

Mutterings, Misunderstandings and Division

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[0:00] Let me add my welcome to Jordan's. My name is Aaron Roberts. If you're new, I kind of look after the service here with Jordan. And if you are new, I'd love to meet you. I am really pleasant. That's all.

So, just come and say hi. I'd love to say how to you after this. Alright, so it would be really helpful. You heard the passage. It's really dense. Super dense. It's just gold. There's treasure in here. And we're going to get right into it. And it's probably going to be really helpful to have your Bibles open in front of you. So why don't you do that? We're looking at the second half of chapter 7. Jesus is teaching. And the opposition is just ramping up.

A great example of that is our first verse. In describing Jesus. The way they identify him is this. Is this not the man whom they seek to kill?

So that's how they kind of set him apart from the other people on the street. Oh yeah, that's Jesus. That's the guy they want to kill, right? So, opposition is really, really intense.

[1:09] Now, there are three things I want us to see in the text this evening. One, Christ teaches. Two, Christ divides. Three, Christ sustains.

So one, Christ teaches. Christ divides. And Christ sustains. First, Christ teaches. And it deserves a lot more attention than I'm going to give it this evening.

So I'm just going to keep it really, really short. This is this first section. All right, Christ teaches. So what is this teaching that's getting the religious leaders so riled up here? You remember from previous confrontations, people are really upset about, you know, the healing from the Sabbath, etc., etc., etc.

But here, what they don't like about him is what he says, and I'll use a couple of great words. When he starts talking about his whence, that's a great word, and his wither.

His whence and his wither. When he talks about where he's come from and when he talks about where he's going to. And that's basically the first half of our reading here. And we'll look at it very quickly. You see verses 27 to 29.

[2:14] But we know where this man comes from. And when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from. So Jesus proclaimed as he taught in the temple, You know me and you know where I come 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. I've come from him, and he sent me. So what's happening here? So the people are listening to him, and the vast majority of people held this belief that the Messiah would just pop up one day.

And one of the signs is that you wouldn't know where he's come from. It's just kind of like a peers. Mystery man. And the problem they have with Jesus is that they know where he came from.

He's up the street. They know his mom and dad. So they think they know where he's from. But, ironically, they don't really know where he's from.

Jesus says, I come from the Father. But, you know, that's actually where I come from. Anyway, this is wince.

[3:18] There's so much more to say in that. We don't have time. So the Pharisees, hearing this, sent temple officers to arrest him. Temple officers, like the kind of like, what are they called in America? Like mall police?

Mall cops. Mall cops. Yeah, like mall cops. See the mall cops, right? And Jesus' response is, instead of telling them more from where he came from, more highlighting that idea, he tells them where he's going, where he's headed to.

So this is a great expanse of teaching here. Verse 33. Jesus said to them, I'll be with you a little longer, and I'm going to him who sent me. You'll seek me. You won't find me. Where I am, you

cannot come.

So the Pharisees are really confused and a bit mocky. And they sort of go, where can he go? We can't find him. Is he going to the Greeks? The diaspora? The Greeks? Is he going to go there? Again, ironically, they kind of got it right, interestingly here, because Jesus does go to the Greeks through his spirit, through his church.

Okay, so that's as wentz and as with it. Again, so much more to say there. We don't have time. Because I really want to sort of park in these two next sections here. All right, next section.

[4 : 24] Jesus divides. Jesus divides. So that's the truth, isn't it? That's not a pleasant truth. I wouldn't put it on a t-shirt. Don't mistake it. Jesus, you know, Jesus saved.

Jesus divides. That's true, though. I remember as a very young Christian, and I'd become a Christian my last year at high school, going to university, and I kind of just rolled up to this random university Bible study.

And somebody was doing a reading of Matthew 10. And let me read from Matthew 10 here, 34, 35. Do not think that I've come to bring peace. This is Jesus speaking. Do not think that I've come to bring peace to the earth.

I've come to bring peace. I've come to set a man against his father, a daughter against his mother, and a daughter-in-law against your mother-in-law.

And I remember hearing that just going, whoa, wait, wait, wait. This is not what I signed up for. This is destroying my hippie Jesus kind of paradigm that I'd spent weeks kind of, you know, developing here.

[5 : 26] What the passage is saying there in Matthew is not that it's not Jesus' mission to ruin families. No, that's what he's not about, of course.

No, he's saying that because of his teaching, some are going to follow him, others will not. And that will cause division, even in the closest of relationships, like a family relationship.

