

John 7:25-52

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[0 : 00] Please turn, if you will, to John 7, verses 25 to 52. So if you've got a church Bible, if you've got a black church Bible, that is on page 893, and they're just on the rack as you come in.

And there is something, isn't there, about raising Jesus in conversation. I don't know whether you've experienced that in your office, or at the school gate, or in school, in the classroom. People don't seem to mind that I go to church.

They quite like that I'm religious. They're interested that I'm a minister, but you bring Jesus into it, and people start to bristle a little bit, I find.

I never cease to be amazed at just how confused people are about the Lord Jesus. How they've misunderstood him, or misunderstood what he came to bring.

But there are many people out there that are hostile. There is a tension in our society. When you bring up Jesus, some people think of Jesus as a good person, a likable person.

[1 : 12] Some people might say, I'm all for Jesus, but I don't like the church. I like Jesus, but I don't like Christians. And I think that's so encouraging, is that when we come to the Gospels, that opposition to Jesus is the dominant response.

Many reject him. Some reject Jesus out of complete ignorance. Some oppose him because they refuse to submit to his claims on their life.

Some dislike Jesus intensely because he exposes religious hypocrisy. Some look at Jesus and think, you come from the wrong town, you've got the wrong accent.

You've got the wrong background. Some think of Jesus, you're not educated like we are. How could this possibly be someone who is worth listening to?

And yet, we see in the Gospels, don't we, some, who I hope like you tonight, some see Jesus and they rejoice. Who see Jesus and say, at last.

[2 : 17] There are some who see Jesus and they see in him bread for the hungry. Fresh water for the thirsty, sight for the blind, joy for the downhearted, deliverance for the broken, hope for the hopeless.

And the key to receiving Jesus is knowing your need for Jesus. And that's why the religious leaders of Jesus' day, the ones that Reuben read to us about, they think they don't need the Lord Jesus because they've got religion.

They've got their laws. They've got their system for improvement, self-improvement sorted out. Or there's the crowd and they're drawn to Jesus because they see in him, here is someone who can meet my physical needs.

Food, health, here is someone who is entertaining, he puts on a good show. But the one who receives Jesus and gets real life, the life that lasts, is the one who sees Jesus and knows that they are spiritually poor.

The one who receives Jesus is the one who knows that they are lost. The one who receives Jesus knows that they're running on empty. And they know that they have a thirst which cannot be quenched by anything in this world.

[3 : 35] Such a person who knows their spiritual thirst looks at Jesus and says, yes, at last. And there will be some here this evening who don't know this real need for Jesus.

And maybe Jesus does not appear to you as wonderful as he really is. And there may be some who are here tonight, it's possible, isn't it, to grow up in a church like this and think that Jesus is for the weak but I'm strong.

Jesus is for the hopeless and actually I'm self-sufficient. And some of us who have been Christians for many years, and that's most of us, isn't it, I think we too, I certainly can, lose that real sense of dependence on Jesus.

The sense that I, moment by moment, hour by hour, day by day, month by month, year by year, need to be fed by Jesus. And need to depend on him for everything.

And it's so easy to forget, it's so easy to become self-reliant. And so my prayer tonight as we walk through this passage is that God might do two things for us tonight. That he might give to you and to me a deep sense of our need of Jesus wherever we're at.

[4 : 58] And that he might fill us also with joy at the gift of Jesus. John 7, Jesus is back in Jerusalem, he's been absent for about a year. But Jerusalem is still buzzing from what Jesus did a year ago in chapter 6.

He healed a well-known paralysed man. And he did it on the Sabbath and it raised all sorts of questions. And then Jesus left and now a year later he's back in Jerusalem.

And he's arrived halfway through the Feast of Tabernacles. And Jesus appears and he amazes the crowd. They say, where did you get this teaching from, Jesus?

And he says, I'm simply a servant of the one who sent me. And that leads us to our first point. There are three C's tonight and the sermon is like a sandwich. There is confusion on either side of calling. And so the first confusion is about the coming and going of Jesus. The confusion about the coming and going of Jesus. You see this particularly in verses 25 and 26.

[6 : 00] Look down there. There is confusion. And here is this man, the religious authorities, we know they want to arrest him. And they're planning to kill him.

But they're not doing anything about it. And so maybe, just maybe, they've concluded that he really is the Messiah. He is from God.

But then they're confused, verse 27. Because they think, well, when the Christ comes, no one will know where he's from. They've got this idea in their head that when the Christ, God's anointed king appears, when the saviour appears, he's going to come out of nowhere.

