You Must Decide

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Preacher: Rev. Sol Green

[0:00] Would you turn with me to John chapter 7 please.! Are you committed to it and faithful to it?

Rain or shine, heaven or hell, I'm going to do this? Or do you kind of have second thoughts about it? In my own case, I'm kind of slow.
In fact, my daughter, Angela, has said that on my tombstone, she's going to have put on it, here lies dad thinking about it.
Okay? And the reason is because growing up, okay, every time she asked me if she could do something or if she could have something, guess what I said?
Let me think about it. I'm very slow at decisions. Actually, when we go on vacation in Roodle Beach, there's an outlet mall.
[1:29] And the outlet mall has a Columbia store. I really like Columbia stuff. And so, but the trouble is, my wife will tell you, we have to make more than one trip.

Okay? That's because I need to go and see everything they have and decide if I really want to spend the money or not. And I kind of go back and forth. And eventually, I have to go back and get something.
So we have to make a second trip back to the same outlet mall. Recently, I decided, oh, I'm going to give Peggy my smartphone and I'm going to get a different one.
Okay? Okay? So I was talking to Pastor Andrew, asking him about, you know, what kind of smartphone do you think I should get? Guess what he said. Okay? The newest Apple.
Okay? Well, actually, not the newest one. So he told me about where I could get one, but I had to act quickly. Okay? Okay? I was, I was, I struggled with it for a day.
[2:33] I said, yeah, I'm going to do it. I'm going to do it. I'm going to get it. And my wife just kind of looked at me. Okay? And then I finally said, by the end of the week, I said, no, I'm not going to do it. And my wife said, I was wondering who that man was that was in our house because you never make a decision like that.

But she doesn't know it yet, but I made a decision kind of quickly this week. Well, this past week, I decided to buy a router table.
And I had committed on which router table I was going to buy. And I went to the store, and there was a different one. And I bought it. I brought it home. It's still in the box because I couldn't bring myself to open it.
Tomorrow, she doesn't know this yet, tomorrow we're taking it back to get the one that I was going to get. Well, all that aside, there is one decision that every single person must make.
It's the most important decision of your life. Would you follow along as I read John chapter 7, verses 25 to 36?
[3:44] Some of the people of Jerusalem, therefore, said, is not this the man whom they seek to kill? And here he is speaking openly, and they say nothing to him.

Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? But we know where this man comes from. And when Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from. So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, you know me?
You know where I'm from? But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. I know him, for I came from him, and he sent me.

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So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him because his hour had not yet come. Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, when the Christ appears, will you do more signs than this man has done?
The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him. And the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to arrest him. Jesus then said, I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me.
[4:56] You will seek me, and you will not find me. Where I am, you cannot come. And the Jews said to one another, where does this man intend to go that we will not find him?

Does he intend to go to the dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? What does he mean by saying, you will seek me, and you will not find me? And where I am, you cannot come. Remember the setting here. Remember the situation from last week. Jesus had come down to Jerusalem. He had taught, and they had tried to arrest him and kill him. He went back to Galilee, and he's back in Galilee teaching there.
And his brothers, in disbelief, say, you want to be something special? Go down to Jerusalem. Because it's the feast of the tabernacle. It's one of the biggest feasts of the year.
And everybody else is going to be there. Jesus said, I will not go, because it's not time. Last week, we saw he did go.
[6:00] And here he is in the temple, teaching openly, and teaching with clarity and authority. Today, we're going to see the reaction to his teaching.

Just like in our day, as we will see from our passage, the reaction of people to Jesus was not always direct. It's not always simple and straightforward.
It's not always accepting. The first thing I want you to see and understand is that Jesus responded to the apparent confusion. In fact, in this case, in Jesus' day, he confronted people's confusion.
The people of Jerusalem were confused. They didn't recognize the Messiah. And they did what you would expect them to do. They thought, well, what about our leaders?
What about those who are supposed to know? Let's see what they're saying. And they looked at their leaders, those who had supposedly more information, and they seemed to be getting mixed messages.
[7:07] On the one hand, the leaders often confronted Jesus. They had threatened the people that if you believe in Jesus, if you follow him, we're throwing you out of the synagogue.

