

GOSPEL OF JOHN

Encounter Jesus – The Son of the Living God

To Whom Are You Listening?

Charles Stanley asks the question, “In the midst of our electronic generation of instant communication, information, and entertainment, is anyone listening to God? He wants to communicate with us and has been speaking ever since creation. In the Old Testament, He spoke through prophets. In the New Testament, through His Son. He continues communicating now through the Holy Spirit. The issue is not whether God is speaking, but if we are listening.”

Have you ever heard a group of friends talking together as you approach and you realize that their discussion is so intriguing you begin to listen in because the topic matters to you? That’s what we are doing today – going back 2,000 years to listen in on a conversation some folks had with Jesus that is still relevant to us! It is my prayer that you are as anxious as I am to listen in.

In last week’s lesson, Jesus had just arrived in the middle of the Feast of Booths and gone directly to the temple where He began teaching. As the crowd listened, they were surprised by His ability to teach, Jesus said in **John 7:16 (ESV)** ¹⁶ ... “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.

Read John 7:17-18 (ESV) ¹⁷ *If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.* ¹⁸ *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 falsehood.*

Psalm 34:8 (ESV) ⁸ *Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!...* This verse tells us to taste for our self and see that the Lord is good. If we want to do the Lord’s will, we must know His teaching. If Jesus was speaking on His own authority, His teaching would be meaningless. But what if this Son of Man was speaking on the authority of His Father, the Master of the Universe? Then the words He says would be important to every generation – not just the folks back then.

Most of us feel resentment when listening to ‘know-it-all’s’. I am talking about folks who are an authority on every subject even when they have no credentials to back up their claims. Jesus was not just an upstart trying to get a crowd of listeners. He explained He was not speaking on his own authority, His opponents believed that Jesus was seeking His own glory. In their teaching, they were quick to vocalize the authority of others. ‘Rabbi so-and-so says this’ or ‘Rabbi so and son says that’. The authority of Jesus went beyond a rabbi or even a high priest. Jesus’ ministry was to bring glory to the Father. The very people who should have known the most about the coming Messiah from their study of the prophets were the ones who were swift to reject Him.

Read John 7:19-20 (ESV) ¹⁹ *Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?* ²⁰ *The crowd answered, “You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?”*

The Pharisees were ‘big on’ the law of Moses. They must have been infuriated when Jesus told them: *none of you keeps the law*. It is easy for us to jump back 2,000 years and think, ‘That’s good Jesus, give it to them!’ When in reality we should be listening to that conversation as though Jesus was speaking to us reminding us as well: *none of you keeps the law*.

The evidence that they were not interested in doing God’s will, not even as it was expressed in the law of Moses, was they were willing to kill Jesus which was contrary to the law of Moses. **Exodus 20:13 (ESV)** ¹³ “*You shall not murder*. How did Jesus know they were plotting to kill Him? The same way He knows about us today – He knows our hearts.

Jesus bringing up Moses was very appropriate at the Feast of Tabernacles, where the Jewish people were remembering God’s provision in the wilderness under Moses’ leadership.

Undoubtedly there was a large group involved in the conversation and most likely many in the group did not yet realize that a small group of religious ‘leaders’ were plotting to kill Jesus. There are always varying responses from those who listen to Jesus. Some at the temple responded to Jesus’ comment that His life was threatened by saying: *You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?*” Their design was to make Jesus’ statement about people wanting to kill Him evidence of His paranoia and divert the crowd from realizing that they were out to kill Him.

I love how Jesus caught the criticizers in their own picky way of interpreting the Law. Even though I have read this before, this was the first time the example has really ‘sunk in.’

Read John 7:21-24 (ESV) ²¹ *Jesus answered them, “I did one work, and you all marvel at it.* ²² *Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath.* ²³ *If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man’s whole body well?* ²⁴ *Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.”*

According to Moses' law, circumcision was to be performed eight days after a baby's birth (**Leviticus 12:3**). If the eighth day after birth was on a Sabbath, the circumcision rite was performed (even though it was considered work and would be ‘breaking the Sabbath). The religious leaders allowed certain exceptions to Sabbath laws for themselves, but they allowed none for Jesus, who was healing people. So, if the act of circumcision didn’t break the law, how could making **a man entirely well** break it? I think you know the answer to that.

Read John 7:25-29 (ESV) ²⁵ *Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, “Is not this the man whom they seek to kill?”* ²⁶ *And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ?* ²⁷ *But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from.”* ²⁸ *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.* ²⁹ *I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me.”*

Since some of the crowd did know their leaders were seeking ways to put Jesus to death, they were amazed that Jesus was still speaking publicly and the leaders were not doing anything about it. That brought up the question that maybe the leaders had changed their minds and discovered Jesus was the Messiah. This is why they asked” *Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ?*

Notice what they bring up in verse 27. There was a popular tradition that the Messiah would simply appear. But those who believed this tradition were ignoring the Scriptures that clearly predicted the Messiah's birthplace. ***Micah 5:2 (ESV)***² *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.* If they had any workable knowledge of the scriptures, they would have known that Jesus came from the Father via Bethlehem.

