

Glory Seeking

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[0:00] Good evening. It's a pleasure to be with you. I encourage you to open the Bible in front of you. You will need it. I believe it was page 892. When I say the word Jesus, it's the name Jesus, what comes to mind?

If you have a pen, you can write down a list, but if you don't, and most of us probably don't, what instantly came to mind as soon as you heard Jesus of Nazareth? This doesn't need to be theologically impressive.

It's probably better if it isn't. Be honest with yourself. What is the first thing that came to mind when you heard Jesus' name? I imagine if we went through the church and shared, and we won't, this is what the list would be.

It would be something like this. Jesus is Christ. I imagine that's a popular answer. Jesus is God. He is Savior. He is our friend.

He's powerful. He's Messiah. He's the Son of God. He's Jewish. And He's Lord. But at the same time, I imagine there's another list.

[1:12] And maybe you didn't fit in that first list. And in your list are words like this. Jesus is irrelevant. Jesus is fake. Jesus is American.

Jesus is some surfer dude. Jesus is weak or confusing. Or maybe Jesus is a good guy, but certainly not God.

Tonight we come to John 7. We've been moving through a book written by Jesus' closest friend while on earth.

His name was John. And this book is written so that we might know who Jesus is, and by believing in Him, have eternal life in His name.

Now, the story so far, up to John 7, and if you're new here, we've been walking through this gospel together. The story's been going pretty well. A couple bumps in the road, but nothing significant.

[2:10] Until the end of John 6. And then it all seemed to go sideways. So if you were here last week, it all kind of went off kilter. In one uttered sentence, Jesus went from having a massive crowd of 5,000 men, plus women, plus children, hanging on His every word, down to 12.

He said one thing, and almost everyone who was following Him instantly left and said, No, this is crazy. Why?

What did He say? In John 6, verse 56, Jesus says that if anyone would experience God's eternal life, that person must eat Jesus' flesh and drink His blood.

The people had no idea what Jesus was talking about, and so they misunderstood Him as scandalous, offensive, and heretical. And so followed a massive exodus, a massive falling out.

In verse 66, it's almost a cataclysmic fall from grace. And imagine if those people present that day were asked, What immediately comes to mind when you think of Jesus?

[3 : 24] What do you think they would say? Probably words like, Disappointing. Heretical. Way off the deep end. Antagonistic to our faith.

A troublemaker. It appears to be disastrous for Jesus' ministry and His purposes. And that's the context within which we come to John chapter 7.

In John 7, verses 1 to 24, the author John gives Jesus one title. He uses only one adjective to describe who Jesus is, following this disastrous feeding and fleeing of 5,000.

And in John 7, the word John uses is teacher. Teacher. I bet almost none of us had teacher come to mind when we heard the name Jesus.

Following a disastrous ministry event, following a terrible day at the office, Jesus teaches. In our passage, and in our lives, Jesus must become our teacher.

[4 : 35] Or else we will completely misunderstand Him. He might be your Lord, He might be your Savior, He might be your Messiah, but He must be your teacher. Or you will misunderstand who He is.

After John 6, when people are offended by Jesus and storm off, His response is not to do a big public miracle to win them back, but rather to teach. And remember, it was teaching that got Him in trouble in the first place.

Jesus is God speaking. As Christians, we believe Jesus is God's word. And in John 7, above all else, Jesus is teacher.

So let's sit at His feet and learn. In our text, Jesus teaches two primary things to clear up misunderstandings people have about God.

He gives us two teachings. The first teaching is about the purpose of God's Son. And the second teaching is about the purpose of God's word.

[5 : 40] And what Jesus shows is that everyone around Him has totally misunderstood the purposes of both these things. They've missed the purpose of God's Son, Him, and they've missed the purpose of God's word.

So that is what Jesus is going to teach us in the text tonight. Firstly, the purpose of God's word. People have misunderstood the purpose of Jesus.

People misunderstand Jesus. They don't know why He's come and they forget to realize why it matters. Maybe you do this as well. Maybe you don't know Jesus' purpose or you think you know, but maybe you're wrong.

Did you notice in our text that no one understands Jesus correctly? Just look with me. Verse 1, the Jewish leaders are seeking to kill Him.

