

Compassion & Courage

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[0 : 01] Well, we're here this morning in the basement of the church, and I thought about if for this morning there was a good passage to preach in the basement of the church. I didn't think of one.

I didn't want to preach on people being in prison or anything like that. It's not that bad. But it got me thinking about churches that today are meeting underground or in secret.

And thankfully we have the freedom to continue to meet today in person. And I guess I'm not going to worry for ourselves anyways about whether that will be taken away this year.

The Lord Jesus has said, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. But I got thinking, what are all those underground churches preaching about this morning in their services?

And then I thought, well, it's probably the good news of Jesus. It's probably the story of Jesus. What else would they be preaching? That's our main thing.

[1 : 06] Jesus is everything to us as a church. And if we have him, we have everything. And if we don't have him, we don't have anything. So we're going to continue right on with our series through John this morning.

We're in John chapter 7. And if you have your Bible, you can open it up there. Or if not, you can use one of the Bibles that are provided in the pews there. And Jesus is in Jerusalem.

He's at the temple courts. He's teaching the people. The people are astonished at his teaching. They wonder where he got it from. Jesus told them that his teaching is from God.

Some of them don't believe that. And Jesus has been making the case that he's no deceiver. The evidence is there that he hasn't been seeking glory or praise for himself in all this, but that he's been seeking for the people to glorify and praise God the Father who sent him.

So we're going to pick up the conversation in verse 19. At this point in the conversation, Jesus seems to turn the focus onto them and away from himself.

[2 : 14] Verse 19. Has not Moses given you the law, says Jesus? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?

You have to know that at this point in the conversation, this probably took the conversation to a whole different level. Let's remember that there are hundreds if not thousands of people gathered there for the festival at this point.

And Jesus throws this out into the whole crowd. Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?

It's a rhetorical question. Of course, Moses has given you the law. You have it. But why are you not living according to the law? And I think at this point, Jesus is talking specifically to the Jewish leaders in the crowd.

You know what is right. You know what is wrong from the law. And yet not one of you keeps the law. Case in point. Why are you trying to kill me? This is an amazing response.

[3 : 24] And on the surface, it might look like Jesus is just kind of throwing out some kind of an accusation that will get people's attention off of him and onto the religious leaders. But it's more than that.

It's far from that. Jesus and a good number of people have known for a while that the religious leaders are out for his blood. The religious leaders have been plotting.

They have been scheming. They've been asking around. As we heard back up in verse 11. They've been at this festival saying, where is he? And Jesus, in front of this whole crowd that's gathered there, he exposes just what the religious leaders are up to in front of everyone.

And not only that, but he uses it as an example of their own hypocrisy. Talking about deceiving people and deceivers. You know, these guys are the religious leaders.

They're the experts in the law. He says, you have God's holy law, yet not one of you keeps the law. Case in point, why are you trying to kill me?

[4 : 34] Let's think about the law that God gave to Israel and what it says in this matter. Just a couple quick verses. Deuteronomy 25 verse 1. The Lord said this. When people have a dispute, they are to take it to court and the judges will decide the case.

Acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty. So there's instruction about what to do in a dispute. Jesus and the religious leaders are in a bit of a dispute here.

And then when they get to the court, there are instructions that the Lord gave about that too. He said in Exodus 23 verse 7, So they want Jesus dead.

But the only justifiable reason to put anyone to death is if they're guilty of breaking the law of God in a way that deserves capital punishment. And all of this, of course, is to be handled in the court system with due process and proceedings.

So if Jesus' death doesn't come this way, then the other law that applies from the law is Exodus 20 verse 13, right out of the Ten Commandments.

[5 : 49] You shall not murder. This is what Jesus is really exposing in the so-called religious leaders. It's hypocrisy of the worst kind.

Deceit of the worst kind. They're pretending to be righteous, faithful, devout followers of God who obey him and do the law of God.

Yet in their hearts, they are envious and murderous. And not just in their hearts. They've been actively scheming and plotting and planning to get Jesus killed.

That's what murderers do. So Jesus asks them in front of everyone, Why are you trying to kill me? Verse 20.

It's the crowd who responds, You are demon-possessed. The crowd answered, Who is trying to kill you? Now it's maybe a little ambiguous.

[6 : 49] It says the crowd is the one that answered. But this is probably some of the crowd who have traveled from other parts of Israel. Maybe they are unfamiliar with all that's been going on between Jesus and the religious leaders.

