

# (1) The scandal of Jesus' teaching

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[ 0 : 01 ] Today's reading is from John chapter 7 verses 1 to 24 and this can be found on page 1076 of the Bibles.

John chapter 7. After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill him. Now the Jews' feast of booths was at hand. 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. For not even his brothers believed in him.

Jesus said to them, my time has not yet come, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil.

You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come. After saying this, he remained in Galilee. But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly, but in private.

[ 1 : 12 ] The Jews were looking for him at the feast and saying, where is he? 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.

Yet for fear of the Jews, no one spoke openly of him. About the middle of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. The Jews therefore marveled, saying, how is it that this man has learning when he has never studied?

So Jesus answered them, my teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.

The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory. But the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood. Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law.

Why do you seek to kill me? The crowd answered, you have a demon. Who is seeking to kill you? Jesus answered them, I did one deed, and you all marvel at it.

[ 2 : 21 ] Moses gave you circumcision, not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers. And you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well?

Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment. Thanks Richard for reading the passage to us. Please keep the Bibles open on 1076 as we look at John 7 together.

Let me pray for us before we start. Father God, we thank and praise you for your word. We praise you that your word is living and active, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to division of soul, of joint, of marrow.

We praise you that judges the thoughts and intentions of our heart. Please would you be at work in our hearts then now as we come to your word. Please change us, we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Now I wonder whether you've ever had a conversation where you're happily chatting away with someone, perhaps it's someone you've met for the first time.

[ 3 : 42 ] The conversation's gone past the usual pleasantries and small talk, and it moves on to what you're doing over the weekend. And you say you're going to go to church, you're a Christian, and then suddenly the conversation stutters a little bit.

Things seem to have gone a little awkward. Now you've mentioned that you're a Christian. And it feels as if there's sort of an invisible barrier gone up between the two of you. Have you experienced

anything like that?

It happens to me all the time. People introduce themselves to me. Hi, I'm Mark, nice to meet you. What do you do for a living, Mark? Oh, I work for the church. Oh, I see, they say. And sort of, you know, there's that awkwardness again.

And when on a very rare occasion I say something a tad bolder, like, oh, I tell people the good news about Jesus for a living. Well, I can usually see their eyes scanning the room for the nearest exit. Now, why is that? Why do people seem to have this inbuilt negative reaction to Jesus? It's not just in our conversations, is it?

[ 4 : 44 ] So, in the papers, Jesus is constantly getting negative press. In our language, Jesus is regularly used as a swear word. In the world at large, Jesus is mocked, scorned, rubbished.

Now, why is that? I mean, if you're going to choose one person in the history of the human race to emulate one person's example to follow, one person's teaching to live by, well, it would be Jesus Christ, wouldn't it?

His life was perfect in every way. And yet there's all this negativity towards him. Why is that? Well, in our passage this morning, Jesus gives us the answer.

You see, even back then, at the time of Jesus, there was much negativity towards him. So, if you've been following our series in John, you will know that Jesus has been getting some bad press.

For example, last week, after Jesus had promised to give life to all who would believe in him, we actually saw, verse 66, his disciples turning away from him.

[ 5 : 51 ] So, after this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. Not just that, but we were left last week with one of his own disciples, one of the twelve, going to betray him.

Verse 71. He spoke of Judas, the son of Simon of Scariot. For he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him. And as we come to our passage today, we're reminded in verse 1 that the Jews, referring here to the Jewish leaders, were seeking to kill him.

We've got unbelief, we've got betrayal, we've got death threats. All this hostility towards Jesus. And the question is, why? Why do people treat him like this?

Well, let's look, turn to John 7, and we're going to hear Jesus' answer. First, we're going to look at Jesus' conversation with his brothers in verses 2 to 10.

That's summarised by the heading on the reverse side of the service sheet. You won't believe in Jesus if you follow the world's agenda. Let me read from verse 2.

[ 6 : 52 ] Now, the Jews' feast of booths was at hand. This was one of the biggest feasts in the year, where people from all over the land would come to Judea and live in huts or booths made of branches to remember the time when God had rescued them.

from Egypt in the wilderness, when they too lived in booths. And so with this in mind, verse 2, verse 3, sorry, his brothers say, leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see your works you are doing.

Clearly, the brothers are impressed by Jesus' miracles, the works he's doing. And knowing his popularity is fading, well, they advise him to go to Judea.

