

Jesus is Life Giving

May 23 & 24, 2020

By: Andrew Bondurant

Crossroads Christian Church

Memorial Day:

This weekend allows us to remember those who have given their lives for this country, we are grateful for that. I know there are likely many of you joining us who have lost friends or family members who died defending our nation. As we begin today, I want to take a minute to honor those fallen veterans and pray for their loved ones who mourn their loss. We are forever indebted and grateful for their sacrifice. **(Prayer)**

John 7

Turn with me in your bibles to John chapter 7. If you don't have your Bible with you, I would encourage you to pause this and get your bible. We are entering the last 6-7 months of Jesus' life as we jump into John 7. Today we are going to take a ten thousand foot view of this passage to understand the setting and the story it tells before diving in to see how we might respond. The first couple of verses here help set the scene...

Setting

- Religious leaders seeking to kill Jesus (Verse 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.** (John 7:1)

In John 5, Jesus healed a paralyzed man on the Sabbath. This appalled the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and Judea because they considered it a blatant violation of the Sabbath. They began seeking an opportunity to kill Him (John 5:18). Jesus has since left Judea and spent his time ministering and teaching in Galilee. Jesus knew the cross lay before him, but it was not yet time to face his impending death.

- Jewish Festival of the Tabernacles (Verse 2)

From the Passover mentioned in John 6:4 and the Feast of the Tabernacles in John 7:2, six months have passed. Verses 2-5 tell us that the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near. The religious leaders likely expected to see Jesus there.

Popular:

Now, the Festival of the Tabernacles was the most popular of the three feasts the Jewish people would travel to Jerusalem for each year.

Because it was the most popular, pilgrims would come from all over. God instructed the people to observe the feast in Leviticus 23. The Feast was established as a reminder of the 40 years that the Israelites spent in the wilderness after God delivered them from Egypt and how God preserved them. It was set during the grape harvest in September/October and was a time when people would bring their first fruits to celebrate God's provision.

History/Nehemiah:

In the history of Israel, they were often caught in a cycle of rebellion and turning away from God. God had delivered them from slavery, but they continued to turn away. God gave them a land to live in, but they turned away. God provided them a king, but they continued to turn away. From the beginning of the nation, God had told them that exile would await them if they continued to turn away. And eventually, this is what God did. But with a promise: he would bring them back to the land He had given them. The book of Nehemiah tells of the return to Jerusalem from exile. As the people return from exile, rebuild the walls, and rediscover the Law in the Temple. When reading the Law, the nation began by celebrating this feast. Their celebration is found in Nehemiah 8-9. It was a major moment in the history of Israel.

Rites:

- Water

The Feast was known for a couple of rites that were practiced. One was a water-drawing rite. This wasn't originally part of the festival, but was added to the festival at some point. What would happen is each day the priests would take a fancy gold pitcher and fill it with water from the pool of Siloam. The High Priest would then lead a procession back to the temple. As they approached the Temple Court, there would be three trumped blasts and the pilgrims would watch the priests proceed around the altar with the pitcher. The temple choir sang the Hallel, which is Psalms 113-118. Every male pilgrim would shake palm branch in the right hand, while his left raised a piece of citrus fruit as they cried "give thanks to the LORD!" three times. The water was then poured at the front of the alter at the time of the morning sacrifice along with the daily drink-offering. This celebrated two things: (**BRIEFLY EXPAND ON EACH**)

Water Rite:

- (1) **remembering** God's miraculous provision of water in the desert
- (2) **looking forward to** the Lord's pouring out of the Spirit in the last days.

Jesus' Brothers:

Jesus' brothers encouraged him to go to Jerusalem to make a name for himself. His brothers did not believe in him at this point. They saw Jesus as an attention seeker. And what better place for an attention seeker to show off his works than the most popular festival of the year! But Jesus only walked in His Father's time, and it was not yet time for him to go to Jerusalem. Jesus was not saying that He was staying in Galilee forever, but that His agenda was set by His Father in heaven, not His brothers.

Jesus heads to the festival in private (verses 10-11)

After his brothers head to the festival, Jesus heads there in private. Here we begin to see a reoccurring theme: Jesus was a polarizing person. Verses 12 -13 give us a glimpse into something we will see again and again throughout this passage:

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. (John 7:12-13)

Jesus goes up to the temple courts about halfway through the festival (verses 14-15)

Remember:

- The most popular of the festivals.
- The crowds of pilgrims would come and gather at the temple for the festivities.

Jesus teaches (over the course of a few days):

Jesus begins to teach halfway through the week and the people were amazed at his teaching! They couldn't wrap their minds around how someone who had no formal training could know the Scripture so well and be able to teach it like Jesus taught. Typically someone would have gone to a great rabbinical center of learning or would have "apprenticed" with a great Rabbi. But Jesus has neither in his resume. Jesus said that his teaching did not come from a great Rabbi, but came from "the one who sent me." Aligning his teaching with being directly from God was not received well. Jesus says,

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. 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?" (John 7:17-19)

Here Jesus makes a profound statement: if you want to discover the truth about who God is, you have to be willing to surrender yourself to Him above all. You must be fundamentally committed to *doing* God's will whether it aligns with your original hopes/plans or not. Jesus says that the problem is not an intellectual one... it wasn't for a lack of signs or cognitive capabilities... it was a problem with their willingness to submit to what God was revealing in Jesus. He further challenges them to weigh His teaching as to whether God is being glorified or if Jesus was using it for his own benefit.

Jesus *proves* their lack of desire to obey God by exposing the Jewish leaders desire/plot to murder him, which would have been a clear violation of the command: DO NOT MURDER. The response of the crowds: Serious escalation!