But they kind of just seem to be throwing out an accusation. You know, you're mad. You're insane. You're crazy. Who's trying to kill you? You think the government, the religious ruling leaders are out to get you?

This guy must be demon-possessed. Interestingly enough, Jesus doesn't seem to answer the question any further. Maybe he felt that he had already answered it, or maybe he didn't think they were sincere in asking it.

I'm not sure. But he just goes right on ahead with exposing the hypocrisy of the religious leaders. Verse 21. Jesus said to them, I did one miracle, and you are all amazed.

Yet because Moses gave you circumcision, though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs, you circumcise a boy on the Sabbath. Now if a boy can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing a man's whole body on the Sabbath?

[8 : 07] Stop judging by mere appearances. Instead, judge correctly, says Jesus. So Jesus points back to his last run-in with the religious leaders back in chapter 5.

We heard how he healed that man at the Pool of Siloam on the Sabbath day. And we saw how the religious leaders after that began to go after him even more, trying to kill him.

Jesus says, I did one miracle, literally one work, and you are all amazed. And probably this is not the good kind of amazed. It's probably more like astonished.

You're all shocked that I did that on the Sabbath. That's your charge against me. That's why I'm deserving of death, because I did that on the Sabbath.

You hypocrites! Don't you also, in the same way, break the Sabbath by doing the work of circumcision? The covenant that was made with Abraham and the law of Moses prescribed circumcision for every baby boy on the eighth day of his life.

[9 : 16] But what happens when his eighth day of life is on the Sabbath? Well, the Jewish leaders recognized that even though it technically was work to circumcise the baby boy, they should still do this on the Sabbath day, they said.

I mean, this is circumcision. This is the sign of the covenant between God and the people. Doing this puts that boy into a right covenant standing with God.

And it's necessary. Jesus masterfully argues from the lesser to the greater. He says, you will circumcise a boy on the Sabbath day to heal or to make right that one part of his body.

So why are you angry with me for healing a man's whole body on the Sabbath? This guy hadn't been able to walk for 38 years.

And you're telling me that I'm guilty of breaking the Sabbath because I didn't let him go another day. I didn't wait another day till the Sabbath was over to heal him. Stop judging by mere appearances, says Jesus.

[10 : 30] And make a right judgment. Wow. What's the problem with these religious leaders? The religious leaders are trying to play a game here.

They're trying to make Jesus look bad on the surface. On the face of things. In front of all the people. But their charge and their accusation is all wrong.

They've misapplied the law. And they haven't done that innocently. They're trying to twist the law. And use it against Jesus. But Jesus says, you don't even apply the law to yourselves in this way.

Their determination that he's worthy of death is completely unjust. And unjustified. Well, that's the snapshot of the conversation that we get with this crowd and Jesus.

We don't get a lot. We get just the highlights. And at this point, John starts telling us about the reaction of some of the crowd to all this. And they haven't seen or heard from Jesus in a while.

[11 : 38] Because he's been up in Galilee for a while. Verse 25. At that point, some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, Isn't this the man they're trying to kill?

Here he is, speaking publicly. And they're not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he's the Messiah? So some of the people of Jerusalem are picking up what Jesus is laying down.

They're figuring it out. They've known for a while now that the religious leaders have been seeking to put someone to death. But now this question reveals that they realize that it's Jesus.

This is the guy. The very one that everybody's been talking about. He's the guy that they're trying to kill. Probably what's been happening is that the religious leaders have been putting a deceitful spin on things.

Here in Jerusalem. Putting out the word that there's a man wanted for having repeatedly broken the Sabbath law. Attempting to discredit Jesus and poison the attitudes of the people toward Jesus there in Jerusalem.

[12 : 49] But now here, all of a sudden, it seems as though the citizens of Jerusalem are realizing that there's something not quite right here. Like we recognize that this is the guy that they're trying to kill.

But something's not right here. If he's deserving of death for breaking the law, I mean, look, here he is speaking publicly right here in the temple courts and nobody's saying anything to him.

The religious leaders aren't saying a word. What's going on here? Have they concluded that he really is the Messiah? Do you feel the tension among the people?

They smell something fishy. Things aren't quite adding up. Something's not right here. Could it be that he is the Messiah? Verse 27.

But we know where this man is from. When the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from. Just when it seems as though they were moving towards the right conclusion about Jesus, all of a sudden the voice of doubt enters in.

[13 : 59] Apparently it was a popular idea that the Messiah would seem to come out of nowhere when he came. Not that he would be a ghost. They thought he would be human.