Look, everyone's going to be there. Do your impressive miracles in front of them. That will get your popularity going again. So they urge Jesus some more, verse 4. Come on, brother.

No one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world. It's just the advice, I imagine, David Beckham got at the end of his time in Real Madrid.

[ 8 : 04 ] Want to be famous still, David? Says his agent, well, why don't you go over to LA? Capital city of the fame world. Go as public as you can. Show your skills there. Let people know who you are. Show yourself to the world.

This is what the brothers are doing. Off to Judea. Capital city of the Jewish world. Do your works there. Show yourself to the world. See your popularity rocket. Sounds like good worldly advice. Except then comes verse 5. For not even his brothers believed in him. The author John wants us to be clear that this is not good advice.

This is bad advice stemming from unbelief. Of course, Jesus already knows this. And in verses 6 to 8, he explains why. My time has not yet come.

But your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me. Because I testify about it that its works are evil.

[ 9 : 04 ] You go up to the feast. I'm not going up to this feast for my time has not yet fully come. See what Jesus is saying? Jesus is saying, look, I can't go up to the feast now because the time set by

my Father has not yet come.

But when it does come and I do go up, well, I'm not going to impress the world with my works. I'm going to convict the world of its works.

I'm going to testify about the world that its works are evil. You want me to gain popularity with the world. But don't you see? The world hates me.

You just don't get at my agenda. My Father's agenda that I'm following. You see, the brothers you see, they want a Jesus that everyone can like, a popular Jesus, an impressive Jesus, a Jesus they can marvel at, that the world will love.

You know, they believe in that sort of Jesus, but that's not the Jesus of the Bible. The Jesus of the Bible is not so comfortable. Jesus will talk about people's sin. We've seen it already.

[10:08] Jesus will expose people's works as evil. And the world, says Jesus, hates him for it. So this is why the Jews were trying to kill Jesus.

Because he exposed their evil works and they hated him for it. That's why many of his disciples were turning back from Jesus. Quite happy for a Jesus who could feed the 5,000.

Quite happy for a popular Jesus. But not a Jesus who said they needed their sin dealt with. Not a Jesus who pointed out their faults, who said their works were evil.

They hated that. I'm not sure about you, but I find hate quite a strong word. It has connotations of fierce anger, shouting, of the blood boiling. But hate doesn't have to be so outwardly expressive.

We know, all of us know that feeling when someone criticises us or points out our faults. That's our instant reaction to not like it, turn from it, justify it, come back in some way.

[11:09] And for deep-rooted faults in our lives, we're tempted to look for blame elsewhere.

Parents' faults, schools' faults, in my genes. None of us likes criticism. We hate having our faults exposed and it's this sort of hatred towards Jesus we're talking about.

Because Jesus comes into the world and does point out its faults, all of its faults. He does call evil by the right name. Pride, not self-esteem, greed, not ambition, envy, not desire, adultery.

not affair, debauchery, not fun. Jesus does convict us of our sin. He exposes our evil works.

And he says the blame lies with us. And we don't like it, it's uncomfortable. And this is why the world hates Jesus.

It hates me, Jesus says, because I testify about it that its works are evil. So this is why there is such hostility towards Jesus in the world.

[12:18] Why he does get such a bad press. Why those invisible barriers do go up in conversation. Why people deny those invites to church, guest services, carol services.

Jesus. The world hates Jesus for exposing its sin. I worked in the city, I ran several Christianity Explored courses, and you would often see exactly this reaction in process.

So you start off week one, Christianity is about a relationship with God. Great, I think, sounds good.

Relationships are good. I like the sound of that. Week two, Jesus is God, calms a storm, makes people better, raises people up from the dead.

Again, great, sounds good, have a relationship with this Jesus who's good. But then week three comes, and we look at why Jesus came to earth. To rescue us.

To rescue us from our sin. Now, this is a wonderful message, to be saved from sin and brought back to God, but, you know, you can see people suddenly getting a little bit awkward.

[13:20] They don't like it. What do you mean I'm sinful? What do you mean my works are evil that I need rescuing? The mood on the court, often changes from that point on. Now, I can see the barriers going up.

You see, as long as it's a popular Jesus, the world will love him. As long as it's Jesus the miracle worker, feeder of the 5,000, Jesus the healer, Jesus the good teacher, well, the world's all for Jesus.

