

“Will You Live Openly as a Christian?”
(John 7:10-13)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

Last time we considered:

That the Gospel divides.

Wherever the two kingdoms exist –

The kingdom of heaven

And the kingdom of this world –

There will be division,

There will be conflict.

It’s inevitable.

And it can hurt,

Because it can separate us from friends,

And alienate us from our own family.

The Lord has so ordered things

That there’s no one closer to us

Than those in our household,

Which is why we should be thankful

That when the Lord separates us from the world –

When He adopts us into His household

And brings this separation –

That He gives us a new family,

A much larger family –

The body of Christ.

But let's not forget

There is something we can do

To help them find Jesus and enter into His kingdom:

When Jesus' brothers displayed this division

By encouraging Him to go to Judea

Even though they knew it would be dangerous for Him,

He didn't allow Himself to be tempted by what they said,

But continued to do what was right:

He didn't get angry or try to get even,

But responded gently and humbly,

And showed love to them

By encouraging them to go to the feast

Where they might – by God's grace –

Be called into His Kingdom.

Remember this example Jesus gave you

When you have to deal with unbelievers

In the world or in your home:

Return good for evil –

Do good to those who injure you.

B. Preview.

This morning, we see Jesus go up to the feast –
Not publicly, as His brothers suggested,
But secretly.

We see the Jews looking for Him at the feast:
They knew He would come –
After all, Jesus would not dishonor His Father
By refusing to attend,
Even if His life was in danger.

We see the difference of opinion that existed among them:
Some thought He was a good man,
While others thought He was evil.

And we see that those who believed in Him
Were afraid to talk about Him openly
Because of the Jews.

We know the kingdom won't grow
Unless we who belong to Jesus
Are willing to speak openly about Him.

This morning, I would like for us to consider
Some things that may help us do this.
Let's consider three:

1. If you are willing to live openly as a Christian, it will draw the attention of both kingdoms.
2. Because of the persecution from the world, you will be tempted not to live as a Christian openly, but you must resist it.
3. If you know there are those who want to hurt you because you're living openly as a Christian, you may hide yourself from them.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, if you are willing to live openly as a Christian, it will draw the attention of both kingdoms.

John writes, "So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, 'Where is He?' There was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, 'He is a good man'; others were saying, 'No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray'" (vv. 11-12).

1. There was a lot of talk going on at the feast about Jesus.

There were those in favor of and those speaking against His ministry –

He was a highly controversial figure.

- a. Controversy has its benefits, as well as its liabilities.

One of the benefits is that it causes people to talk;

The more they talk, the more the controversy spreads;

And the more it spreads, the more it encourages others to look into it,

Until everyone is talking about it –

Just think Donald Trump.

- b. The liability, of course, is that it also divides.

Again, Jesus asks us, "Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division" (Luke 12:51).

That's what we've been seeing.

If everyone received Jesus

And entered His kingdom through faith in Him,

There would be perfect peace –

Everyone would love God and each other

In the perfect way He calls us.

But because so many refuse Him,

There is conflict –

Which is what we see here.

(i) Some were saying, “He is a good man” (v. 12).

It's not entirely clear what they meant by this:

They could have meant that Jesus had pure motives,

As the rich young ruler suggested

When he asked Jesus, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17).

Or they could have meant He is superlatively good,

Which is what Jesus asked the rich young ruler

If he recognized about Him, when He replied,

“Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone” (v. 18).

It's not enough merely to think Jesus is a good man –

You must believe He is the Son of God –

That He is the eternal God in human nature,

If you are to enter His kingdom.

If that's what these believed –
 And they had trusted in Him –
 Then there were some present at the feast
 Who were in His kingdom.

(ii) But there were also others

Who believed He was deceiving the people –
 Who thought He wasn't good, but evil.
 These were listening to their leaders
 Who had accused Jesus of teaching against Moses –
 Who claimed He was a Sabbath breaker,
 Because He healed on the Sabbath;
 That He was encouraging others to break the Sabbath ,
 Because He told the man to pick up his pallet and walk;
 And that He was a blasphemer,
 Because He called God His Father,
 Making Himself to be equal with God (John 5:18).

2. The people were divided,

And so both were seeking Him for different reasons.

a. His enemies wanted to find Him

Because they were looking for an opportunity to arrest Him

That they might stop Him from preaching the Gospel –

The more He taught the truth,
The more it exposed their sins
And turned the people against them.

The enemies of the church will do whatever they can
To stop the truth from moving forward,
Because as it does, their sins are exposed
And they lose what they're really after –
Money, power, popularity, and above all, pleasure.

One thing that highlights their evil
Was *where* they were seeking to do this:
At the feast the Lord had appointed to remind them
Of His kindness and mercy towards them
When they were in the wilderness,
And in bringing them into their land.

This was supposed to be their opportunity
To honor and serve God
For fulfilling His promises to them;
But they had turned it into an opportunity
To reject and persecute His Son.
In this regard, they were no different than King Saul
Who hoped the feast of the New Moon

Would bring an opportunity to kill David (1 Sam. 20:27; cf. Num. 28:11).

The enemies of the Gospel will sometimes

Take the battle to where God's people meet together.

The San Francisco OPC had protestors

Picketing their meetings every Lord's Day

Because of their stand against homosexuality.

Unbelievers used to frequent John Wesley's church

Just to heckle and disrupt the services

Because of his zeal for the Gospel.

b. But there were others

Who were looking for Him

Because they wanted to hear His teaching,

See the miracles God had given Him to do,

And honor the One who sent His Messiah.