It doesn't have to, but it can. Again, division is not the goal, but it happens when Christ teaches and people respond one way or the other.

If you're the only Christian in your family like I am, you know what I'm talking about. I think we see it in really lots of small ways as well, this division, this separation. You might have a group of friends at work or school or whatever, and you're talking to your friends.

And it's great having this very friendly conversation. And there is an ease about this conversation. You're talking about renovations or sports television. And it's great.

[6 : 22] And then you drop the J-bomb in the middle of the conversation. You mention Jesus, right? And all of a sudden, it just gets awkward.

And people are reminded that they have to be somewhere else at that point in the conversation. There can be a dispersion of the crowd or a bit of drama.

Now, have a look at how what I just talked about plays out in the story in front of us. For example, verses 40 to 43. In 40 to 43, you have three opinions on who Jesus is.

Some said he was Christ. That's positive. Others said he's just a prophet. Others said, no, no, no, he's just a guy from up the road. He's a guy from Galilee. Verse 43 very plainly summarizes what I've just been talking about.

So there was division among the people over them. Sadly, differing opinions on Christ still divide people today.

[7 : 22] The second example, and this is the one we'll spend a bit more time on. Have a look at 45 to 46 there. So the mall cops, the temple police, they are supposed to arrest Jesus.

The Pharisees send them to arrest Jesus because they don't like what he's saying. They come back. And the Pharisees are like, where's Jesus? And they say, well, he's not with us.

Why? Why didn't you arrest him? And they say, no one ever spoke like this man. Isn't that wonderful? No one ever spoke like this man. So they had this authentic experience with Jesus.

They were authentically impacted by Jesus. So how were they treated? By those who didn't share their enthusiasm for Christ.

Namely the Pharisees there. What did the Pharisees say to them? Well, they rebuked them. And it's a threefold rebuke. Three distinct things are said.

[8 : 25] Rebuke number one. This is a rebuke you may be familiar with. Rebuke number one.

Verse 47. The Pharisees answer them, have you been also deceived? In other words, Christians, you're brainwashed.

They're just brainwashed. And you guys have been brainwashed too. So it would seem that back in the days, and still today, that you have this idea that people who trust in Jesus are just people who have experienced a bit of a conjo.

They've been manipulated. I became a Christian, as I said, at like 17. It was just after my parents divorced. And I know that many people thought this of me.

Oh, look at him. He's so fragile. And there's brokenness and fragility. Some religious nut child got a hold of him and converted him.

He was deceived. Rebuke number one. Rebuke number two. The second thing the Pharisees say to the temple officers who really like Jesus, they say this. Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him?

[9 : 34] They're essentially saying to these officers, none of us believe him. And we're the experts. Why should you believe him? No one important believes in him.

Why should you? Goodness, that is a pressure that we can easily feel. That amazing professor or relative or colleague or friend who is so smart and so winsome and so thoughtful.

But they don't want anything to do with Jesus. And you can start to think, goodness, maybe I've been deep as well. And they don't think it. And they're so clever. And they're really kind.

And they read books. Really interesting ones. And maybe... Maybe I've been deep as well. These poor officers here, they've been confronted by the most imposing disbelievers in history.

They've been confronted by God's own religious elite. They must have felt stupid. Imagine the pressure. Do you know this pressure?

[10 : 39] Do you feel this pressure? Do you know this? You know, your favorite pop icon or well-respected scholar or whoever comes out and says, there can't just be one way to God.

Christians are so narrow-minded. Jesus was just a good man but no more. You know people like this in your life, who you love, who explicitly or implicitly reject Jesus.

And that can be difficult. Rebuke 3. From the Pharisees to the officers. Verse 49.

But this crowd does not know the law. Who does not know the law? They're accursed. So the Pharisees are talking about the followers of Jesus, who they regard, and it's not well documented, religiously regarded just the general crowds, as just ignorant peasants.

So this big rebuke is like, officers, come on. Like the followers of Jesus are just simple folk. They don't know any better. Do you really want to align yourselves with them?

[11 : 41] Is that going to be like your crew that you kind of hang out with now? In today's language, you've become a Christian? Come on. Do you really want to align yourself with a bunch of like sexually repressed, anti-science, anti-civil rights rednecks?

Is that going to be your people you want to hang out with now? Have you felt that accusation?

Christians are just this sort of ignorant mob. Well, if you have, I think it's really helpful to know that Christians have been hearing that for 2,000 years, right from the start, right from the first blooming of Christianity.