That was the equivalent to being thrown out of the society. And they had tried to arrest him on more than one occasion. And here he is on one of the biggest days, biggest feast days of the year, teaching openly in the temple, and there's crowds around him.
There's a sense in which they're thinking, maybe there was something to this. Maybe there's something we're not being told. And if it stopped right there, we would say, well, all they need is a little more information.
All they need is to have things explained to them. All they need is for their leaders to say, yes, this is the man. And they're beset. But the text doesn't end there.
See, the people also had a theology of Messiah. They knew what they were looking for. Or they thought they did.
[8:21] It was made up mostly of the teachings of men, mixed in with some passages that they had either taken out of context or misinterpreted. I don't want to get into all the detail and kind of get lost in that this morning.

But let me just say that Jesus was very different than what they were expecting to see. See, what they expected was that there would be this man.
He would be in Bethlehem. And one day, he would just appear out of nowhere. And he would have such presence, such command, such military prowess that everybody would simply follow him.
They thought, well, when Messiah comes, there's not going to be any question because he's going to set up the kingdom and the kingdom that we Jews get to be leaders in.
And here's Jesus. He's authoritative. But he's also meek. He lives in the back country of Nazareth, not the metropolis of Jerusalem in Bethlehem, which is close by there.

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[9:34] He seems to be more concerned about meeting people's needs than about military conquest. Jesus didn't fit the people's preconceived idea of what Messiah would be.

And so they didn't accept him. There was more to it than just misunderstanding. The Jews' nationalistic pride in their personal sin stood in the way of them really looking to God and his answer for their need.
Their unrepentant hearts were blocking their view of what God was going to do to restore his people to himself.
You've heard the old saying, they couldn't see the forest for the trees. Well, they couldn't see their need for their self-righteousness. And Jesus understood it was really not confusion, but it was rebellion.
We know this guy. We know where he's from. And we will not have this man rule over us.
[10:42] That's really what they were saying. When we see that, it helps us understand why Jesus responds to them the way he did.

Jesus' response to them is to confront their hard-hearted unbelief. When Jesus said, you know me? It could be that he was making the statement, you know me.
But I don't think that's what he was doing. Because if you look at how they reacted to what he said, it was pretty strongly. I think Jesus asked that to them as a question.
And remember, I told you last week that in the text, there's no punctuation. So we don't know what tone Jesus used in doing this. But I think Jesus said, you think you know me?
You think you know where I'm from? Let me tell you where I'm from. When Jesus said that, it could have been either way, but I think it was clearly that.
[11:43] Remember what he had just said in verse 24. He had just said, judge rightly and not by appearances. Here they are looking at the appearances and they think that's the solution.

Jesus goes on, God sent me, but you don't know him, so you don't recognize me. I said last week, these right judgments that come from a right relationship.
And Jesus is saying to those individuals there that day, you don't have the right relationship, so you're not making the right judgment. They thought they knew God because they knew the law.
But Jesus said, but you don't obey it anyway. Here again, they had it all confused. Over and over in the Gospels, we see Jesus trying to woo the Jews to himself.
And over and over again, we see them rejecting. It actually proceeds after this. Look over to Romans chapter 9.
[12:58] Romans chapter 9. One of the most direct teachings or passages on this. Romans chapter 9, verses 4 to 6.

In other words, is there any good to being a Jew?
Is there anything worthwhile in being a Jew? Yes. Because it's the Jews that God gave his word to. It's the Jews that God gave the tabernacle and then subsequently the temple to.
It's the Jews that God gave the worship to. It's the Jews that God gave the heritage to. And it is to the Jews that he sent his son. But I didn't finish the passage.
But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel. What Paul was saying is, just because of your birth certificate doesn't mean that you have a relationship with God.
[14:30] Just being a good Jew is not going to get you into heaven. Just being a Jew and having that relationship with God doesn't mean that you really have a relationship with God.

