Christ, who came to redeem us from our sins so that we might become the children of God, Dear fellow Redeemed... Our sermon text this morning is taken from John's Gospel, chapter 7, starting at verse 14.

**When the festival was already half over, Jesus went up to the temple courts and began to teach. 15 The Jews were amazed and asked, "How does this man know what is written without being instructed?" 16 Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but it comes from him who sent me. 17 If anyone wants to do his will, he will know whether my teaching is from God or if I speak on my own. 18 The one who speaks on his own is seeking his own glory. But he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him—that is the one who is true, and there is no unrighteousness in him. 19 Didn't Moses give you the law? Yet none of you does what the law tells you. Why are you trying to kill me?" 20 "You have a demon!" the crowd answered. "Who is trying to kill you?" 21 Jesus answered them, "I did one work, and you are all amazed. 22 Consider this: Because Moses has given you circumcision (not that it comes from Moses, but from the fathers), you circumcise a man even on the Sabbath. 23 If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry at me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? 24 Stop judging by outward appearance. Instead make a right judgment."**

This is the Word of The LORD!!! The congregation may be seated...

Mercy, Grace, and peace our yours through your God and Father, and through His Son, Jesus Christ, true God and Man, dear fellow Sons and Daughters of God...

I think one of the most interesting things that we as a society are fascinated with is the idea of the "child prodigy". The idea that someone could do such incredible things at such a young age is so fascinating and mindblowing to us. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was 5 years old when he first started composing music and a year later had already performed before 2 royal courts. The American Chess player Bobby Fischer was only 15 when he became a grandmaster of the sport. There was a recent documentary that centered around the golf player, Tiger Woods. He started golfing at the young age of 2, and shot 80 on a regulation golf course at the age eight. These accomplishments are unbelievable to us, that someone could do such incredible things at such a young age.

Jesus was also a child prodigy. The only account we have from His youth was a time when He went to Jerusalem with His family. Mary and Joseph were

concerned when He went missing while the rest of the family headed back home. Once the parents realized this, they headed back to Jerusalem and sought Him for 3 days. After 3 days, Luke tells us, **they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. (Luk 2:46-47 NKJ)** When they pressed Him for a reason He had done this, what was the response of the spiritual wunderkind? **Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luk 2:49 NKJ)**

The teaching ability of Jesus was something that would go on to amaze the people who interacted with Him for the rest of His life. All throughout the Scriptures, we have instances where people were flat out stunned by what He spoke. One of the most perplexing aspects about His teachings was that He

had no teacher! Mozart's Father was a musician and composer. Tiger Woods father was an athlete, a single digit handicap golfer and a former Army officer. Bobby Fischer had been taught by several different masters. But Jesus? No doubt He had been going to the temple and the local synagogue since He was young. But even at 12, it seemed like the teachers were learning more from Him than He was from them. In our text the reason for the amazement of the people is **"How does this man know what is written without being instructed?"**

But of course, His Father did have a big influence in His learning. No doubt, Joseph was a just man. But Jesus' heavenly Father was His source of knowledge. The relationship between Father and Son was the reason Jesus was on earth in the first place, and it was the reason Jesus would do what He did.

Christ's teachings are the reason we are here today. His Gospel message is the reason for every hope that we have. Those teachings of Jesus will accomplish any task that it sets out to do. Today we will consider the theme: **The Gospel Will**. The Gospel will show us that Jesus is truly the Son of God. It will save us from all of our unrighteousness and sin. And, the Gospel Will that we are given will shift our amazement. And so, we pray, MAY THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH AND THE MEDITATIONS OF OUR HEARTS BE ACCEPTABLE IN YOUR SIGHT O GOD, OUR ROCK AND OUR REDEEMER, AMEN...

The Gospel of John is a bit different from the other 3. Those books together are referred to as the "Synoptic Gospels", that is, they largely follow the same scope. But John's Gospel is a bit different. It was the last Gospel written we think, and it covers a lot of previously uncovered material. This is not to say that John disagrees with the other Gospels, He doesn't. This is more or less a supplement to those books. Whereas the Synoptic Gospels lay out much of His Galilean Ministry, John spells out much more of Christ's Judean Ministry.

