



SERMON TITLE: "What are you going to do with Jesus?"
SCRIPTURE: John 7:37-52

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"These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ" (John 20:31). This is how John concludes his own biography of Jesus. He wanted the young, the old, the sick, the well, the despairing, the hopeful, the skeptics, the faithful, and whoever reads his account of Jesus to believe and trust him more fully. But what did John want them to believe? He wanted them to believe that Jesus alone brought eternal life into the present, broken world. And for all who enter this eternal life with God right now, we—like John—are exiles. For all who enter a relationship with Jesus, we will very likely be marginalized and dismissed because we follow him. So, what does it mean to believe? And how do we mature in believing? What does it mean to remain faithful to God when the pressure is on? These are the things that John will help us explore by showing us the glory and beauty of Jesus.

Some 'Jesuses' should be rejected. That might sound weird, but it also might help explain a lot. Any view of Jesus that makes you dismiss people you disagree with is wrong. Any view of Jesus that primarily helps you achieve your financial goals, or helps you psychologically cope, is wrong. Any view of Jesus that makes you hate other people is wrong. The Real Jesus isn't like that. God made us in His image, and it's backward for us to think that we can make him in ours.

Furthermore, regardless of whether they were orthodox or abusive, the starting point for how you understand the Real Jesus can't be your upbringing, your opinions, or your feelings. We need the Jesus of the Bible, the Jesus of history, the Jesus who was God in the flesh. We have to reckon with him, and not whatever 'projection of him' helps us get by most comfortably. He is what it means to be truly and fully human. And so we have to understand him on his own terms. We have to get our hands and feet dirty with the dust of first-century Palestine if we are to understand Jesus the way that Scripture presents him.

Tim Keller maintains that if any educated person was to make a list of five or ten people who have most influenced the world, it is inevitable that Jesus would be on the list. And not only would he be on the list, but he would be the most unique person on the list because of the claims that he and others made about him. People in Jesus' day said things like, "No one ever spoke like this man!" And this is part of why he's the most unique on the list. Aristotle, Confucius, Buddha, Muhammad, Einstein - nobody said and did things like Jesus. And because of the exceptional nature of who he was and what he did, the question that lands on our doorstep with authority is, What are you going to do with Jesus? The Real Jesus and not a made-up one that should be rejected, what do we do with him? How does our life relate to his? These are the kinds of things being debated at the end of John 7.

On the last, climactic day of the Feast of Booths, Jesus stood up and declared, "If anybody is thirsty, let them come to me and drink. And if you believe in me, and swear allegiance to me, out of your heart will flow rivers of living water." And not only was this a sincere invitation from Jesus, but Jesus also knew that it would stir the pot. It would force people to ask, "What am I going to do with this Jesus?" And that's exactly what happens.

Following Jesus' invitation, there are seven question marks in John 7:40-52. They prove that people were wrestling with who Jesus truly was. Some were hopeful that he was the Christ. Some were skeptical about exactly what it meant for the Christ to come. And some were antagonistic, wanting to arrest Jesus.

The Pharisees and chief priests sent out some officials into the festival crowds to arrest Jesus, but the officials came back to the religious leaders empty-handed. The religious leaders were furious. And when the officials said that their excuse was, "No one ever spoke like this man," because they feared the crowds, the Pharisees accused them of thinking he was Messiah. And in the middle of the argument, Nicodemus (from John 3) speaks up and says that they should at least hear Jesus out. This also gets shot down.

And strangely, that's how John 7 ends. There's no resolution to the episode. And this is not accidental. This is deeply intentional. John knows that just as the crowds, Nicodemus, and the religious leaders at the end of John 7 all had to make up their minds about Jesus, so his readers must do the same. What will we do with Jesus?

Was Jesus just a good teacher? Was he just another philosopher or ethicist like Aristotle? Or, was he a tamed lunatic who started a movement? Or, was he actually the Messiah-King, the Hero of God's story, the One that the Hebrew Bible was pointing to?

Jesus himself invites us to trust him as Messiah (John 7:37-39). And there is great freedom in trusting and obeying Jesus as Messiah. Think about it: If Jesus is king, you don't have to be. You don't even have to try to rule your own life or be in control all the time. You can trust him, and know that he's good and loving. You don't have to multitask and micro-manage to feel like you've got your stuff together. You don't have to curate meaning or purpose on your own. If Jesus is the Hero, you don't have to be. And this is what John wants for his readers - to believe that Jesus is the Messiah-King (John 20:31).

And if we turn to Jesus as Messiah, that means we're not making Jesus in our own image. It means we're thirsting for the Real Jesus. In the same way that it does no good to be thirsty for a false view of Jesus that should be rejected, it likewise does no good to recognize the right view of Jesus, and not pledge yourself accordingly. This is an invitation to eternal life. This is a bidding to intimacy with God. This is a call to share in his family and in his mission. And it is to this invitation that we must respond.

Read John 7:32-52...

1. What are some views of Jesus that should be rejected?
2. What are the different views of Jesus swirling in the passage (7:37-52)?
3. What did it mean for a first-century Jew that Jesus was the Messiah?
4. Who is someone you know who seeks to follow Jesus no matter what others think?
5. What is the difference between the two sets of circles (inviting Jesus into our life VS. his inviting us into his)?
6. What are of your life is the hardest for you to submit to the Lordship of Jesus?
7. What does it mean for you to regularly and deeply drink from Jesus and the life he offers?