People today have a different problem, or slightly different, but it's related. At the core of what people think today is that sin is not really that bad.
In fact, the sin that they do is not even really a sin. It's just a choice. And God, of course, wouldn't punish or limit in any way our personal choices, would he?
Sins of others. Even against us. Well, they should be punished, but we want the person to be rehabilitated. We want to give them a better education, better economics, better opportunity, so it will never happen again.
But God can't possibly hold them responsible for that, can he? Yes. Don't all roads lead to the same place?

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[15:43] No, they do not. I'm going to say it very simply, very clearly. Salvation is only in Jesus Christ.

I want to remind you of two passages. I know that most of you are familiar with them, know them. Both of them are in the book of Acts. You don't have to turn to them. I'm going to read them to you. But if you want to, the first one's in Acts chapter 4, verse 12.
And there is salvation in no one else. For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Chapter 16 of Acts.
A man facing death cries out for help. He says, what must I do to be saved? And the answer is, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household.
There are not multiple ways to heaven. There is only one way to heaven. Whether you are the nicest person or a mass murderer makes no difference.
[16:45] You have only hope in Jesus Christ. Whether you are Jew, Greek, English, Irish, Italian, Swahili, Japanese, Chinese, or Martian.

There is only one God. And His answer to sin is acceptance of Jesus Christ. Being a good person, being a good Jew, will no longer be the answer, only Christ.
You know, I don't think we take that seriously enough. Well, I've got this Uncle Joe. I don't have any uncles.
I have this Uncle Joe. And Uncle Joe is pretty well-to-do. And he's really a nice person. I'm certainly not going to confront him about his relationship with Christ.
He doesn't really have one. But he's a nice person. I certainly don't want to offend him. This person I work with that I don't give a hoot about when it really comes down to it.
[17:49] I don't want to offend them. So I'm not going to tell them that what they're seeking after has no hope. We don't take it seriously.

Next thing I want you to see is the response of the people. Which was division. The result of Jesus' coming is not the division of Jews and Gentiles, but believer in Jesus Christ or enemy of God.
Jesus' exalted claims forced people to decide about him, and the result was always division.
Always division. It's always true. Jesus does not bring world unity, at least not in the way that people expect.
Those who strive for ecumenicalism miss the point. We have brothers and sisters all over the world.
And we don't need to pick at them and argue with them about every single little detail.
[18:59] But there is unity only in full acceptance of Jesus Christ for salvation. That's what he said. And that division leads not only to peoples, not only to nations, but it also comes right down to the family.

I will ask you to turn to this one, Matthew chapter 10. Matthew chapter 10, verses 34 to 36. Jesus is speaking.
Matthew 10, verses 34 to 36. Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. 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.
And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. There are some of you here this morning who understand this on a personal level.
Because the day that you came to Christ, your family said, we want none of that. It's not just families, external associations, but we're also divided, we're changed and divided internally.
[20:23] Where acceptance of Jesus Christ always separates us from what we were and from the world. It's one of our great hopes.

That as a result of salvation, I'm now a new creation. That old things have passed away, and the new truly has come. There's now no connection between me and the world and its practices.
We're in the world, but we're not of the world. All of us still battle the old self. But if there's no battle going on, perhaps it's because there's no new self.
And if there is a battle, we should be able to see little victories. Maybe not the big battles, but we ought to see some little skirmish that is successful.
And I hope you can see those. Come back to the passage in John. And I want to take a couple of minutes and just look at an aside here.
[21:32] Because I think it's really important. It's something we could easily just kind of skip over. Here in the passage, we see three groups of people. The first group are people who are offended by his claims.