Verse 5, His family doesn't believe in Him. Verse 12, the general population is mixed. In the best case, they say, He's a good man. Nothing more than that, but He's a good man.

[6 : 42] And in the worst case, they say, He's leading the people astray. And in verse 20, they then add, Jesus, you're possessed by a demon. No one, not one person in our text gets Jesus.

Everyone misunderstands Him. From the most astute, spiritual, theological thinkers to the every man and woman who walk the streets, even to His own family.

And so Jesus teaches His purpose for being on earth. So act 1 of our story is verses 1 to 9 on page 892. And this is now six months after that disastrous event in John 6.

So six months have passed between John 6 and John 7. Jesus is back at home in Galilee. He has a dismal ministry numerically. It's petered out. It's lost steam.

He got a little too radical for the general population. So many have left Him. And Jesus' brothers offer some advice to seemingly fix Jesus' ministry and get Him back on His feet.

[7 : 49] Look at verse 3. The brothers say to Jesus, and I'm paraphrasing slightly, Jesus, leave here. Leave this armpit nowhere region of the world and go to the capital during a national festival so that your disciples may see the works you are doing.

For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly and widely and publicly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world. Jesus' brothers' advice is based on a misunderstanding of who Jesus is and what He's come to do.

They don't understand His purpose. Based on the brothers' advice in verse 3, I think we can deduce that the brothers think Jesus' motive in life is to acquire disciples and to be known.

In short, they think Jesus' purpose is publicity, power, and glory. Isn't that what every leader wants? Publicity, power, and glory.

Surely that's Jesus' purpose. So Jesus' brothers feel what Jesus needs after John 6 is a comeback tour. They try to motivate Jesus to return to the golden days of ministry, of healing sick people and turning water to wine and feeding thousands of adoring fans.

[9 : 03] They want Jesus not to focus on His problematic teaching. Did you notice they told Him to do works and not to teach? It's His teaching that's getting Him in trouble. They say, focus on your works, which are philanthropic and winsome.

Don't focus on your problematic teaching. The festival of booths is arriving, which is a national spectacle in Jerusalem with eight consecutive days of people congregating around the temple to praise God and worship Him.

How better for Jesus to get back on center stage than to be the headline act of an eight-day festival in Jerusalem? We need to pause here and actually think about it.

And at first blush, this actually seems like reasonable advice, doesn't it? After all, God so loves the world that He sent His only Son. Shouldn't Jesus be seeking to gain maximum market saturation?

Shouldn't He be campaigning like an American presidential hopeful, kissing babies and visiting the sick and speaking on the temple grandstand? What is Jesus doing wasting away in Galilee?

[10 : 14] He has work to do. Isn't Jesus' purpose to be known widely and publicly? If that were Jesus' purpose, He would not have been born in Nazareth to an unmarried teenage girl in a barn.

If Jesus wanted instant glory and publicity, perhaps He would have been born as the son of Caesar. Or better yet, He would have come as His glorious, divine self, resplendent in heart-stopping glory, surrounded by the entire host of heaven.

But that's not what He did. Why is Jesus' motive not self-glory and acclaim and publicity? What is His motive?

Notice the insertion in verse 5 after His brothers hatched this great plan. The text tells us, for not even His brothers believed in Him.

Jesus' brothers suggested He get back on track in their minds, not because they saw Him as the Son of God or as the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world, but they saw Him as the people did, as a miracle worker, as a Jewish freedom fighter, as an everyman who speaks and acts for the people against the establishment.

[11 : 40] They saw His signs, but they completely failed to see what His signs pointed to. For them, it ended at the signs, and that was the focus. Signs always point to something greater.

Jesus' motive was not personal acclaim and glory. In John 7, Jesus, as the great teacher sent from God, who is God, teaches us firstly what His purpose is.

Look at verse 18. The one who speaks on his own authority, this is Jesus' teaching, 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 lies.

It sounds a bit like a riddle until you untangle it, but what Jesus is saying is that His motive and His purpose and His reason for being alive is to bring glory to His Father.

That's why Jesus came, to bring glory to His Father. And John's gospel is saturated with this. If you flip through the whole gospel and look for it, it's everywhere.

