

Jesus at the Feast of Booths

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 January 2014

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's turn again to John's Gospel, John chapter 7, just for a short time looking at verses 1 to 13.

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, and so on.

Now what it says there, after this, it means very simply after what has happened. Remember where Jesus fed the thousands, and then he went on to speak about the importance of feeding upon him. And he gave that great lesson upon how he himself was the bread of life. So after this covers a period of about six months, because there was a six-month period where Jesus was just moving about there up in the north in Galilee.

And it's very interesting how John doesn't follow the same pattern as the other Gospel writers. Matthew, Mark, and Luke follow the life of Jesus in a much more sort of chronological way.

[1 : 17] John, on the other hand, homes in on certain people and certain incidents. And he'll spend a whole chapter dealing with one particular incident or one particular experience or dealing with Jesus' teachings.

So that John's Gospel is quite different. But John has an aim in mind, and that is to convince people that Jesus is who he is.

Because John often refers and uses the words of the signs, of the miracles that we're speaking about testifying that Jesus truly is who he is.

So John's Gospel, we've said that before, is different to the other three. And we've also got to remember that as we come to John's Gospel, that John deals with things in a different way.

So for these few months, Jesus was staying up in the north because it was becoming very dangerous for him to go down into the southern part, down into Judea and towards Jerusalem, because the tide of public opinion had really turned against Jesus.

[2 : 28] And particularly amongst the Jewish leaders, they had sort of come into a collected movement where they decided, Jesus has got to go, he's got to die.

And Jesus was aware that in the south, down towards Judea and towards Jerusalem, there was this movement against him. And so that's why he remained up here for these months.

And then it tells us here about the Feast of Booths, that now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. And the Feast of Booths was round about September or October, round about that time.

And following on from that, two months later was the Feast of Dedication. And you will find towards the end of John's Gospel, chapter 10, when with the Good Shepherd, from here to John chapter 10, there are these months.

In these four chapters, these two months are compressed. From the time of the Feast of Booths and two months later in winter to the Feast of Dedication, these four chapters fill out the two months that take place.

[3 : 49] And this is now, we're moving now into the last year of Jesus' life. Now as we saw there, the Feast of Booths was something that was, the Lord had several feasts through Moses that were to be established in Israel, because God wanted Israel never, ever, ever to forget his work in them and for them.

And the Feast of Booths was a, it was a, it was probably the feast that they loved the most of all, because they set up little booths with leafy shelters, and they lived there for a week.

There was a time, we read about it in Leviticus, there was a day at the beginning and at the end, which were set aside, there were solemn days, there were days that were given to the Lord. But in between there was to be rejoicing, and there were to be times of offering, but it was a time of

celebration.

And right up into Jesus' time, they kept these, they kept that, these feasts going. And the temple, the candlesticks would be lit up there, so the temple would be shining bright, which was picturing the cloud by, a pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night that led Israel through the wilderness.

And the priests would take water from the pool of Siloam and pour it out, which was again a picture of the water coming from the rock. But God was, this is something the Lord wants us to do, is to keep remembering his work in our lives.

[5 : 24] And it's the same, that's why we're given the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, so that we've always got something at the forefront of our thinking. It's not that we'll forget, or we shouldn't forget, but it's incredible how easily we do forget that there are times we can drift along, and we maybe don't forget.

We say, oh yes, I'm a Christian, oh yes, Jesus died for me. But they're just words, the reality, the impact, the power, the effect, it's kind of, it's not there.

And that's where the Lord says, no, I want you, I really want you, I want you to remember. And that's why when they would be physically living in these little shelters for a week in a time of celebration, they couldn't but remember how God had delivered them.

Oh, it was centuries back, generations back. But they had to keep God's work before their life. And it's important for us also to remember what God has done for us in our lives, lest we forget.

And that's one of the great things about the Lord's Supper. Now we find that Jesus' brothers are urging him to go up to Jerusalem. And the reason that they're urging Jesus to go up to Jerusalem is to perform some big miracle.