But many also thought that his origins would largely be unknown. I mean, it can't be this Jesus guy. We all know where he's from. He's from Nazareth. Over in Galilee.

It's kind of an odd thing to stumble over. I'm not really sure what they were expecting. If they believed that the Messiah would be flesh and blood human being just like us, a Jewish man, then of course he would have a hometown in Israel, a place that he was from.

And if they were only expecting him to just seem like he came out of nowhere, well, that's what happened, isn't it? One day John the baptizer is preaching out at the river, and the next day he says, Behold, the Lamb of God!

And there Jesus was, a grown man that nobody except his friends, family, and neighbors knew anything about. So I don't know what they were expecting. Verse 28, Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from.

[15 : 20] I am not here on my own authority, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, but I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me.

So Jesus kind of acknowledges the objection of the crowd. Yes, you know what family I am from. You know where my hometown is, but there is a lot you do not know about me, like why I am here.

Do you know that I am not here of myself, or of my own initiative, and you do not know the one who sent me? Of course we know who Jesus is referring to, it is the same thing he has been saying all along.

He is claiming to be sent by God, his Father. And if we are listening closely, he is also telling the people in the crowd that they do not know him, God, the one who sent him.

So yes, you know a few things about me, superficially, but there is a lot you do not know about me. Let's finish the moment here.

[16 : 32] The crowd has a mixed response to all this. Verse 30. At this, they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.

Still, many in the crowd believed in him. They said, when the Messiah comes, will he perform more signs than this man? So it was a mixed response.

Some think that Jesus is crazy, perhaps demon-possessed. Some are trying to get him arrested. But in the midst of all this, John says, some believed.

He has to be the Messiah. Look at the signs he is doing, and how many of them. Are we to expect the Messiah to perform more signs than this man has performed?

Surely not. So things are kind of heating up here between Jesus and the crowd, and next week, we'll see how the Pharisees make a play to try and get their hands on Jesus.

[17 : 36] But what can we take from what we've seen so far here today? Well, I want to encourage you to put yourself in the story. First of all, the big question here is, who is Jesus?

Are you like the people in the crowd who thought that Jesus was out of his mind? Are you like the people in the crowd who think he's a clever deceiver?

Or are you like the people in the crowd who see the countless miraculous signs that he's been doing and believe that he is the Messiah, God's chosen king? Who do you believe, I mean truly believe, that Jesus is?

This is the question that we need to sort out first and foremost. But not only this, this is the question that we need to urge others to sort out first and foremost.

Our children, our neighbors, those who live in our community, our co-workers, our extended family members. I love what Jesus does here in this conversation.

[18 : 46] And I think there's something we can learn about sharing the good news with others from Jesus here. Do you hear what the people said about Jesus? They said, we know him.

We know where he's from. He can't be the Messiah. But do you hear what Jesus' response was? Essentially he said, yes, you know the surface details.

the tangible details of me and my story, but you do not know the deeper details. You do not know truly who I am, where I'm from, why I'm here.

It's as though Jesus, as tactfully as can be said, is gently pushing back, saying, you think you know me, but you don't know me as well as you think you do.

he challenges them. And I think we can learn from that. I think it's very likely that we all have some people in our circles who don't believe in Jesus, who also have some misconceptions about him, or who see him in a very superficial way, have a certain view of him.

[19 : 59] And I think it's okay, just as Jesus did, to graciously and gently push back a little bit on that. So what might we say to people? Well, this is going to come down to the individual conversation and to you and how you say things and to the person you're saying them to.

I trust the Lord will give you wisdom and words. But maybe you might say something like this in your own words. You know, one of the things that continually surprises me is that the more I read the accounts of Jesus, the more I realize that I didn't really know him as well as I thought I did.

You know, there's kind of this pop culture understanding of who Jesus is. There's kind of this church culture understanding of who Jesus is. But as a follower of Jesus, as I've been reading my Bible, I'm continually finding things about him that surprise me.

I love that about Jesus. No matter how hard you try, you just can't seem to put him into a box or a mold. It's amazing.

You might say something like that. A subtle way to remind people that maybe they don't know Jesus as well as they think they do. Where maybe it comes up in a conversation that's a little more tense.

[21 : 25] Maybe somebody makes a comment about what you believe. And maybe you say something more like this. You know, what I'm hearing from you is that you already have made up your mind about Jesus.

And I just want to be honest with you. I don't say this to insult you or anything like that, but I'm not sure that you know Jesus as well as you think you do.