[12 : 51] Almost every chapter has some mention of Jesus' purpose being to glorify His Father. And if Jesus had come as this powerful, divine King, the people would have praised Him for His power, but they would not have glorified His heavenly Father.

They would have just glorified Him. And that was not Jesus' agenda. That's why He refuses to go to the festival with His brothers. He doesn't want praise at the expense of His heavenly Father.

Think about it. His brothers want Him to go to a festival that's given for the purpose of worshiping God. And His brothers want Jesus to go so that people might praise Him. Jesus won't go to the festival for that reason because He doesn't want glory.

He wants God to receive glory. Jesus' purpose is to glorify His Father. And to this end, He wants people to worship God and enjoy Him forever.

If Jesus came with all these signs and made fireworks come out of His fingers and showed His glory to everyone, He would have never ended up on the cross. And if Jesus never ended up on the cross, He would have never taken our sin upon His shoulders.

[14 : 07] So we would all be lost forever and we would fail to worship His heavenly Father. This is why Jesus in all the Gospels seems to work in secrecy.

Even in our story in verse 10, He goes in private. His purpose is to glorify His Father, not Himself. Everywhere. This is His heartbeat. This is His emphasis.

Think about when Jesus teaches His disciples to pray. What does He teach us to pray? Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Let Your name be made holy.

May You be glorified. That's what Jesus teaches us to pray. This is Jesus' motive. It inspires and empowers all He does. Jesus, as our teacher, constantly teaches us this and challenges us that if we would be His pupils, His disciples, then we too should seek the glory of God above all else.

So the purpose of the church, let's make this uncomfortable, the purpose of the bride of Christ is not publicity. It's not power. It's not prestige.

[15 : 21] It's not full pews. It's to glorify our Father in heaven. That's why we're here. Not here because of good music or singing or friends. We're here to glorify God. That's why we meet.

That's why we sing. That's why we pray and why we listen to God's word that we might worship Him. Every time we receive glory, especially in the church, we must be vigilant and ensure that we aren't receiving glory at the expense of God receiving glory.

To make this incredibly uncomfortable for myself, I think this is hardest for preachers. How often have you gone up to a preacher at the end of a service? Maybe never. Maybe you should start tonight and said to the preacher, that was an incredible sermon.

That was amazing. I'm never going to be the same. And you have never once stopped to glorify God for the message He brought you through that person.

Christians need to fight the urge to make a celebrity culture around our leaders. This is so dangerous because it undermines the purpose of the church, which is to glorify our Heavenly Father and Him alone.

- [16 : 38] In John 7, Jesus comes to us as a teacher. And He seeks to instruct us on two misconceptions we have about God. The first misconception is that Jesus came to earth to be great, in order to be famous and to be celebrated.
- He did not. This is not why Jesus came. The purpose of God's Son is to glorify His Father. And that is why, in John, Jesus always has one thing in mind, His coming hour.
- or the time fulfilled when He will be rejected by humanity. He will be tortured, crucified, murdered, buried.
- And once He has taken on all of our sin, He will be risen, victoriously defeating death, ascending to heaven, being seated on the right hand of the throne of God, and ensuring that God receives eternal glory as people are saved and adopted as His children.
- children. This is Jesus' purpose. This is why He came. And this ought to be our purpose as well. The first thing Jesus teaches us, the purpose of God's Son is to glorify His Father.
- [17 : 57] The second thing Jesus teaches us, much more briefly, and it's the purpose of God's Word. So the second misconception the people of Jesus' day have is about the purpose of the Word of God.
- And so just as we did for Jesus, when I say the word Bible, what comes to mind? What is the purpose of the Bible?
- Think about if a non-Christian friend or a child or someone you know asks you, what's the purpose of the Bible? What would you say? In John 5, two chapters before ours, Jesus heals a paralyzed man in Jerusalem on the Sabbath.
- And Jesus claims His authority to do this is because He's the Son of God. The Jewish leaders are furious. So much so that we are told twice that they instantly want to murder Him.
- In our text, Jesus goes up to this festival in private and after worshiping His Father inconspicuously for a few days, He goes to the temple and He begins to teach.
- [19 : 09] And He teaches regarding the Jewish misunderstanding of the purpose of the Bible. So the Jewish Bible, our Old Testament, is centered around the Ten Commandments, one of which states that you shouldn't do any work on the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, the Jewish calendar on Saturdays.
- Historically, for Christians, it fell on Sunday. Jesus, it seems, by healing a man with His words, has broken that rule. He did work on the Sabbath. He healed someone.
- And so according to Jewish authorities, Jesus is working against God's demands. No one sent by God would disobey God by working on the Sabbath.
- even if that work is speaking to heal someone. And again, that actually kind of sounds reasonable. If someone were from God, then surely they would uphold all of God's laws.
- And one of those laws is you're not supposed to work on the seventh day of the week. And Jesus did. Granted, it was just speaking to heal someone, but they considered that work. But then, one must ask, how can helping someone else be wicked?
- [20 : 25] How can healing someone be evil? How can restoring a man's ability to walk be sinful? How can ending the suffering of a man merely by speaking be wrong if God is good?
- Jesus points out a massive crack in the Jewish religious thinking in verse 19. Has not Moses given you the law? Referring to the Ten Commandments.
- And yet, none of you keeps the Ten Commandments. Why are you seeking to kill me? The leaders of the Jewish religion, the teachers of the people, the defenders and arbiters of God's law, have decided that the only way to deal with problematic Jesus is to murder him.