[6 : 48] That's really what they're saying. They said, Let leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works that you're doing. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly.

And Jesus' brothers are recognizing that the support for Jesus is flagging. Now his brothers had seen Jesus perform wonderful miracles.

And they were kind of saying, Look, you've got to go up to Jerusalem and do a big one. You've got to go up to Jerusalem and really, really display your power there so that everybody will go, Wow! But they were looking at things completely in a wrong way. Because it's very obvious that at this point in time, these men, his brothers, were not believers.

Though we believe at a later stage that they did come to faith in Jesus. But at this particular point, they were still unbelievers.

[7 : 52] And they were judging things as they could only do from a human point of view. And they were saying to Jesus, You had great support. And they would have been proud of Jesus and the crowds following.

That's their half-brother. They would have been proud of that. But public opinion has turned against them. They're saying, Hey, you've got to go back up and really show it to them.

Go and give them a display. And Jesus is saying to them, No. He said, That's not what I'm about. It tells us, For not even his brothers believed in him.

You notice I find that quite an extraordinary thing. Think about that statement. For his brothers, that's what it says in verse 5, For not even his brothers believed in him.

For 30 years, These brothers have lived with Jesus. They have seen his perfect life. A sinless life.

[8 : 53] Never once did he say anything that was wrong. Never once did he sin by his action or by his mouth. They had seen him enter into his public ministry.

There is no doubt but that there were times they were looking for him because what's not Jesus told your mother and your brethren are outside. They're looking for you. And all these years of private living with Jesus and public watching of Jesus, they still didn't believe in him.

And I find that extraordinarily challenging. And it shows that people can have every gospel privilege going. That they can be surrounded in a Christian home.

They can be surrounded by Christians in a church. They can be at the center of everything that's going on in a Christian way and still not believe in Jesus.

And this shows us the absolute darkness that is in the human heart. Because you would say to yourself, surely if any group of people were going to believe in Jesus, it would be those who witnessed his life most of all.

[10:10] But no, they haven't. And you know, my friend, there is nothing that will open a person's heart but divine illumination. And we need to discover that. That's one of the things that, as we've looked at John's gospel, Jesus has been driving home more and more.

And accept, he said, accept the Father. Accept you. Accept you be given from above. And that is why we have to pray.

There is nothing else beyond that we can seek to do but that the Lord pray that the Lord will open people's eyes. Yes, we have to work.

And we work. You know, there's, in many ways, it can be very, I suppose, flattening.

People might find it very hard-going that you can labor week in, week out, month in, month out, year in, year out, and not see anything happening.

[11:15] But you know, in many ways, that's how it was with Jesus. That's why Jesus said to his disciples that they would see greater things than that they were actually seeing just now.

That they were actually going to be doing greater things. And, of course, that's exactly what happened. The likes of Pentecost, after Jesus had risen from the dead, and the Holy Spirit had come in power, that thousands came to faith in Jesus Christ.

But in Christ's lifetime, and in his time of ministry in this world, there weren't great numbers coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

We have to be faithful, but I think this is one of the things the church must never, ever lose sight of, that it is the Lord who opens people's eyes. You can't, I can't.

But we have to, we still got to be faithful to what we have to do. But that is why it is imperative that if you today are in darkness, if today you have not come to faith in Jesus Christ, there is only one who can open your eyes to see.

[12:25] And that's not yourself. It's the Lord. Only the Lord can open your eyes. And it is your duty to go to him and say, Lord, open my eyes, that I may see you as my Savior.

Because otherwise, you can't see. Otherwise, you cannot believe. We cannot believe in and of ourselves. I know myself that, looking back, that was the hardest thing for me to understand.

That I, in and of myself, could not actually believe myself. I tried and tried to believe, but I couldn't. It is when I came to discover that salvation is a gift.