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And they try to lay hands on him. And they're unable to do that. The second group believed in him. And at least because of his miracles, they at least for the moment are committed to Jesus Christ. The third group is kind of a strange group. I won't go into this one. But the Pharisees and the priests hated each other. They were not buddies. And in fact, if you remember in Acts, Paul uses that fact at one of his trials to bring such confusion that they just have to put him back in the jail cell and just cancel the hearing because none of the people can agree.
Because he set the Pharisees against the Sadducees, which is the group of chief priests. But their hatred for Jesus is so strong that they join forces during that day.
And they do everything they can to try to remove him from the public arena. But that's not the thing I want you to notice. What I want you to notice is go looking at verse 30.
[22:57] A little phrase there. It says, This idea of the time or the hour is a common one.

And John appears more than eight times. David had said it best back in Psalm 31. You don't need to turn to this. Psalm 31 verse 15. My times are in your hand.
Rescue me from my enemies and from my persecutors. Here we are at the Feast of Tabernacles. It's a time when they're celebrating the trip through the wilderness.
They're celebrating the fact that God brought them through and he brought them into a land of rest. It's six months before Passover. And though he's surrounded by danger, the anger of the Jerusalemites, the hostile desire for power of the leaders, and even the questionable belief of those who say, well, at least look at his miracles.
Jesus was in reality free from all danger. Because it was not the will of God that he should die at this time. So here's the thing I want you to understand.
[24:15] Nothing happens out of time in our lives. And there is no safer place than to be at the center of God's will.

Maybe you face health issues, concerns, financial concerns. Maybe there's family problems. Nothing happens out of time.
Nothing is surprise to God. Nothing is outside of his control. Maybe it's not the specifics. Maybe it's just that we live in such a frightening time.
To simply let your family members outside, out of your sight can flood us with worry and fear. Just sending our children off to school can frighten us.
There's no place safer than the center of God's will. There was a situation in our family just a couple weeks ago.
[25:20] June Stoll, and I've already checked with her if it was okay for me to tell this. June Stoll was going to stay the week with our grandchildren while Rob and Steph went to a conference.

And so, June and Gary were there same time we were there. And they needed to come back. And then June was going to come back.
So, Joseph and Samuel decided that they would go with Grandma and they would ride with her. And that way they could go back with her so she would have someone with her.
And also they'd be able to, Joseph would be able to share with the driving. So, they're traveling back and they stopped at one of the roadside rests.
And this guy came up to June and said, hey, can you help me with a situation over here in my car? At one of the roadside rests on 70. And she just kind of looked at this young man and said, I don't think so.
[26:21] Got in the car. Samuel said, you know, nanny, there was nobody in that car until after he went back to it. And then three guys were in there.

They were just hiding down on the seats. They drove on and at the next roadside, there's another one. There's several of them in a row in Indiana on 70.
And they got to the next one and Joseph, who was driving, told Samuel, look over there and see if you see that car. And Samuel said, yeah, it's that silver one over there.
At the next roadside rest. We stop at that roadside rest every time we go to Indiana. There is no place safer than being in the will of God.
I want to remind you that Jesus came to die for the sins of the world. Here at the Feast of Tabernacles, there is absolutely no danger despite the appearances.

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[27:36] Six months in the future, when they come together for the Passover, the celebration of the land dying as a sacrifice so that its blood could mark God's people and they would be protected from God's wrath.

I want to be careful how I say this, but because of the will of God, His hour will come and no power on heaven or on earth can stop what is going to happen that day.
There's no place safer than being in the will of God. Back to the main point. Jesus confronts, He divides, and He gives a clear warning.
Then Jesus said, I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to Him who sent me. You will seek me, and you will not find me. Where I am, you cannot come.
In the midst of this rather tense situation, Jesus proclaimed very clearly that they had to make a decision. Last week, you saw that He said, you think because you know the law of Moses that you know God's will, but none of you keep it.
[29:03] then here, as some believe and accept while others reject, He presents the way to know the will of God by acceptance of Him. And here, in this declaration, Jesus makes the truth clear.