John's main purpose of his gospel is to show that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. That is, no doubt, the driving force of our text as well. He wasn't just the

son of Mary and Joseph. As the centurion who guarded His cross later would say, **"Truly this was the Son of God!" (Mat 27:54 NKJ)**

Where do we find that Son of God in our text? **When the festival was already half over, Jesus went up to the temple courts and began to teach.**

The preceding verses of this chapter tells us more about the background. The festival mentioned here is the festival of Booths. Jesus was with His brothers prior to this festival. They urged Him to go up to Jerusalem to "show Himself to the world." Jesus did not do what they wanted Him to do. They did not yet believe in Him. This was more or less an urging based on mocking their brother. After all, it must be hard to be a sibling to a prodigy.

Jesus did not go to Jerusalem with His brothers. He still went, but He did so in secret. He was looked for at the feast. It was during the middle of this feast that Jesus shows up and starts teaching in the temple. Just like when Jesus was 12, here too we find Him being about His Father's business.

And of course, the people were amazed at the prodigies' words. Here we have His reaction to their amazement: **16 Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but it comes from him who sent me. 17 If anyone wants to do his will, he will know whether my teaching is from God or if I speak on my own.**

While we don't have the actual words of what Jesus taught, we know what He was saying. No doubt, the Savior of the world was talking about salvation. But where did their amazement come from? Did they marvel about the words being spoken? Or were they marveling at the person who was speaking them?

Why was the way He taught so shocking to these people? Matthew records a similar reaction of the people after the sermon on the mount. **And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, 29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. (Mat 7:28-29 NKJ)**

This did not happen. It did not happen that someone came out of the blue like this who would teach at this level. Typically, one would study for a time under a

rabbi. Jesus had no such teacher. How was this possible that this man, with no formal training, was able to teach such things?

Jesus explained: **My teaching is not mine, but it comes from him who sent me. 17 If anyone wants to do his will, he will know whether my teaching is from God or if I speak on my own.**

The teachings of Jesus were not His own. It was of God's. Jesus also goes on to say that if you truly want to do the will of God, then you will know whether or not Jesus spoke just on His own or was really from God.

It's funny (sad really) how much things change, many things still stay the same. Everyone there that day could see that Jesus was indeed an incredible teacher. Indeed, many people even today would admit something similar. Even the hardest of atheists wouldn't necessarily deny the fact that Jesus was a real person who was a great teacher. But Jesus was so much more than that! Either Jesus was and is the Son of God, or He was false. This was the same dialogue before this text when even the idea of Jesus was being discussed: **Some said, "He is good"; others said, "No, on the contrary, He deceives the people." (Joh 7:12 NKJ)**

Yes, Jesus was a great teacher. Not only that, He was the greatest teacher of all time! Why? Because He taught the truth, the Gospel! There was a reason that He was the greatest teacher of all time. It was because He was the Son of God! Doesn't it make sense that the Word of God would be easily understood by the very same person who spoke it, let alone WAS the Word? Jesus' point remains true. If you really have the will to do God's will, the result will be that you know Jesus' Word as the Word of God, and thus you will know that Jesus is God! Believing in the Gospel is believing that Jesus is God. If you truly don't believe that, then you don't believe in God. As He concludes: **18 The one who speaks on his own is seeking his own glory. But he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him—that is the one who is true, and there is no unrighteousness in him.**

Jesus would go on to talking about unrighteousness in action. He asked the question: **Why are you trying to kill me?** They said: **"You have a demon! Who is trying to kill you?"** Basically, they were saying that He was paranoid. But of course, He wasn't. The next verse after our text says: **Now some of them from Jerusalem said, "Is this not He whom they seek to kill? (John 7:25 NKJ)**

Why did He ruffle so many feathers? Well, because this teacher was different. One of the many differences between Jesus and the leaders of the time was brought up by Jesus Himself: **22 Consider this: Because Moses has given you circumcision (not that it comes from Moses, but from the fathers), you circumcise a man even on the Sabbath. 23 If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry at me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?**

There were many times that Jesus performed a miracle on the Sabbath, and none of them went over very well with the scribes and Pharisees. One such event, perhaps the one Jesus is referring to here, occurred in John 5. A certain man had an infirmity for 38 years. Jesus told him to "rise, take up your bed, and walk". So, he did. At the word of Jesus this man was healed. The leaders tracked down the healed man who was carrying his bed. This was a violation of their Sabbath laws. They wanted to know who did this. Why? John says, **For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath. (Joh 5:16 NKJ)** Turns out Jesus wasn't so paranoid after all.