What he said, what he did. And just leave it at that. As Greg Kukul said in his book called Tactics, it's almost like putting a pebble in someone's shoe.

Something that they can carry around with them in their shoe for a while. And eventually, maybe that little thought, that thing that you said to them will get to them and will get them thinking.

Maybe I haven't really known Jesus or understood who he is, the whole story. Who knows? Maybe the Lord will use that to cause them to get back into their Bibles and read for themselves the story of Jesus.

[22 : 28] I'm reminded of the story of Rosaria Butterfield. There was a gracious and kind older couple who reached out to Rosaria after she wrote an article against the promise keepers.

And this couple invited her to come over for a meal and chat about that article. Pretty bold step. And one thing led to another and it kind of became a regular thing.

They started having her over for a meal and talking about what she was interested in and talking about things of faith and Christianity. And Ken, the older man, would do this from time to time.

He would gently push back just a little bit on what Rosaria was saying about Jesus to help her see, no, look at this passage. I don't think you've really got Jesus figured out yet.

And because of that, Rosaria continued in her own words to research the religious right, she began reading her Bible even more in an attempt to make her case.

[23 : 34] Her original goal was to publish something about the religious right's politics of hatred against LGBT people. Her conversations with Ken drove her deeper into the Bible and eventually she ended up giving her life to the Jesus that she found in the pages of the gospel.

The truth is that we never quite know how people will respond to the next time that we graciously and gently point them to Jesus. Jesus always knew what to say to people.

Of course he did. He's the perfect son of God. But even he had a mixed response. Many didn't believe. But some did.

And so I think we can be encouraged by Jesus here to be a little more bold. Not argumentative, but humbly and graciously courageous. If people are not reading their Bibles regularly, the chances are they have a superficial view of Jesus as well.

chances are they don't really know him as well as they think they do. And so this is one of our opportunities. But we all need to admit here, I think, that in order for it to be an opportunity, we need to know Jesus beyond the superficial.

[24 : 58] We need to know him well. How well do you know Jesus? Jesus? What's something about him that you love?

What's something about Jesus that has captured your heart recently? Maybe even surprised you? You know, it's easy to tell people about something or someone who has captured your heart.

let me share just one thing that captured my heart this week from this passage. Something about Jesus, and we'll end with this.

In this whole crowd of people, I don't hear anyone else standing up for that poor man, the man who for 38 years had been unable to walk and was lying there by the pool of Siloam desperately trying even 38 years later to get into the water and get back the use of his legs.

Do you know why Jesus healed him on the Sabbath? Do you know why Jesus didn't wait until the next day? Because Jesus saw this nobody as a person and he loved him.

[26 : 23] He heard how long it had been and he had compassion on him like nobody else ever had. he felt that man's suffering in that moment as he talked with him there and because he was moved in his heart he decided to put an end to his suffering that day then and there and it happened to be the Sabbath day.

I don't hear anybody else in the crowd standing up for that man except Jesus. The Pharisees cared nothing for him.

They couldn't have cared less if he'd sat by the pool of Siloam for the rest of his life. Just let him lie there another day. Wait till tomorrow and then heal him.

How sick is that? It's disgusting. And now they're trying to get Jesus killed for breaking the law by doing the most gracious and loving work of compassion on the wrong day of the week.

Isn't it wonderful how Jesus exposes the disgusting hypocrisy of the religious leaders for what it is? Isn't it beautiful how he helps the people who are gathered there see that their version of being devoted to God is twisted and a sham.

[27 : 54] I don't hear anyone else in the crowd having the compassion or the courage to stand up for this poor man to the likes of the religious leaders. But I see Jesus crying out all by himself.

With a lot more compassion than I have in my heart and the courage of a lion going head to head with those poisonous vipers there in the temple courts and yet in his humble and gentle humanity there's no one to defend him and eventually it will cost him his life.

That's what I see here in this passage. That's something that captured my heart this week here. And it just makes me want to worship Jesus. Do you know him?

Do you love him? Let's pray. Father in heaven thank you for sending your son.

Lord Jesus thank you for coming. We give you praise because you are so unlike us. You are glorious. You are worthy of our worship.

[29 : 08] God we pray and ask that you would help us to continue to fall in love with you again and again and again that even this week we would see and learn more things about you that fill our hearts with joy and carry us forward but also that we would have those words ready to share with the people in our lives that need you desperately we pray this in Jesus name amen here.