

Message #26

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John

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JESUS PROVOKES OPPOSITION

JOHN 7:1-13

I.

Joseph Pleck, former Professor of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Illinois, wrote a book in 2013 entitled *Fathers in Cultural Context*. In it he says, **“The notion that fathering is essential to children’s social and personality development seems to be a uniquely American preoccupation. Current research actually provides little support for... this popular conception of paternal essentiality.”**

I don’t know what kind of research Professor Pleck is using. By the grace of God kids can turn out OK without a dad around. But the statistics I see indicate that it is a much greater challenge for children not to have a father around. Fatherless teens have a 63% higher suicide rate. Ninety percent of homeless kids and runaways come from fatherless homes. Seventy-one percent of high school dropouts do not have fathers around. (Breakpoint, 6/3/2014) Seventy percent of long term inmates come from homes without a father. (Breakpoint, 5/5/2013) According to the National Fatherhood Initiative (2004), children without a biological father in the home are 2-3 times more likely to be poor, to use drugs, to have emotional and health and educational problems, to be victims of child abuse and to engage in criminal behavior. The statistics that I see indicate that it is pretty important to have a father around.

Jesus Christ was blessed with an excellent earthly father. The New Testament indicates that Joseph protected Jesus when King Herod tried to kill Him. Joseph loved Jesus’ mother. He taught Jesus a trade. He raised Him in a godly home. Joseph’s absence in the story before us this morning may have played a part in the opposition that Jesus had to endure.

We have been working our way through John’s Gospel. Last week we finished #6. Chapters 5 & 6 describe Jesus’ ministry in Galilee in the northern part of what we know as Israel. We saw Jesus perform the 4th and 5th sign miracles that the Apostle John records in his book. Jesus multiplied the loaves and the fishes, and He walked on the Sea of Galilee. He also declared to the Galilean Jews that He is the

bread of life. But these Galilean Jews are reluctant to believe His claims and buy into His agenda. The rest of the Gospel of John is going to focus on events that happen in Jerusalem.

II.

So in vv. 1 & 2 of #7, which is found on p. 892 of the black Bibles under many of the chairs, we find THE SETTING FOR OPPOSITION. (PROJECTOR ON--- II. THE SETTING FOR OPPOSITION) According to v. 1, **“After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him.”** We have seen that the term “the Jews” is used in this Gospel to describe the religious leadership in Israel. These leaders are consistently portrayed as being in opposition to Jesus and His claims.

We also find here much of the reason that Jesus has been hanging out in Galilee. (GALILEE JUDEA SAMARIA MAP) Galilee was removed from the center of religious and political power. Jerusalem in Judea was the center of Jewish authority. The Apostle John describes two previous visits of Jesus to Jerusalem. In #2, soon after Jesus began His public ministry, He showed up in Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. It was then that Jesus kicked the money changers and merchants out of the temple. The religious leaders had a monopoly on the exchange of money and the sale of animal sacrifices. They also allowed this commerce to take place within the temple compound. Jesus declared that this was defiling holy ground. So Jesus right away was out of favor with the religious leaders.

Chapter five described Jesus’ second visit to Jerusalem. It was for a feast that is unnamed. Jesus healed a lame man on the Sabbath. The religious leaders had set up a complicated system of rules that had strayed far from God’s law handed down to Moses at Mt. Sinai. It included rules that healing on the Sabbath was wrong and carrying a mat for a lame man who had just been healed was wrong. This miracle again sets Jesus at odds with the religious establishment.

(JOHN 5:16) In #5 v. 16 we read, **“And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.”** Two verses later we have (JOHN 5:18) this additional note: **“This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.”** So this was a swamp that needed to be drained. The swamp monsters were after Jesus. Jesus was aware of this, and that is why He was spending most of His time in Galilee. (PROJECTOR OFF)

Verse 2 in our passage says, **“Now the Jews’ Feast of Booths was at hand.”** At the beginning of #6 we were told that the Feast of Passover was at hand. This was the setting for the miracles of the multiplication of the loaves and walking on water. This was followed up by the discussion with the Galilean Jews in Capernaum on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Now it is the Feast of Tabernacles which is at hand. This feast happened six months after Passover. John doesn’t tell us anything about what happened during these intervening six months. So John is not providing a complete biography of Jesus. The other three Gospels describe some of what Jesus did during this time.