But as soon as people come face to face with the real Jesus, Jesus the saviour, the saviour, from our sin, well, as soon as they come face to face with this teaching, I imagine we've all seen their distaste at best, hatred at worst.

So, let these verses not put you off, I suppose, next time you get this reaction from a friend or colleague you're sharing the gospel with, Jesus says it's natural.

By nature, the world hates him. So, don't take it personally. Their problem is with Jesus, it's his teaching, their problem's not with you.

[ 14 : 30 ] And I suppose don't be put off, keep sharing the gospel. I'm sure we're all tempted to leave out the sin part. It's tempting to have a Jesus that the brothers wanted, isn't it? Wouldn't it be great if we had a popular Jesus?

Wouldn't it be great if we had a Jesus that people naturally love, that you could rally the crowds around, a marketable Jesus with no talk of sin, Jesus the healer, the money manager, the marriage counsellor.

I mean, it's tempting to go for the popular Jesus, but it's not the Jesus we see here in chapter 7. Because the message of Jesus is a message of salvation from sin.

And what a far greater message it is too. Eternal life, forgiveness, sin dealt with, death eradicated, a perfect world to come, where there'll be no sin. Yes, of course, Jesus will make your life better, but it's on God's agenda, not the world's.

An agenda which ultimately finds its fulfilment in Jesus dying in our place for our sin. And this is when, in the brother's words, Jesus will show himself to the world, not by miraculous works, but by miraculous death.

[ 15 : 44 ] So that's the first reason why there's such hostility to Jesus in the world. The world hates Jesus for exposing its sin. The world's agenda is totally opposed to Jesus' agenda.

Now, the second reason for hostility towards Jesus comes in verses 11 to 24.

As Jesus is questioned here over the authority of his teaching by the Jewish leaders. So, in verse 10, we see Jesus has now gone up to the feast, not publicly, but in private, and the tension's building.

Jewish leaders are looking for him. Where is he? They want him dead. The people are muttering about him. He's a good man. No, no, no, he's leading the people astray. There's controversy surrounding him.

And then right in the middle of all this, verse 14, about the middle of the feast, Jesus goes right up into the temple and begins teaching. And immediately the Jews react.

[ 16 : 45 ] How is it, verse 15, that this man has learning when he's never studied before? This is just a kid from Galilee. He's never been to preaching practice or Cornhill or theological college.

I mean, how can he teach like that? So, Jesus answers, My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. My teaching is God's teaching.

These are God's words I'm speaking. And you, Jewish leaders of all people, should realise this, verse 17, because if anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I'm speaking on my own authority.

Jesus is taking it straight to the Jewish leaders here. He's saying, only those who want to do God's will will know that my teaching is from God. Problem is, you don't. Verse 19, has not Moses given you the law, the law which says do not murder?

This is God's will, yet none of you keeps the law. I mean, why are you seeking to kill me? You don't want to do God's will, Jesus is saying.

[ 17 : 52 ] That's why you don't recognise my teaching as being from God. What Jesus is doing here is that he's exposing the real motives of God's people.

They simply don't want to do God's will. Their hearts are opposed to God. They don't care for God's will. They've got no hope of recognising who Jesus is.

So we saw in the first point that the world hates Jesus for exposing its evil works. How are we seeing God's own people reject Jesus? Because they don't want to do God's will. The brothers, the crowds, even God's chosen people, they are all part of the world, a world which hates Jesus, a world which doesn't want to do God's will.

I'm not sure if you remember all the way back to chapter 1, the very first talk in this series, we were told that the world would reject Jesus, that even his own people wouldn't receive him.

And now we're seeing the main reason why, that the root cause and problem of it all, it's a heart in rebellion against God, a will that doesn't want to do God's will, a life, in Jesus' words, of evil works.

[ 19 : 04 ] God's will. This is the reason behind all the hostility, the unbelief, the betrayal, the death threats. The world as a whole is in rebellion against God, just as it has been ever since Adam and Eve first chose not to do God's will in the Garden of Eden.

All of us, by nature, don't want to do God's will. All of us, by nature, have hearts opposed to God. All of us, by nature, have a natural tendency to reject God.

And that's why people hate it when Jesus exposes it. Now, this is tough to hear, that these are strong words from Jesus.

Perhaps like the crowd's reaction back then. I mean, it's difficult to accept when we hear it. So what I want us to do is spend the rest of our time seeing Jesus defend what he's saying here.