Escalating Polarization... - "Demon-possessed"

They accuse Jesus of being demon-possessed because he seems paranoid. But Jesus points back to the miracle he performed in John 5 when the plot to kill him began in chapter 5. He goes onto show *why* his healing on the Sabbath was actually true observation of the Sabbath rather than a violation.

Sabbath Controversy (Lesser to Greater)

Jesus uses a common argument tool moving from a lesser accepted truth to point to a greater truth. Here is how it works out in this passage:

- The Law handed down to Moses instructed the people to circumcise a boy on the eighth day and that was practiced whether it was on the Sabbath or not. The act of circumcision was seen as the "completion" of the physical body. So, it was acceptable. If this was acceptable, how much more acceptable should it be for Jesus healing a man's whole body on the Sabbath?
- Jesus points to the problem in verse 24: they were judging by mere appearances.

At this point, the crowds are confused why the religious leaders have been talking about killing Him but aren't doing it when he is right there for the taking. Could it be that it is because they know he is the Messiah? But, they reasoned, we know where this man came from so he CAN'T be the Messiah. In verse 42 they show they know their bibles. They know the Messiah is supposed to come from the line of David and be born in Bethlehem. They believe Jesus was from Galilee and couldn't possibly fulfill the prophesy.

After this, Jesus again ties Himself to God and His authority to Him. Jesus says, "you must not know God if you don't recognize me!" The result... which we should be expecting at this point... is outrage. They tried to seize Jesus, but no one laid a hand on Him. Why? "because his hour had not yet come." But many in the crowd wondered, "Will the Messiah perform more signs than this man?!"

Again, we see the polarized responses to Jesus. When the Pharisees heard the whispers of the crowds, they sent temple guards to arrest Jesus. Jesus states that His time here on earth is short. He doesn't have many days, then the religious leaders will not be able to find him. Confusion ensued.

We don't know how the teaching has been spread out during the festival to this point. But verse 37 gives us another time stamp:

Climax:

³⁷ On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."

I can just imagine the High Priest leading a procession back to the temple with the water from the pool of Siloam. I can imagine him pouring the water on the front of the altar **remembering** God's miraculous provision of water in the desert and **looking forward to** the Lord's pouring out of the Spirit in the last days. And Jesus speaking these words! And this offer goes out to "anyone" and everyone!

As we learned last week, Jesus is the only way. Here we learn that we believe in him, "rivers of living water flow from within" us. This is an incredible picture of **life; of fulfillment; of God providing deep satisfaction.**

Imagine the priest pouring the water following this rite that was practiced for a week each year for centuries. Jesus is saying, "*Are you thirsty? Do you desire to experience God's provision like our ancestors did in the wilderness? Do you want to experience new life like God promised? Come to me.*"

Here we see a powerful truth about Jesus: **Jesus is Life Giving**

In case we didn't make the connection from the purpose of the water pouring rite and what Jesus was saying, John makes it explicit in verse 39 ³⁹ **By this he meant the Spirit,**

whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. (John 7:39)

They were looking forward to the pouring out of the Spirit in the last days. Here Jesus is saying that the Spirit is poured out upon **Whoever believes** in him. The result? **Rivers of living water will flow from within them.** The Holy Spirit is the life giving agent that sent after Jesus was glorified. The Spirit had always been at work, but here Jesus points to the fact that those who believe in him would be indwelt by the Spirit. The Spirit would not just come upon them, but “will flow from within them.” Jesus begins here to prepare his followers for something he will make explicit as the book moves forward: the alignment of Jesus’ departure and the sending of the Spirit. In fact, in just a few chapters, he will tell His followers that this is **better** for them for him to go and the Spirit to come.

Put yourself in the shoes of the original hearers! They knew the Old Testament prophecies like Isaiah 58:11

The LORD will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden (Isaiah 58:11)

Ray Ortlund writes this about this passage, “If your life is a continual effort to cope with the grim business of survival, just to get by, you don’t understand. God has so much more for you than that. He has “a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.” - Ray Ortlund

Are you willing to come to Jesus to experience this? I want you to take these next three minutes to write down these questions and answer the first one.

Discussion Questions: (COMMON LANGUAGE)

- How would you describe your current experience with God?
 - o Does it feel like “a sun-scorched land” (i.e. you are just surviving) or do you feel like “a well-watered garden” (i.e. you are flourishing)?
- What is one step you will take this week to experience the “living water” flowing in you?

(Provide examples of how to experience the “living water”?)

I want to encourage you to make time later today or this week to spend extended time wrestling through that second question. You can even spend more time on the first question!

God desires rivers of living water to flow from within you.

The prophet Ezekiel spoke of a day when a river would flow from the temple. A river that would give life to all it touched. A river with healing and restoring power (Ezekiel 47). Everything in Ezekiel's description presents a picture of the life-giving, healing, and life-sustaining properties of the water from the sanctuary.¹

The pictured offered here in John 7 is of the Spirit-indwelt believer being a channel of that healing and restoring power. The world is parched and is longing for a source of something pure and satisfying. If you are a follower of Jesus, you are a channel of that life-giving, healing, restoring power.

(? I'd also unpack a practical way this can happen (might be a nice time to celebrate "being the church" through NaN and the challenge to keep serving and the ideas shared at /church).???)

The question is: will you come to Jesus to be filled up? Will you surrender whatever is life draining to tap into His life giving Spirit?

The crowds and religious leaders were conflicted.

Reactions:

"This man is THE Prophet" (John 7:40)

"He is the Messiah" (John 7:41a)

"How can the Messiah come from Galilee?" (John 7:41b)

"Why didn't you arrest him?" (John 7:45)

"No one ever spoke the way this man does" (John 7:46)

"Shouldn't we explore more before condemning?" (John 7:51)

How will you respond?

¹ Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, vol. 17, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 413.