If you want to find Jesus,

The best place to look

Is in the ordinances God has appointed.

Jesus still visits us

When we meet together to worship Him,

And especially at His Table –

The memorial of His sacrifice,

The feast of His body and blood.

If you haven't found Him,
This is where you should look.

If you have,
And are seeking Him as He calls you do to,
This is where you'll find Him.

3. My point is, if you live openly as a Christian –

If you live as Jesus lived,
As He calls you to live –
You will draw the attention of both kingdoms
Just as He did.

a. The more you are like Jesus –

The more you stand out
As a godly man, woman or child –
The more the world will hate you,
The more it will look for you to harass you.
Again, consider the SF OPC;
Consider John Wesley;
Consider also the circumstances under which
Charles Wesley wrote the hymn “Jesus, Love of My Soul”:
While he was being hunted
By those who hated his teaching.
Consider the Scottish Covenanters

Who were relentlessly persecuted

By Charles II of England

For holding to the Solemn League and National Covenant,

By which they bound themselves

To reform all areas of life –

Church, family, and state –

According to Scripture.

The more you stand up for Christ,

The more you will also face persecution.

Paul writes to Timothy, “Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, *and* sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium *and* at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! *Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*” 2 Tim. 3:10-12).

b. On the other hand,

The more openly you live as a Christian,

The more those who truly love Jesus

Will seek you out.

You will be loved

For what His children see of their Master in you.

That’s why John tells us that it’s impossible

To love God and at the same time hate your brother.

He writes, “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 John 4:20).

If you love Jesus,

You will also love those who bear His image.

If you are willing to live openly as a Christian, it will draw the attention of both kingdoms.

- B. Second, because of the persecution from the world, you will be tempted not to live as a Christian openly, but you must resist it.

John writes, “Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews” (v. 13).

1. John wasn't talking here

About those who believed He was leading the people astray.

The Jewish leaders would have praised those

Who were willing to speak openly about that.

He was talking about those who thought He was a good man,

Particularly those who believed He was the Messiah.

They didn't openly support Him

Because they were afraid of what

The Jewish leaders would do to them.

We will later read in chapter 9,

That the parents of the man born blind,

Who was healed by Jesus,

Will be afraid to answer the questions of the Jewish leaders,

Because “the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue” (John 9:22).

Such was already becoming the case,

And it effectively silenced those who believed.

2. Isn't fear the main reason

We find ourselves reluctant to tell others about Jesus,

Or to stand up for His truth?

Fear of being ridiculed,

Of being thought odd and out of step with the world,

Of being thought a fool,

Fear of losing friendships,

Of losing our jobs,

Of being sued,

And a host of other things?

We generally excuse ourselves

By thinking we have good reason for our fears –

Especially in today's world.

But we must remember what Jesus said:

“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38).

“Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32-33).

Now He isn't telling us
That if we have the slightest amount of fear,
The least degree of reluctance of identifying with Him,
Or if we have a great deal of fear, that we're lost.

But He is saying that if our fear
Compels us to deny Him as a pattern of life,
That we are unconverted.
That kind of fear shows that we don't have His Spirit.

Paul writes, "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with *me* in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity" (2 Tim. 2:7-9).

Jesus wasn't ashamed or afraid to stand up for you
When He came into this world and went to the cross.
Don't be ashamed or afraid to stand up for Him.
He has given you the Spirit of power and love:
Be filled with His Spirit
And walk in the strength of His love.

Don't give into the temptation to let the world's persecution
Keep you from living openly as a Christian.

C. Finally, don't think by saying this

That Jesus is ordering you to walk into the fiery furnace:

If you know there are those who want to injure you because you're living openly as a Christian, you may hide yourself from them.

John writes, "But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret" (v. 10).

1. We read before that Jesus' time to go up to the feast had not yet come;

But now it had.

He didn't go up with His brothers

Because they would have drawn

The kind of attention to Him

That He didn't want –

That it wasn't time for.

After they had gone, then He left,

Likely on the same day,

Since that is what the Law required.

But He went up secretly:

He knew He had many enemies in Jerusalem,

Who knew that He would be coming.

They would be watching for Him on the roads,

Hoping to arrest Him outside the city,

Since doing so in public would create a riot.

His time to die hadn't yet come –

Thought it wasn't far off.
It would come at the following Passover,
Only a few months away,
When He would enter Jerusalem publicly –
But it wouldn't be at this feast.

Jesus didn't place His life into the hands of His enemies,
And neither should we.

It's true that during the Roman persecutions
There were misguided Christians
Who went up to Rome to become martyrs –
Who literally stood in line to be eaten by the lions.

But there were also those who understood
That they had the right to protect their lives,
As long as by doing so,
They didn't deny their Lord.

Charles Wesley hid himself from those who were after him,
Even writing a hymn *praising Jesus* for His protection.

The Covenanters worshipped in secret –
Not openly, in the eyes of king of England.
Many churches have had to exist underground,
Because to worship publicly would be to commit suicide.

2. Jesus doesn't want us to wave a flag in front of our enemies,

Or to paint a target on our chest.

But He does want us to live openly as Christians –

To confess Him before men,

To share His truth publicly,

And not to be ashamed of His Gospel.

He tells us if we will confess Him before men,

He will confess us before His Father and the angels.

May He give us the grace to do so. Amen.

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