In the presence of the Father, there is no room for those who have refused to accept the Son. One last thing I want you to notice there.
because it's the hope of all of us today. John MacArthur wrote this. They found the idea that the Messiah would minister to Greeks, to Gentiles, to be preposterous.
They were mocking His warning. But they do not realize that what they're saying in mockery contains a wonderful prophecy.
prophecy. Did God send a message of Christ to the Gentiles? Yeah. Yeah. The gospel is open to all. Regardless of race, color, nationality, no matter what you've done, no matter where you've been, whether you are young or old, the offer of salvation is there.
[30:23] neither you nor I know your hour. I do know that no matter what you do, that hour will not change.

I don't know how many days you have left, but I do know that today can be the day of salvation. I'm going to ask you to look at four passages with me, just briefly.
If you don't have a Bible this morning, there's one in the pew right in front of you. You can take that one. I'm going to actually give you the page number. And if you don't have one of your own, you can take that one with you.
For those who do not, who have not accepted Christ, I trust these are a clear warning. For those of you who have, I trust they're a wonderful encouragement.
First one's in Isaiah chapter 55 in verses 6 and 7. The pew Bible is on page 615. Isaiah 55 verses 6 and 7.
[31:33] Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord that he may have compassion on him and to our God for he will abundantly pardon.

Isaiah is saying don't delay. God wants to have compassion. 2 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 2.
It's on page 966. 2 Corinthians 6. 2.
For he says in a favorable time I have, I listened to you and in a day of salvation I have helped you. Behold, now is the favorable time.
Behold, now is the day of salvation. Now is the day. If you have not accepted Christ, do it now. If you have, who do you know that you plan to plead with one more time?
[32:52] Hebrews chapter 4 verse 7. I'm going to focus on the second part of it. It's on page 1003 in the Pew Bible. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart.

Let me get you back to John. John chapter 6 verses 35 to 37. It's on page 892 of the Pew Bible. 892.
892. Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. Whoever believes in me shall never thirst.
But I say to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

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Right there in the middle in verse 36 again is the same warning that Jesus has. Again, I don't know your hour. I don't know if you will have another day.
[34:06] I don't know if I'll have another day. So I plead with you. Today is the day. Do not harden your heart because the day could come when the door is closed.

that's exactly what Jesus was warning these people. You will seek me and you will not find me. You will want to go where I am and you may not come.
One day they would no longer be able to follow, no longer able to go where he was going. Here it is, the simplicity of the gospel. Agree with God that you are a sinner.
accept that Jesus Christ is God the Son. He gave his life for you on the cross.
And then put your faith and trust in him for your salvation. Would you pray with me?
[35:12] Father, the gospel is so simple and yet for the hardened heart is so difficult.

Father, I pray today that you would work in the hearts that are hardened, that you would soften them, that you would open them to the truth.
and that someone would come to Christ recognizing the sinfulness of their own heart and accepting the truth of his provision.
If you're here this morning and that's you, then I pray that you will recognize that and will cry out to God and beg for salvation.
Father, for those of us who are here today that have come to the place of salvation, first, it's great news.
[36:21] It's wonderful to hear the truth that simply believing in Jesus Christ is enough. It's an encouragement to us, but it's also a challenge to us to remember, to think that people around us, people we care about, people we love, have hardened their hearts and have not come to acceptance of you.

Father, we pray that you would help us, give us words to say, give us opportunities. If you do not have us in that family member, we pray that you would bring someone to them that would tell them the truth, that it's not about choice, it's about sin.
And it's not about offense to people, but it's an offense to you. Father, help us to be committed to that. And if there's anyone here that's a believer that makes that commitment, I pray that you would speak to God right now, tell him I'm going to work at that.
Gracious Father, we thank you for our Lord Jesus Christ, for his clear teaching, for his miracles, but most of all, for his finished work on the cross.
We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

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