And yet, they think, well, we know where this man comes from. We know that he comes from Nazareth, this little village in Galilee. And Jesus answers their confusion in verse 28. Can you see it?

He cries out, he says, verse 28. He proclaims, he speaks loudly, you know me. And you know where I come from. But I've not come of my own accord.

[7 : 05] He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. I know him. For I come from him, and he sent me. Just think about that for a moment.

Jesus is saying, yes, you know where I'm from, sort of. You know where I'm from in an earthly sense. You know the town that I grew up in, but you don't really know where I'm from.

Because you do not know the one who sent me, the Father. You know my earthly origin, but not my heavenly origin. And that can be so easily true today, can't it?

People try to make sense of Jesus just as a human phenomenon. They say, well I'm sure he was an extraordinary man who had an extraordinary influence.

But they discount that Jesus actually came from heaven. And without understanding that, it is impossible to make sense of him. You will never know Jesus if you view him only from an earthly point of view.

[8 : 07] You will never come to Jesus because you'll only ever see him meeting needs that are earthly. But Jesus came from heaven. And the needs that he meets are heavenly.

And the crowd, they only saw Jesus' earthly origin. They saw only his earthly usefulness. He was a great healer. They knew that he provided food. He put on a good show, so they missed Jesus.

And the confusion continues. Some in the crowd, verse 30. Can you see that? So they are seeking to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him. Verse 31.

Yet many of the people believed in him. Perhaps they believed in him. Verse 31. They said, when the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?

That's not actually a good sign in John. In John, people's faith that's based on miracles is viewed with huge suspicion. They're only interested in the show, are they?

[9 : 11] Or are they interested in what the signs are pointing to? The Jewish religious leaders, they hear about Jesus' rising popularity in verse 32. And they send guards to arrest him.

There is confusion about the coming of Jesus. But there's confusion about the going of Jesus. Look at verse 33. Jesus answered, I'll be with you a little longer.

And then I am going to him who sent me. And you will seek me. And you will not find me. And where I am, you cannot come. At this point, the crowd's listening.

They've not got a clue what he's going on about. Look at their response in verse 35. Where is he going to go that we would not be able to find him? Is he going to go out amongst the Greeks? Is he going to go out amongst the seas? Where's he going to go? Jesus is saying, isn't he? I am returning to my Father. I am returning to the one who sent me.

[10:12] And I am returning to him via death and resurrection and glorification. I'm with you on this earth only for a short time. So now, now is the moment to believe. Now is the moment to respond.

Because the day is coming when you will look for me and I will not be there. And that can be as true for us as it can be for them. It may be that tonight, this very night, is the opportunity where Jesus says, now is the time to come.

And you leave this room having said no to the Lord Jesus and you immerse yourself in one distraction, one false trail after another.

And the opportunity is lost. And the moment goes. And you come face to face with the Lord Jesus on the last day.

This, tonight, is the night Jesus will remember. The night when Jesus stood up on the feast on the last day and he called out, if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.

[11:25] That is the day they heard those words. And this is the night you hear those words. That Jesus has come to the Father and he is going to the Father and his coming and his going caused great confusion.

But the second point is, Jesus calls tonight. Jesus calls us to come and drink. Listen again to the words of Jesus.

Verse 37. They are remarkable words, aren't they? On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and he cried out, if anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

The feast that Jesus is talking about there, that he was on, right at the end, is the end of the harvest, really, commemorating God's goodness to them.

God's goodness to them in bringing them out of the land of Egypt all those centuries ago and giving them harvest. God's kindness to them in the wilderness. And the festival was like a giant camping trip.

[12:33] It was like the IPC getaway up in Kazakh. People would come from all over the land and they would set up their tents and rent B&Bs; and they would remember the years wandering in the wilderness where God provided for them.

It would be a joyful feast, just like the IPC getaway will be in Kazakh. Booking spaces are still available. And they would give thanks for the blessing of God's provision. And it would be a joyful celebration, celebrating all of God's goodness, all of the good things that we need.

And on the great day, Jesus stands up and he says, all those who are thirsty, come to me and drink. The Jewish people still celebrate the feast today.

They celebrate. They give thanks for God's provision. And yet they've missed it. They've missed it. Jesus says, come to me all you who are thirsty and drink. I am God's great provision. And this invitation to Jesus is not just intellectual assent.

[13:51] It's a difficult question, isn't it? When we say to people, do you believe in Jesus? They say, well, yes, I believe in Jesus. What do they often mean by that? It's kind of an intellectual assent.

It's a tick box, isn't it? In the census for what faith are you? But that's why John's gospel is so very, very helpful. What does it mean to believe in Jesus?