So you're keeping pretty good company. Now this little interaction between the Pharisees and the officers gets really interesting. Remember, there's this threefold backhanded rebuke of the officers who had this genuine experience of Jesus, which included, none of us believe, well, as it turns out, one of them did believe.

Because just after they said that, Nicodemus steps up. Now you remember Nicodemus, John chapter 3, love this guy. So he came, he's a Pharisee, he came to see Jesus, and it says he came at night, because it was a picture of him living in darkness.

He came at night, and here he is here, standing up for Jesus. Verse 50, Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, does our Lord judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?

[13 : 06] They replied, are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee. So notice two things. How? First, how, notice how the Pharisees try and silence him.

How to shut him down. They say, are you from Galilee too? In other words, are you one of those stupid people from that backwater village? Are you one of those guys? It's a debating strategy called ad hominem. It means, instead of attacking the point, instead of arguing the point, you just attack the person.

You don't engage in the argument, you just attack the person. And that was their only comeback, because what Nicodemus said was actually very reasonable. Let's just hear them out.

Let's just listen to Jesus' words. Folks, most, most continents in the world, I think except Antarctica, have something called the Continental Divide.

In North America, it runs from the Rockies all the way down through Mexico. And it's a mountain range. And when rain falls or snow mounts, that water that was once together separates.

[14:16] It either goes east, ends up in the Atlantic, goes west, ends up in the Pacific. That's called the Continental Divide. And Christ is like the Continental Divide in our life.

He will create a divide. Because we meet him, and we accept him, or we reject him. And if we accept him, our life is redirected, our values are changed, our attitudes, our affections.

And this will create a division between you and people around you, between you and the culture around you. And as culture changes, I am so sure that Christians are going to continue to feel and experience that division more acutely.

As our culture continues to become more secular. And it's only going to become more acute as society all around us becomes more secular. So, how do we sustain ourselves? I know that's so depressing, isn't it?

But, how do we sustain ourselves? This is point three. How do we sustain ourselves in a culture where there are many people who are angry at you for what you think, for what you believe, for who you follow?

[15:19] What do we do given what we've just learnt here? Historically, the church has reacted in various ways to culture, to society.

Good ways and bad ways. bad ways. Retreat. Christians retreat. Get out of Dodge. Desert farmers. You can look it up. A lot of Christians have retreated into sex out in Bountiful.

Bountiful is a great example of that. Two, embrace. Just embrace it all. So, this kind of syncretistic sort of approach, right? And what happens there is that Christianity can sort of morph and just take on all the cultural values around it.

It results in something called moralistic deism, which is just be nice, do what you want. The main goal in life is to be happy and God can, God is a resource for that sometimes.

Or when things go bad, God is a resource. That's just embracing culture around you. Third strategy. not embrace, not retreat, it's be in, but not of.

[16:23] It's be in culture, but not of culture. It's living in the real world, but living radically differently. And how do we do that? How do we do that when there is such great division?

How are we sustained? Well, it's certainly not by an act of our own volition. It's not by us, you know, come on, we can do it, do it, you know. That's what I say to Sadie when she plays soccer, do it.

Christ sustains us. Christ sustains us. And he does that to his Holy Spirit. That's my third point. Verse 37 to 39.

What a wonderful passage to have on Pentecost Sunday. On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, if anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me as scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

Now he said this about the spirit whom those who believed in were to receive, but it hadn't been given yet because Jesus had not been glorified. Jesus hadn't died yet. So, all of these divisions and controversies in this passage here happened in the context of a feast Jesus was attending.

[17:40] It was called the Feast of Tabernacles. So, on this last day, what happens is that the priest would come up with big jugs of water and pour the water on the altar.

And it was this reminder, two things, pointing back, pointing forward. It was a reminder of what God did in the desert for his people where water miraculously flowed from rocks in the wilderness.

And it points to God's future for us. The abundant living waters that will be put in you, the life of God in you. It talks about this in Ezekiel 47.

Let me read a little snippet of Ezekiel 47 here. Water was issuing from, it's a vision, a vision that Ezekiel had. Water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple towards the east.

Going on eastward with a measuring line in his hand, a man measured out a thousand cubics and led me out through the water. It was ankle deep. Then he measured a thousand and led me through the water and it was knee deep.

[18:39] He measured a thousand and led me through the water. It was wasty. He measured a thousand and it was a river that could not pass through, that I could not pass through. Then he led me back to the bank of the river.