They seek to work directly against the law they're trying to uphold. How can a Jewish leader argue Jesus is breaking one of God's rules if their solution to this apparent misdemeanor is to break another one of God's rules for the purpose of defending God's rules?

They're hypocrites. Here's a totally not true modern day example. Imagine if I illegally download a movie onto my computer and imagine if I tell my neighbor about it and my neighbor decides to murder me in order to uphold the laws of the land.

[21 : 54] It doesn't make any sense. That's what Jesus is saying here. I broke the Sabbath, so you're going to break another commandment to make it right? Jesus points this out further in the example he gives in verses 21 to 23.

We don't have time to get into it, but what Jesus is pointing out in that example is that the Jewish religious leaders think the Bible is a rule book whereby if they obey every letter of the law like a checklist, if you cross all your T's and dot all your I's, then you're good in God's books.

They misunderstand the purpose of the Bible as this, a checklist to get into God's favor, a checklist to get into heaven. Heaven forbid Christians should think like this, but the Jews 2,000 years ago did, and many Christians today do.

We view the Bible as a rule book, a checklist, almost like a recipe where if we do this, this, this, and don't do this, this, this, God will be obligated to save us. That is not how Jesus feels God's word works.

Certainly not what he thinks the purpose of God's word is. At the end of verse 23, Jesus reveals the true purpose of God's word. He says, why are you angry with me?

[23 : 16] Because on the Sabbath, I made a man's whole body well. Jesus argues that God's word has the central purpose of revealing to us the God who wants to make us holy well.

well. The purpose of the Bible is to reveal to us God and to share God's story of healing and of restoring and of recreating the fallen world and to invite us to participate in that story.

God's word is not a rule book, it's not a checklist, it's not a recipe to get to heaven. God's word reveals to us the God who wants to make us holy well.

that is the purpose of God's word. Another way of saying it is the purpose of the Bible is righteousness, which just means rightness, right relationships, things made as they should be.

Look at verse 24. Do not judge by mere external appearances, but judge with right judgment, judge with righteousness.

[24 : 27] It's another way rendering that. Judge with right relationships with God and with others in mind. Read the Bible and live it not as a rule book, but as a guide book, as a story of God making humans holy well, as a story which invites us into it to participate in what God is already doing.

Ultimately, the purpose of God's word is to reveal the God who makes us well. and this finds its fulfillment and its climax in God's son, Jesus Christ.

We end where we started. Jesus comes to us as the great teacher, teaching us that he is a great doctor and a great healer. He is a great finder of the lost and his whole purpose is to glorify his heavenly father by making us all well.

And so, unlike the 5,000 who fell away, let us fall at his feet in worship, in devotion, and give our lives to learning from him that we might be healed.

Amen.