Jesus keeps using vivid images of participation, of drinking, of eating. It is wholehearted participation in Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the spiritual drink for the spiritually thirsty. And of course, you can't not think of, can you, that great passage in Isaiah, in Isaiah 55, where the servant of the Lord passages have happened. And the great climax of Isaiah 53 depicting Christ's crucifixion. And then, chapter 55, the invitation, come everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and he who has no money, come buy and eat, come buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

[15:07] Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me. And eat what is good, and delight yourself in rich food.

Incline your year, come to me, hear that your soul may live. And so Jesus stands on that day, and he says, come all who are thirsty. Jesus, the living water for our souls.

Of course, it's full of the Old Testament, isn't it? There's people of Israel who had been redeemed from Israel and kept for 40 years in the wilderness. Do you remember? They were thirsty, and God provided water from a rock in the desert.

And now, God has provided living water for you tonight in Jesus. Are you thirsty? Do you know your need for Jesus, for what he offers?

Are you yearning for forgiveness and acceptance? Have you reached the end of your efforts, knowing that you are unable to do it?

[16:18] Because when you are truly thirsty, you will see Jesus and you will delight in him. You will delight in that soul quenching water that he provides.

And the chances are, maybe, that tonight, you don't feel particularly spiritually thirsty. You may not particularly feel that you need Jesus right now.

You've got things sorted, maybe. Can you heed the warning of verse 34? Look what verse 34 says. You will seek me and you will not find me.

Where I am, you cannot come. You need to drink, don't you? Even when you don't feel thirsty. I'm not really a runner, despite my part run excellence. But I'm not really a runner.

[17:26] I don't do endurance sports. But the golden rule of hydration is this, all right? You don't wait until you're thirsty before you drink. Is that right?

If you wait until you're thirsty in a marathon before you really start drinking, it's too late. Your body will never catch up on that hydration. And so, that is why, isn't it, you see people in marathons right at the end, they get delirious and they trudge along and they're all over the place and they don't know where they are.

What's happened? They become dehydrated. Because in the endurance race, whether it's cycling or running or anything like that, you need to drink even if you don't feel thirsty. You need to drink when you feel great.

You need to drink when you feel like you can keep on going at this pace forever. And you might feel your life, you're spiritually self-sufficient. Yeah, you assent to Jesus.

Yeah, I'm part of the Christian club. But what does that actually mean for my dependence on Jesus moment by moment, day to day? Drink. Drink. All you who are thirsty, drink from this living water.

[18:39] And Jesus goes on to say, doesn't he, in verse 38, whoever believes in me, as the scripture says, whoever believes in me, streams of living water will flow out from within him.

The one who drinks Jesus, that is, believes in him, will become not just filled with this water, but will become a source of living water for others.

We could play with this image for ages, but I've got time. John tells us here, this is what Jesus meant, this living water from other people.

Verse 39, he said, didn't he, now he said this about the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

He's teaching us really something important here, that after his death and his resurrection and his ascension and glorification, Jesus would give his Holy Spirit. And that's what he's talking about here.

[19:42] This living water, Jesus pours upon us by his Holy Spirit. That is the present work of the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, this pouring into us and through us, this living water.

Of course, if you know your Bible, you know that the Holy Spirit was active in the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit was there in creation. Let us make man, God says. He was there in the kings, wasn't he, and in the prophets, and in the judges, and in the musicians, and the craftsmen.

The Spirit was there and was upon them. But this full gift of the Holy Spirit is the fruit of Jesus' ministry. Up to that point, the Holy Spirit had not been given in this way, because the Son had not yet been glorified.

this is what the Old Testament anticipated and pointed forward to. And they actually remembered it at the Feast of Tabernacles. It was one of the things they remembered.

Let me read to you from Zechariah 12. You don't need to turn to it. But in Zechariah 12, this is what is promised. And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and please for mercy, so that when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him.

[21 : 04] As one mourns for an only child and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. And then in chapter 13, verse 1, on that day, there shall be a fountain opened in the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from all sin and unrighteousness.

And here Jesus stands up in Jerusalem as the firstborn son. As the one who in six months' time they would pierce.

And he says, when you pierce me on that day, a fountain will be opened that will cleanse you. And it will cleanse you from impurity and from sin. That's what living water does.

It is a fountain of life and cleansing. And through us, this life and cleansing goes to others. A bit later in Zechariah chapter 14, it says this, on that day, on that same day, living water will flow out of Jerusalem.

Half to the eastern sea, half to the western sea, in summer and in winter. and the Lord, Yahweh, will be king over the whole earth. And on that day, there will be one Lord and his name, the only name.