The Feast of Booths is also called the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Ingathering. In Hebrew it is referred to as Sukkot. Leviticus #23 in the Old Testament provides us one description of this feast. (PROJECTOR ON--- LEVITICUS 23:34) God tells Moses, **“Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is the Feast of Booths to the Lord. (LEVITICUS 23:35) On the first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work. (LEVITICUS 23:36A) For seven days you shall present food offerings to the Lord. (LEVITICUS 23:36B) On the eighth day you shall hold a holy convocation and present a food offering to the Lord. It is a solemn assembly; you shall not do any ordinary work.”**

This was one of the three feasts in the year when all Jewish males were required to show up at the worship center, which was now in Jerusalem. (PROJECTOR OFF) Another Old Testament description of this feast instructed worshippers to make tent structures out of branches to remind them of God’s provision for their ancestors during the forty years in which they wandered in the wilderness.

This feast was also celebrated as a harvest festival. The last crop of the year, which was olives and grapes, was gathered in at this time. The feast also pointed toward the coming of the Messianic kingdom, when the Messiah would gather in His people and celebrate a great banquet.

Josephus was a first century AD historian who wrote about his fellow Jews. He says that Tabernacles was the most popular and best attended of the three feasts in his day. Whole Jewish villages would sometimes empty out and show up for this feast. Such is the setting for the opposition that Jesus will now encounter.

III.

In vv. 3-6 we discover that JESUS PROVOKES OPPOSITION FROM FAMILY. (PROJECTOR ON--- III. JESUS PROVOKES OPPOSITION...) Verses 3 & 4 tell us, **“So his brothers said to him, ‘Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.’”**

After Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary had other children. Mark #6 v. 3 lists the names of His brothers. (MARK 6:3) Mark describes the words of the skeptical crowd in Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth: **“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not his sisters here with us?”** The omission of father Joseph suggests that he is dead by this time. James later became the head of the church in Jerusalem and the author of the New Testament book of James. Judas became the author of the brief New Testament book of Jude. (PROJECTOR OFF)

At this point the brothers of Jesus are skeptical about Jesus and His claims. It is difficult to determine what their attitude exactly is. Are they being sarcastic, or are they trying to give practical advice? They are aware of Jesus’ miracles. So they know that there is something special about Him. They are also aware that many of the Galilean Jews have decided not to follow Jesus any more. Perhaps His movement is in danger of collapsing. So it made practical sense to them for Jesus to go up to Jerusalem and do His best miracles there. Jesus, if You think that You are really Israel’s Messiah, then this is the best opportunity to show Yourself. Show them your best stuff.

Verses 5 & 6: **“For not even His brothers believed in him. Jesus said to them, ‘My time has not yet come, but your time is always here.’”** So even Jesus’ brothers are not buying Jesus’ claims. They can’t deny the miracles that He has done. But it would seem that they are not buying the stuff that Jesus said in #6 about being directly from heaven and being the bread of life and about having to trust in Him for eternal life.

The brothers are not about to sell their brother out to the Jews who are trying to kill Him. But since they are not believing Jesus’ basic claims, they are opposed to His real purpose and mission. Closeness to Jesus does not guarantee saving faith. Such it is today. Involvement with church and membership in a Christian family do not guarantee that we are genuine believers.

The reference in v. 6 to Jesus’ time might prompt us to think that Jesus is referring to His coming death. But elsewhere in John’s Gospel the term that Jesus is quoted as using in reference to His crucifixion is His “hour.” That hour could be in the background. But the immediate context has to do with going up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles.

The brothers can go up to the Feast of Tabernacles at anytime in these preceding days. Typically people would go up in a large caravan. Jesus has a more particular schedule. There is danger in going up to Jerusalem early. Jesus knows that the authorities are already looking for Him. They want to kill Him. So He has to be careful.

There is another dynamic that needs to be considered here, especially on this Father's Day. It appears that Joseph has died by this time, though perhaps not long ago. In #6 v. 42 the leaders of the Galilean Jews said that they knew the father and mother of Jesus. But Joseph is not mentioned at all during the public ministry of Jesus. It would seem that he is gone.