As I went back, I saw on the bank of the river very many trees on one side or the other. And wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live. This wonderful, wonderful picture of the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, what that's going to look like in your life when it comes. So Jesus is picking his timing amazingly here in this feast and he's saying, I'm going to give you that stream of living water. You'll find out that later on that happened on Pentecost.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It's interesting how he talks about it though. How does Jesus talk about this Holy Spirit coming here? He does it in a very simple way, a very profound way. He talks about it like drinking water, like a glass of water, which in BC, tap water, fantastic. Shake off the excess. Nothing, right?

[19 : 45] In this very arid place in the east, water was live. Jesus was talking about giving something that was so essential to life. Now first see the condition he sets for receiving this living water.

All it is is this, if anyone thirsts, thirsts. That's the condition. You must be thirsty for it. You must be thirsty. You have to be thirsty to receive the living waters.

Often we don't recognize the thirst because we try to quench it with other things. Jordan talked about that last week, wonderfully. The Pharisees, they didn't think they were thirsty because they were drinking from the river of power and religion and status.

You just have to be thirsty. Next invitation, next part of the invitation, come, drink. This is it. You thirsty? Come, drink. Isn't this wonderful? So simple.

Come and drink. To receive the water, we must come to Jesus and that can be hard because coming to Jesus involves surrender, doesn't it? It involves a giving away of your life and a great trust in Jesus.

[20 : 55] In the silver chair, you guys know this story, the silver chair, C.S. Lewis, he puts his finger on this idea in a section where Lucy's in the forest and she sees a lion and she runs away.

She's terrified. She's running, running, running, running, running. She runs, runs, runs, runs. She's dying of thirst and she gets to a river but between her and the river is that same lion.

Now, let me quote, long quote from a book. Are you not thirsty? said the lion. I'm dying of thirst, said Jill. Oh, so it's Jill, Jill. Then drink, said the lion.

May I? Could I? Would you mind going away for a while while I do? said Jill. The lion answered this only by a look and a very low ground and as Jill gazed at its motionless bulk she realised that she may as well have asked the whole mountain to move aside for her convenience.

The delicious, rippling noise of the stream was driving her nearly frantic. Will you promise not to do anything to me if I come? said Jill. I make no promise, said the lion.

[22 : 07] Jill was so thirsty now without noticing it she'd actually, she'd come a step nearer. Do you eat girls? she said. I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms, said the lion.

He didn't say this as if he were boasting nor as if he were sorry nor as if he was angry he just said it. I dare to come and drink, said Jill. Then you will dive first, said the lion.

Oh dear, said Jill, coming another step nearer. I suppose I must go and look for another stream then. There is no other stream, said the lion.

It never occurred to Jill to disbelieve the lion. No one who had seen his stern face could do that and her mind was suddenly made up for itself. It was the worst thing she had ever had to do but she went forward to the stream knelt down and began scooping up water in her hand.

It was the coldest, most refreshing water she had ever tasted. Folks, when you come to the water you must come realising that you will die without it.

[23 : 15] You will die without the spirit of God and that you are coming to a lion. You are coming to Jesus. You must trust his goodness even though it's scary and you must surrender your whole life to him and some of you haven't done that but when you get to the water and you yield to that water it will be the coldest, most refreshing thing you've ever drunk.

Next, the result of this living water. You see from the text it's living water in you and flowing out of you. So in you meaning your thirst which may have been misdirected in the past can now be satisfied in Christ through his Holy Spirit these great desires that you have can be satisfied in Christ but also out of you.

Not only does satisfaction come to us but to others through us. But Judah and Deeper are great examples of this. God saved them and their life is directed towards other people.

It's wonderful. It's wonderful. When Christ comes to his person to a person and they satisfy their thirst through his Holy Spirit it will flow to others.

Your life will become more missional as you do that. The less that you feed on Christ the less missional you will be. Let me conclude.

[24 : 38] Society is becoming more secular and the differences between people of faith and the rest of the society is becoming more pronounced in a place like Vancouver. Those lines those divisions will become more sharply defined.

What do we do? What do we do? What do we do about this? Folks, we can drink from the fountain of secularism and be unsatisfied. We can drink from the water Christ offers through his Holy Spirit and to do that we come to him daily we come recognizing our sinfulness we throw ourselves on his mercy and we say fill us fill us again fill us fill us daily and when you do that those rivers of living water will flow out of you not only satisfy your desires but flow out of you and the divide between you and the city around you will not cause you to run from it but to go into it but to go into it and be a blessing to others.

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