And it is something we are to receive. And we ask the Lord, Lord, help me. Help me to receive you. Draw close to me.

Come, Lord, into my heart. Now. And that's our duty. That's our responsibility. And the Lord will respond to that if we are genuinely seeking the Lord with all our heart like that.

[13:33] He will. So this passage, again, just shows us that unless there is divine illumination, then we cannot see.

But the other thing I think it highlights is the humanness of Jesus. He was absolutely human. God, yes. But man.

And that his brothers, in all these years that they grew up with him, weren't saying, whoa. They weren't seeing his humanity shining. They weren't seeing glory radiating of him.

They weren't seeing the Godhead pouring out of him. They were just seeing a man. And that shows how absolutely human, apart from his sinlessness, he was exactly the same as everybody else.

His glory was veiled. But I think the other thing that it shows us here is that in Jesus' humanness, he must have felt very isolated and lonely at times.

[14:45] In fact, we know that. We sang about that in Psalm 69. Because here we find that his brothers do not understand.

And there might be people here today and you're exactly in the same boat. You might be a lonely Christian. Jesus, yes, his mother Mary was a believer.

It was reckoned that his stepfather, by the time he was put to death, Joseph had died. So this is the last year of Jesus' life. So in all probability, Joseph isn't living. But apart from Mary, nobody understands him.

So he's bound to even in his own home feel isolation and loneliness, being misunderstood. And there are a lot of Christians like that today.

They're all alone. They feel alone. They're alone in their home. They're alone at work. They're alone in school. They're alone in different situations. They're in a particular place where they aren't with other believers.

[15 : 51] And that's tough. That's hard going. And that's an encouragement to you today to say, ah, but we have a Savior who understands. Jesus was touched in all aspects like us, apart from sin.

And it doesn't matter where you go. It doesn't matter what road you go down. Jesus has been there. And this is one of the places he's been, in the lonely place where nobody understands.

And he feels all alone. Well, he is able to give, to give that encouragement to you. And we sang that in Psalm 69, I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons.

It's interesting. It doesn't say father's sons, but mother's sons. Because, of course, Joseph wasn't his real father, his stepfather. It was Mary. So, again, you just see how scriptural this is.

But then, again, another thing that we see here is that Jesus gives a little insight into why the world hates him and hates Christians. Because Jesus says to them, the world cannot hate you, he says to his brothers.

[17 : 00] But it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. You see, that's the bottom line. The world can cope with a lot of things about Jesus.

The world quotes from Jesus often. Many of his words are famous. His teaching, people marvel at it. The miracles, wow, they were great.

But when Jesus became personal, and when he began to expose people's hypocrisy and deceit within their lives, and when Jesus challenged people according to how they lived, then people took umbrage.

As long as people, as long as Jesus was keeping away from challenging and exposing the sin and deceit within people's lives, they were okay with him.

But the moment he became personal, that's why the religious leaders couldn't tolerate him.

because he was pointing the finger, he was dealing right into where they were at. And they said, hey, we can't cope with that.

[18 : 03] And that's the same today. That is why, that is why Christianity, above all, is hated. It is because Christianity gets under people's skins in a way that nothing else will.

And people don't realize it, they're not aware of it. But the Christian, the Bible, God, Jesus Christ, is a rebuke into people's lives and into people's hearts.

And that is why, when you see the anger, people are so angry against Christians, so angry against Christ, it is because there is a rebuke to them in it.

Jesus said to them, men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Leave us in the darkness. They don't want the light of Jesus.

Shining in to disrupt and to spoil their enjoyment of their dark deeds. Leave me in my darkness.

Leave me in my slumbers. But that Jesus is the light of the world and his people who are also termed the light of the world.

[19 : 10] Hidden. They are a rebuke. They're a challenge. And so that is why there is this hatred. But then, when Jesus said to his brothers, my time has not yet come, but your time is always here.