At the death of the father in a family it was understood that the oldest son would take over leadership of the clan. Jesus was the oldest son. Thus back in #2 we looked at the story of the wedding in Cana, where Jesus was present with His disciples and His mother and perhaps His brothers. (PROJECTOR ON--- JOHN 2:12) In v. 12 we read, **"After this he [Jesus] went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days."**

Remember, the family of Jesus was from Nazareth. Jesus made Capernaum His basis of operations when He began His public ministry. Notice here that the extended family of Jesus follows him here. The reference to staying a few days has to do with the fact that the Passover came just after this. The whole clan probably went to Jerusalem for that. (PROJECTOR OFF)

In our story today in John #7 the brothers of Jesus are present in Capernaum. So it seems reasonable to conclude that the whole family may have moved to Capernaum with Jesus, and Jesus was acting as head of the family. Jesus was about thirty when He began His public ministry. Some of His brothers were probably in their twenties and probably had wives and kids by now. So Jesus was probably acting as head of this extended family. But His siblings had doubts about Jesus' claims and His mission. Could the new patriarch in the family be trusted?

This was ultimately the situation that God intended that it should be. But from a human perspective, what difference would it have made if Jesus' earthly father was still around? Perhaps Jesus would have had more family support. Joseph had firsthand experiences with God that the brothers of Jesus did not. The angel Gabriel had appeared to Joseph and told him something about the mission of Jesus. He heard the angel say that Jesus would save His people from their sins. Joseph knew that he was not the earthly

father of Jesus. He had heard from the shepherds in Bethlehem about the angels who appeared to them and confirmed the divine mission that God had for Jesus. He was present when the wise men from the east showed up to worship his young son. Joseph had received a visit from an angel that warned him to move the family to Egypt.

In the face of opposition, even from family, the presence of a godly father could have made a difference. But it was not to be. Today in the face of family challenges, a godly father can make a difference.

IV.

In vv. 7-9 we find that THE SOURCE OF JESUS' OPPOSITION IS THE WORLD. (PROJECTOR ON--- IV. THE SOURCE OF JESUS' OPPOSITION...) Jesus continues His address to his brothers in v. 7, **"The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil."**

The word "world" is used in different ways in John's Gospel. In John 3:16 we are told that God so loved the world that He sent His only Son into it. There the word appears to refer to the world of people. These are people for whom Christ died. But here in our verse "world" appears to refer to a system that involves people who do not have God as their center. This is a system that is controlled by Satan. For the people in this world oppose God and His purposes. This world system includes the Jewish leaders, the Galilean Jews and even the brothers of Jesus.

This world hates Jesus because He tells people that they are sinners and do bad things. The message of John the Baptist was "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." This was also the initial message of Jesus. In His first visit to Jerusalem Jesus called out the religious and political leaders for having a corrupt system that let business people into the temple to increase the money that went into the pockets of the high priests. In His second visit to Jerusalem Jesus called out the religious leaders for having a legalistic system that objected to having sick people made well on the Sabbath.

When Jesus went to the Galilean Jews, He found people who rejected His agenda. Their agenda was to have economic prosperity and to get rid of the Romans. Jesus said that they needed repentance and spiritual rebirth. Most of them did not want to hear it. Even His brothers were not buying His agenda. They reflected the world thinking of their fellow Galilean Jews.

This is why the world opposes Jesus today. The Bible says that we are valuable creatures created in the image of God. But we are greatly fallen. We are sinners who are headed for hell. Jesus says that we are supposed to be about serving Him and glorifying God. We are to love God and love our neighbor, even if that neighbor is an illegal immigrant. We are to live by His standards and to respect marriage and to value life in the womb. We are to recognize that there is only one way to the true God.

The world around us doesn't like to hear that. The world thinks that we are just fine. There are many paths to God. Life is about me and my happiness and my self-fulfillment. Sure we have problems. But the problems stem from lack of education and poverty and homophobia and narrow-mindedness.

So Jesus says in v. 8, **"You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come."** Then the writer John adds in v. 9, **"After saying this, he remained in Galilee."** Probably the brothers joined a caravan from Capernaum that was going up to Jerusalem. Jesus stayed behind for the time being.

Jesus speaks of His time not having come yet. Again, in John's Gospel Jesus usually speaks of His "hour" in reference to His coming death. I suspect that the primary reference here is to the time when Jesus should go up to Jerusalem for the feast. But in the background does lie His coming crucifixion.

V.