Because in verse 20, the crowd answer, you've got a demon. Who's seeking to kill you? You're talking nonsense, Jesus. What do you mean we don't want to do God's will?

[ 20 : 15 ] Who's seeking to kill you? Jesus responds, I did one deed, one deed, referring here to the healing of the invalid in chapter 5 on the Sabbath. I did one deed, and you're all shocked by it.

But, Moses gave you circumcision and you circumcised on the Sabbath. If then on the Sabbath you do what the law requires, cutting off a part of the body, why are you angry with me when I fulfil the law on the Sabbath, making the whole of the body well?

Don't judge by appearances, judge with right judgment. So Jesus is going beyond their question of who's seeking to kill him, even though it's the Jewish leaders who are plotting his death at this stage, he knows that by chapter 20 the crowd too will be calling for his blood.

So what he does here is exposes why their desire to kill him is wrong. And simply put, Jesus is the fulfilment of the law. It's them twisting the law for their own purposes, whilst completely missing what it points to, Jesus himself.

It's totally wrong for them to want to kill him. He's doing nothing wrong, Jesus speaking the truth.

Actually we skipped over verse 18 where Jesus also defends what he is saying.

[ 21 : 35 ] Let me read verse 18. But the one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory, but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.

You see, Jesus, he's not seeking his own glory, like the religious leaders of the day or our day.

Jesus only cares for his father's glory. If he was seeking his own glory, he would have gone up to the feast following the world's agenda.

He would have done a few more miracles, rallied the whole nation around him, but he wasn't speaking on his own authority. He was speaking on God's authority, speaking God's word, seeking God's glory, a message of salvation, a message he knew the world would hate him for, a message his own people would kill him for.

But his desire for his father's glory is what kept him going to the end. And this is how we know Jesus says that he's true, that in him there's no falsehood. We can be sure that what Jesus says in these verses is true.

What Jesus says about the world's hatred of him is true. What Jesus teaches about the world not wanting to do God's will is true. Tough teaching, but true teaching.

[ 22 : 49 ] The problem is with us. By nature we don't want to do God's will, by nature we hate Jesus for exposing our evil works. Now as I say, this is strong teaching from the lips of Jesus and it will get stronger over the next chapter and a half as Jesus continues to probe deeper and expose our hearts.

But I want us to see that it is necessary that Jesus does this exposing work. Remember, he's not doing it in some sort of malicious way, it's not like Jesus likes to rub people up the wrong way and annoy them with this teaching.

No, Jesus loves us. And he knows this revealing of our sinful hearts is necessary. Because it's only by realising our problem that we'll turn to the solution and accept Jesus' rescue.

What today's verses have shown us beyond any doubt is that the world needs saving. We need saving. People need new hearts that want to do God's will.

People need wills that want to follow God's agenda, not the world's. People need their lives.

Change from the inside out. And that's exactly the rescue Jesus has come to bring in.

[ 23 : 58 ] This is why he came to earth. To rescue us from our sin, to bring us back into relationship with God. Today we see how much we need that rescue. So if you are someone here looking into the claims of Jesus, this is the rescue he's bringing in.

This is the rescue he's offering you. And the question is do you want it? Are you prepared to let Jesus expose your sin?

Are you prepared to admit you don't naturally want to do God's will? This is the first step to believing in Jesus and accepting his rescue. And for those of us who do believe in Jesus, well, what a great reminder of what we've been rescued from.

rescued from these hearts that hate him, rescued from the wills that didn't want to do his will. Jesus has given us new hearts, new wills. And the more we appreciate this rescue, well, the more we'll be holding out this message of rescue to others, not being tempted with the popular Jesus, but with the saving Jesus.

The more we appreciate it, the more we'll be wanting to do God's will, living for Jesus, seeking God's glory and not our own. Let me pray for us.

[ 25 : 20 ] Father God, we do thank and praise you afresh for the Lord Jesus, for sending him to earth to rescue us from our sin. Father, we said at the start that your word does expose thoughts and intentions of our heart, does split us inside, and today we've learnt about the world's hatred of Jesus, about us not by nature, not wanting to do your will.

people, and so we thank you ever so more for this rescue. We pray, Father, that you would enable us to realise this, and so still hold out the word of life to those that don't yet know you.

And please would you help us to continue to live for you and seek your glory, not our own. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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