Then he said to them, you go up to the feast. I am not going to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come. Now this verse has caused a lot of problems for people because they're saying, well, it looks like Jesus has been really deceptive that Jesus has actually lied.

That Jesus is saying, you go up to the feast. I'm not going up to this feast. Now, as you see in the margin, it says there that some manuscripts add the word.

Yet, I am not yet going up to the feast. But the actual Greek word that is used, the Greek present tense, can legitimately have the idea when he says, I am not going up to this feast.

I am not now. The actual word carries the idea, I am not now going up to the feast. It's not at this particular moment. And that is really what Jesus is saying. I am not now going up.

[20 : 20] Or as some manuscripts have, not yet going up. It's not saying, I am never going to go up. But I am not now going up to the feast. Because Jesus was going to make his way up privately because he knew of the animosity that was against him.

So it tells us then in verse 10, but after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly, but in private. The Jews were looking for him at the feast and saying, where is he?

And there was much muttering about him among the people. Now there are two groups mentioned here, the Jews and the people. The Jews, John, John, from now on, when he talks about the Jews, he's talking about the religious leaders, the chief priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, all these people.

And they had lots of, these different groups, they had lots of theological differences. Lots of them didn't get on together. But here was something that brought them all together, the Jews. All these religious men, these religious leaders, they came together with one aim, with one objective. We've got to get rid of Jesus Christ. And so they're searching, they're searching for Jesus.

[21 : 41] And then, of course, the other group are the people. That's just the, the huge crowd, the mass of Jews who were up, the ordinary people who were up for the feasts. And many of them didn't know, of course, that the Jewish leaders were trying to kill Jesus.

But there was a great division amongst the people. Who is Jesus? It tells us there was a lot of muttering going on. That's what the actual word that is used here, that they were muttering about him.

There was much muttering about him among the people. You know, nothing changes. Still the same today. People are still muttering about Jesus.

People still talking. He's causing so much division in people's hearts and people's lives. People are, who is he? And some of the people there actually didn't like Jesus.

Some of them were quite open about it. Some said, he's a good man. Others said, no, he's not. He's leading the people astray. So there was all, all this kind of stuff going on.

[22 : 46] There was nobody who had more false accusation leveled against him than against Jesus. Various things. For instance, some said he had a demon.

Others said he performed his miracles through the forces of hell through the power of Beelzebub. Some said he was a madman. Some said he was an alcoholic because they were said he's a winebibber.

That he was always, always at the wine. Some people said that he was a Sabbath breaker. Many charged him with blasphemy. They said he went about deceiving the people.

They said he was a Samaritan. They said he was mad. They said he went about doing evil. All of these things are listed as actual accusations leveled against Jesus and rumors that were spread about him.

Can you imagine that list I just read? These were all things that people were saying about Jesus. And we've always got to be careful what we say about people.

[23 : 52] Because you know what it's, the mud sticks. If you throw mud it'll stick. And that's what was happening because wherever Jesus would go people would say oh yeah there but it's like with Naaman.

You know what they were saying with Naaman he was a mighty man he was a powerful man he was this he was that oh but but he was a leper. And whoever saw Naaman yeah they would see his swords and his rows of medals and his glittering armor but they would say oh I'm keeping my distance he's a leper.

And that must have been part of the challenge that the difficulty that Jesus had in this world. that's part of why he was called a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

Because wherever he went he was labeled so unjustly. They were accused him of all these things and not one of these things was true.

And we've always got to be careful that we never add to accusations about people or judge people because we actually we don't know. But anyway there was all this muttering going on muttering about Jesus as to who he was.

[25 : 03] And I would say that it's the same today. People are muttering about Jesus. In homes schools and colleges and coffee shops pubs towns villages cities people are talking about Jesus.

Sometimes they just take his name as a swear. Sometimes they'll ask a question. A lot of people they just dismiss him. But remember you can never be neutral with Jesus.