As I consider that some of the Jews then thought that the Messiah would just appear, I am reminded that will be true for the second coming of Christ. ***Matthew 24:27 (ESV)***²⁷ *For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.*

The Jews prided themselves on knowing the true God, the God of Israel. And Jesus is so bold that He tells them the truth – they don't know Him because they do not know God the Father!

Read John 7:30-32 (ESV)³⁰ *So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.*³¹ *Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, “When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?”*³² *The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him.*

Jesus' speaking of his *hour* is an important concept. His *hour* is the hour of Jesus' passion, death and his subsequent exaltation. Jesus understood that there was nothing His opponents could do to bring His ministry to a premature end. A quote that I first heard Dan Hiser say was, “We are immortal until our work for the Lord is done.” I think it may have originated with George Whitefield who lived in the 1700s. Upon this first anniversary of Dan's death, it is easy to wonder why was he called home in what seemed to us to be the middle of his ministry. The answer is simple. Dan's hour had come. And how wonderful that is for him.

There were those who blocked out the sounds of the city of Jerusalem and believed Jesus. *They said, “When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?”* These people, probably festival goers who had come from outside Jerusalem, were not being influenced by the attitude of the Jerusalem crowd. For these people the miracles they had witnessed far outweighed what others ‘thought’. The Pharisees did not like what they heard among the people. They most certainly did not want folks turning to Jesus; consequently, their attempts to arrest Him.

Read John 7:33-36 (ESV)³³ *Jesus then said, “I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me.*³⁴ *You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come.”*³⁵ *The Jews said to one another, “Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?”*³⁶ *What does he mean by saying, ‘You will seek me and you will not find me,’ and, ‘Where I am you cannot come?’”*

After the Feast of Tabernacles Jesus made only two more visits to Jerusalem, one for the Feast of Dedication, the other for His final Passover, when He would be handed over to be crucified. It would be through His death and subsequent resurrection that Jesus would return to the Father who sent Him, and there would be no more opportunities for the crowd to see Him. Where He was going, clearly they could not come especially since they did not believe in Him. Even those who believed, did not see the entire picture. We know that those who trust in Jesus will eventually be with Him in His Father's house.

The Dispersion (Diaspora in Greek) was the scattering of the Jews from the land promised to Israel into other parts of the world. The crowd wondered if Jesus was going to leave Judea and Galilee to join the Diaspora and then teach the Greeks/Gentiles. If He did that He would most likely be beyond the reach of His Jerusalem opponents. However, going specifically to the Gentiles was not what Jesus was called to do. He came to the Jews. Time tells that the Apostle Paul would eventually be called by Jesus to head up God's mission trip to the Gentiles. Jesus telling the people *You will seek me and you will not find me* – reminds us of the words of the prophet Isaiah.

Read **Isaiah 55:6 (ESV)** ⁶ *“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.”*

These folks in the Jerusalem temple had the Living Lord right before them speaking to them personally. They could call upon Him while He was physically near. However, Jesus the Messiah was destined to physically leave this earth. There were a few who made the most of the opportunities they were given to seek the Lord while He was found with them on earth. I think of Mary of Bethany. When her sister tried to get Jesus to tell Mary to help in the kitchen rather than sitting at His feet, Jesus said of her in **Luke 10:42 (ESV)** ⁴² *but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.* This reminds us of the importance of taking time with Jesus

I also think of another Mary – Mary the mother of Jesus. After the birth of Jesus we read in **Luke 2:19 (ESV)** ¹⁹ *But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.* It is good and wise to go over and over in our minds the things we have learned about Jesus.

I think of Peter – who in a moment of fear betrayed Jesus with his lips. However, even before the crucifixion and the resurrection, Peter had listened closely to Jesus. He said of Jesus in **Matthew 16:16 (ESV)** ¹⁶ ... *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* When we listen to Jesus, we realize that even when we fail Jesus, He will never fail us.

If you had been in that crowd at the temple that day what would you have thought when you listened to Jesus? Would you have taken the things He said and pondered them in your heart? Would you have chosen the good portion? Would you have believed Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God? But more importantly, who are you listening to now? We live in a world that shouts at us and we are often distracted by other voices. Let's remember what the LORD said to Peter, James and John when they saw Jesus transfigured before them. **Mark 9:7 (ESV)** ⁷ *And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.”*