[22 : 22] Living water flowing out in Jerusalem, flowing out across the lands to us here tonight, to the ends of the earth. And this need for water, this need is a cleansing from sin of bringing life to the dead.

And that is the work of the risen Lord Jesus by his spirit in us. And praise God, it is the work of the risen Lord Jesus by his spirit through us going out from here as that living water goes out from us. Well, thirdly, there's confusion again in verse 43. Confusion and calling and confusion. The people are divided because of Jesus. Verse 40, some say, he is the prophet, the one that Moses said was coming.

Others said, he is the Christ. Others said, how is it possible for the Christ to come from Galilee? The Christ is going to come from Bethlehem. They're so confused, aren't they again?

A bit earlier on in the chapter, we saw earlier they said, well, when the Christ comes, we won't know where he comes from. But here's another group saying, actually, we are the ones that know where he's coming from. He's coming from Bethlehem. He's coming from the wrong place.

[23 : 37] They're thoroughly confused. Verse 44, again, some want to seize him, but no one laid their hands on him. Temple guards have been sent to arrest him.

They come back to the Pharisees. In verse 45, the Pharisees say, why didn't you bring this Jesus back with you? And they say, can you see it?

No one ever spoke like this man. No one ever spoke like this man. He's the greatest preacher I've ever heard. You can feel the temperature in the room rise, the Pharisees.

The Pharisees fume. Are you kidding? Are you kidding me? Has he deceived you also? They say, has anyone of the people that really matter believed him?

Have any of the rulers of the Pharisees believed him? Have any of the important people in Jerusalem believed in him? It is only you uneducated riffraff that believe in Jesus. You are fools to believe in him.

[24 : 44] A curse be upon you for believing this man is from God and yet there's one, isn't there? There's one who's not rejected Jesus. Verse 50, Nicodemus speaks up.

Nicodemus comes back into the picture. And Nicodemus is on a journey here at the expense of his own reputation and position.

It's not a massive stand he makes, is it? He simply says, don't you think it might be appropriate for us to investigate this a little bit further? To actually look at the evidence?

How often, tragically, do people dismiss the Lord Jesus without even looking at the evidence? And Nicodemus says, he says, well how about, how about we actually check it out a little bit?

We're reminded, aren't we, verse 50, that this is the same Nicodemus who'd come to Jesus in chapter 3 in the middle of the night. And Jesus said to him, you must be born again, Nicodemus, to enter the kingdom of God.

[25 : 50] And here Nicodemus says, does our Lord judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does? Our society certainly condemns Jesus, don't they, without even listening to him, without hearing him.

Nicodemus is wealthy, Nicodemus has power, he has influence, he is privileged, and yet Nicodemus knows his need. And Nicodemus is there at the end of the story.

He's there in chapter 19 when Jesus is taken down from the cross and it's Nicodemus who is there with Joseph, carrying Jesus' body, wrapping it, caring for it, laying it in a tomb because Nicodemus knew his need.

He knew his thirst and he comes to Jesus. And so, from this passage, this week, we ought to expect when the name of Jesus comes up, great division, great confusion, great polarisation, anger, aggression.

But we ought always to rejoice when those who are thirsty come to Jesus and are cleansed. And we need to come to Jesus.

[27 : 03] You may have been a Christian for 20, 30, 40 years. Children, do you know this?

Do you know that your mum and dad needs to come to Jesus? In whatever situation of your life you're in tonight, you're at the end of your rope.

You're at the end of your ability to deal with that situation. Come to Jesus. And tonight, things might be going brilliantly for you. You need to come to Jesus.

So tragically, isn't it, we try to get that reviving energy from everything else. We make new resolutions. We try hard.

And we can forget that it is Jesus who says, come all you who are thirsty, come to the waters, come by and eat. Listen to me. Eat what is good that your soul may delight in the richest affair.

[28 : 11] Give ear and come to me. Hear me that your soul may live. As we finish, let me show you just one little thing. Look at verse 37.

on the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up. Teachers normally sat down in New Testament times, but Jesus stands up and he cries out.

Kids, you're in school tomorrow and they're in the corridor and there's nobody moving in the corridor and there's bustling back and forth and the head master or the head mistress. She stands at the corridor and she raises her voice and she shouts and she wants you to hear, doesn't she?

Let's say after the service, you're milling around after coffee and tea and somebody's got an announcement to make. They stand on a chair and they raise their voice. What are they doing? They're wanting you to listen.

And Jesus Christ is standing up tonight and he is raising his voice and he is raising his voice because he wants you to listen. And this is what Jesus Christ wants you to hear.

[29 : 28] If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Let's pray. Let's pray.