In vv. 10-13 we find **OPPOSITION TO JESUS LEADS TO CONFUSION AND FEAR**. (V. **OPPOSITION TO JESUS LEADS TO...**) According to v. 10, **"But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private"** It probably would have been a three day walk from Capernaum to Jerusalem. So typically people would go in large groups. It was safer that way, and it was more enjoyable to go in the company of family and friends. Because Jerusalem was on a hill, Jews always spoke of going up to Jerusalem.

What the twelve apostles did, we are not told. Perhaps they went up with the caravan. Jesus may have gone to Jerusalem alone. It is possible that he joined a caravan from another place where the people did not know Him. The Feast of Tabernacles was a seven or eight day feast. So probably Jesus arrived after the feast began. We will find in v. 14 that it was in the middle of the feast that Jesus showed up in the temple and began speaking.

Verse 11: **“The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, ‘Where is he?’”** Obviously “the Jews” refers to the religious leaders. Literally, they ask, “Where is that one?” It is perhaps with a sense of disdain that they ask it.

Jesus acted in many ways like a Jewish rabbi. It was a religious requirement that all Jewish men show up for this feast. So Jesus had to show up in Jerusalem. They were already wanting to kill Him. But they could not find Him. He probably was not there at first. But even when He did show up, they did not immediately spot Him.

There is in this perhaps a reminder of one aspect of the Incarnation. Jesus was able to blend in with the crowds. There was nothing about His appearance that was especially noteworthy. The New Testament says nothing about His appearance, other than how battered He looked at the crucifixion. But otherwise, nothing is said that Jesus was especially tall, or especially big, or especially handsome. In the humility of the Incarnation, in the Son of God becoming a human being, he appeared very much like other Jewish men.

According to v. 12, **“And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, ‘He is a good man,’ others said, ‘No, he is leading the people astray.’”** The two prevailing opinions among the masses were that He was a good man, and He was leading the people astray. The religious leaders had the second opinion. In the other Gospels we find that some of the religious leaders accused Him of being possessed by a demon. The Old Testament penalty for being a false prophet was death.

Some people had a more favorable opinion. The religious pilgrims at the feast realized that they were overpaying for animal sacrifices and for money exchanges at the feast. They probably knew that the priests were getting a cut of the action. So there were some people who liked it when Jesus kicked the money changers and animal merchants out of the temple.

But the opinion that Jesus was a good man was inadequate. Good men do not go around claiming that they are God, that they are bread from heaven. They do not claim that they are the only way to God. Jesus claimed to be the Messiah. He claimed to be the Son of God who had taken on a human body and a human nature. He will soon explain that He must die to pay the penalty for the sins of the world. What will become necessary to have forgiveness of sins and eternal life and existence in heaven is admission of sin and faith in this Jesus. So these people are confused.

Verse 13: **“Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.”** So there is not only confusion but also fear. Of what are they afraid? A couple of chapters later we will find that religious Jews feared that the religious leaders would kick them out of the synagogue if they were found to be supportive of Jesus. So these opinions about Jesus are being expressed quietly and privately.

In Matthew #10 Jesus warned His followers that He would provoke opposition. (MATTHEW 10:34) Beginning in v. 34 He said, **“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. (MATTHEW 10:35) For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. (MATTHEW 10:36) And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household.”** Jesus was finding that kind of opposition in Jerusalem, and He was even finding it among His brothers.

The opposition which Jesus faces today often takes the form of opposition to the pattern for men and fathers laid down in God’s word. Often that opposition finds its most vocal opponents among the cultural elites. The claim of many of them is that patriarchal religion leads to domestic violence and mistreatment of women. How ironic it is that in the last year it has been revealed that so many of these liberal, often anti-Christian, men have been found to be abusers of women.

Bradford Wilcox is a sociology professor at the University of Virginia and Director of the National Marriage Project. Research into marriage and the family in the US is his specialty. He writes, **“Compared to the average American family man, evangelical Protestant men who are married with children and attend church regularly spend more time with their children and their spouses. They also are more affectionate with their children and their spouses. They also have the lowest rates of domestic violence of any group in the United States.”** (*Christianity Today*, August 2004) In my forty years of church ministry I have only had to deal with one situation of domestic violence in my congregation. We Christians are not immune to such sin, but our efforts to follow the Biblical ideals tend to produce a better outcome.

The best legacy that we fathers can leave our children and grandchildren is a love for God and a love for Jesus. In Deuteronomy #6 Moses told his people, **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”** May such be the case with us.