Jesus really called out the hypocrisy of these leaders and that was why they despised Him. What was His point here about circumcision and the Sabbath? They would circumcise on the 8th day after a baby boy was born, Sabbath or otherwise. But circumcision would purify just one member of the body. Jesus, on the other hand, healed the whole body of the man on the Sabbath. Circumcision was painful, and what Jesus did revealed pain. Jesus healed someone who had been suffering for 38 years,

and all these leaders could think about was killing Him.

The sad truth about the religious fervor of the Pharisees was that they were so wrapped up and involved with the law that they missed it's main point. They should've seen that they couldn't keep the law, that they were in fact sinners. As Jesus says here, **Didn't Moses give you the law? Yet none of you does what the law tells you.** Yet, they instead supposed that they could keep it. Thus they missed the point, and fell into even more unrighteousness.

We too need to be made aware of our own righteousness. If you can't see from the law that you are a sinner who is doomed to die, then you will not see the Gospel's will. What need does a healthy man have of a doctor? None! But, if you thought you were having a heart attack, would you do nothing, just grit your teeth and try to withstand it on your own? OF COURSE NOT!!! You would be rushed to the hospital ASAP!!! The Pharisees knew the law perhaps better than anyone. Yet they could not see that they themselves were in cardiac arrest! They thought they could handle it on their own. We need to see from the law that we are totally condemned by it. Then, the will of the Gospel comes in to reveal that Jesus has saved us from our own righteousness.

Jesus tells us what will to have here: **24 Stop judging by outward appearance. Instead make a right judgment.**

We struggle with this, don't we? It is hard sometimes for us to see past the external. We are such visual creators. It can be hard for us to not be caught up in the way something looks, and instead focus on the real inside worth.

What makes a prodigy amazing? Well, it's the fact that someone could do such incredible things at such a young age. And yet, whatever they actually do is the real thing, isn't it? Something is either impressive or it's not. Really, who cares how old someone is? Is what they do or say impressive or not? A prodigy is only a prodigy if what they produce has worth.

When Jesus taught during that festival, the Jews were amazed. After all, there was this amazing

prodigy there in the flesh! But, unfortunately for most of them they were amazed at the wrong thing. They were amazed that Jesus spoke the way He did. But they missed the real amazing thing there that day. It was the amazing word of the amazing Savior that they missed. Is it amazing that Jesus, the Son of God, took on flesh and blood? Absolutely. But what is even more amazing is what that Word made flesh did. He did keep the law, something we could never do. And then, that prodigy, that undeniably great teacher did something even greater. He died for your sins. That Word made flesh was crucified in the flesh. God died! That is what it took to redeem me from my sins! That is amazing, and that is the real worth of Jesus. He's not just my teacher. He is my Savior!

And that's the real worth and beauty of the Gospel, Jesus' teachings. It's amazing. Not just because it is profound, but because it tells me that I am saved from my sins! When you listen to Scripture, (which truly is the words of Jesus and God from cover to cover) it tells you that you, yes even you, are saved! When we have this Gospel, this will of God, inside of us, it really will shift your amazement. Your amazement shifts from the teaching to the personal application. You have been made clean and saved from your sins! You will be with Jesus in heaven for all eternity. This is truly amazing!

What happens after this? The people are split about Him. Is He the Christ? Is He the prophet? But, He's from Galilee! Once again, the Pharisees try to arrest Jesus, and they send out officers. Yet, no one lays hands on Him. The officers come back empty-handed. **Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why have you not brought Him?" 46 The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!" (Joh 7:45-46 NKJ)**

But we all really know the reason they came back empty-handed. His time had not yet come. That was why He didn't reveal Himself to the world in Jerusalem like His brothers suggested. That would happen on a different festival at a different time. That would happen on the Day of Atonement, which was the day of Atonement for the sins of the whole world!

Yes, Jesus was a prodigy. But His teachings didn't come just from Him, they came from His Father. Yes, Jesus was a great teacher. But all of His teachings depended on what that great teacher would go on to do. Jesus was more than all these things because Jesus truly is the Son of God. That very same Son of God died on the cross to redeem me from my sin! The Gospel will do that! The Gospel will show who Jesus is. The Gospel will show you what He did for you. And, "The Gospel Will" will be planted inside of you by the Holy Spirit. The Gospel Will will shift your amazement and show you that Jesus did this for you! And that, dear Christians, will have you praise the Name of Jesus, both here and into eternity. AMEN!!!