There are a lot of people today who have taken a firm view of Jesus and that is somebody they don't even want to think about. They have decided he's not worth thinking about.

And you know we sometimes say to ourselves there are so many people in our land who never heard the name of Jesus and while that might be true you think about it in so many different ways you think of all the funeral services that people attend where God's word is read and God's word is sung.

You think of even something like the last royal wedding where William and Kate got married. and how Christian centred that was.

[26 : 20] How the millions and millions tune in. And the word of God is set out so clearly. The name of Christ is exhorted so clearly.

So you cannot say people have never heard who Jesus is. The claims of Jesus come through to people all the time. And yet people make a conscious decision and say it's not for me. People are dismissing Jesus every day left, right and center because the challenge of Jesus comes so subtly into people's lives. People say no, don't want to.

The solemn, the awful thing is that one day everybody is going to have to face Jesus and answer up for what they did with him in this life. Every single person who has ever heard the claim of Christ upon their life and who has dismissed him is going to have to stand before Jesus at that judgment throne and confess what they have done and hear that final judgment upon them forever and ever because of their dismissal and rejection of Jesus.

Lots of people muttering. There are a lot of other people who side with Jesus but they side privately. They side with Jesus secretly. They don't want to come out in the open because it might cost them.

[27 : 48] And there is a cost in siding with Jesus. Let's make no mistake about it. Jesus said that the world hates me and it will hate you as well. So there is a cost.

But it's the only side to be on, is to side with Jesus. And Jesus does cause division. He causes division and Jesus actually admitted that because it tells us back in Matthew's gospel.

He said, I have come to bring a sword to set a man against his father and our daughter against her mother. Now that sounds awful but that is exactly what happens so often.

It's where one comes to faith in Jesus Christ and the other not only doesn't come to faith in Jesus Christ but hates the very name of Jesus. I knew a man once who was a real, far more than a party animal, somebody who had, he was crazy, he had a drink problem and drink made him crazy.

And he got converted. And you know there's this wife, his wife hated it, hated him for becoming a Christian. Much preferred the madman man that he used to live with than now the Christian.

[29 : 09] That's the division that Jesus is talking about that he has come to bring. But at the end of the day we have to look at it personally because the crowds here, as we finished the crowds, there was this division, they were muttering about him.

Some he's a good man, others he's leading the mistry. The question you have to ask is, what do you think of Jesus? Where is Jesus in your life?

Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we pray that this Jesus, the Lord Jesus Christ, may be our Jesus, and that we may all embrace him and love him.

We ask, O Lord, to help us as we journey through life with all its challenges, with all its great things, with all its trivial things.

Lord, be our guide, our shield, our shelter, lead us in the way of truth, have mercy upon us, and cleanse us from all our sins, in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing in conclusion from Psalm 62.

[30 : 19] And the tune has walked, and this is from the Sing Psalm, Psalm 62. And the tune has walked in. I've got from verse 7, maybe we can sing from verse 5, from verse 5 to verse 10.

It's on page 80, sing Psalms, Psalm 62. Find rest my soul in God alone, in him my hope is ever sure, my safety, fortress, sheltering rock, in him alone I am secure.

My honour and salvation rest on God, my rock and mighty fort. O people, trust in him always, to him alone pour out your heart.

The low-born man is but a breath, the high-born man is but a lie, weighed in a balance side by side, they come to nothing but a sigh. Do not seek after wealth by force, or triumph in ill-gotten gain, and even though your goods increase, set not your heart on what is vain.

Psalm 62, 5-10. June Walton. Find rest my soul in God alone, in him my hope is ever sure, my safety fortress shall bring rock in him, alone I am secure.

[32 : 09] My order and salvation rest on God, my rock and mighty fort.

O people trust in him, always to him alone, poor love, dear dear heart.

The low-born man is but a breath, the high-born man is but a lie, within the fallen side, by sight they come, do nothing but a sigh.

Do not seek after wealth Die Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you, now and forevermore.

Amen.