



John 7:14-24
So That You May Believe: John
“Not My Own”

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This morning we are continuing our series through the gospel according to John, where we are learning about who Jesus is and how his teachings and his life can make a difference in our own, when we believe – which is the reason John writes: So that you may believe. We’re going to take today’s passage in a few smaller pieces today, mixed in with the sermon, rather than reading it all in one fell-swoop. We’ll get to the first part in just a moment. Something we’ve all experienced in life is that good ideas – ideas with wisdom and deep roots that are worth living out in our lives – those kinds of things frequently do not originate with ourselves. They come from someone else.

When Gwen and I realized that we needed to expand our house in order for our family not to go insane, I had no idea how to go about doing that. But I knew people who had the experience and the ability to do a project like that. And so now, when people come to our house and ask about it, I’m able to say, “Yeah, I did a lot of the work, though we hired a bunch out, and even the work I did was not because I knew how to do it. It’s because others taught me what to do.” I learned from conversations with friends, and I learned a bunch from YouTube. You can literally build a house from watching YouTube if you’ve got enough patience and courage. I really can’t take much credit for how our house ended up looking in the end, because most of the knowledge came from other people who knew more than I did.

Whether you’re a parent raising kids gleaning wisdom from parents of older kids, or if you’re retired and had some help in financial planning for your retirement, or you’ve got a new job, or you’ve moved to a new city...probably ideas shared by others have helped you navigate your way. You get advice and see what works for you and your situation. And it may in whatever facet of life you’ve experienced that...it may be that then other people look to you eventually and say, “Hey, it looks like you’ve handled this situation well, can you share with me your wisdom?” And then: **You have the opportunity to say, “Well, they weren’t really my ideas, but I learned**

from different people, and tried some things out to see what works, and here's what I learned after putting some things into practice."

When you think about it, most of life operates this way. And so most of what we say and do, and how we live, is all shaped by others who have gone before us and shared their wisdom and insight, and we've then tested it out and discovered which ideas are best and prove to be true.

And we see Jesus doing this in today's passage. If you were with us last week, you'll recall that Jesus makes his way back to Jerusalem after being away from there for the previous 6 months or so. He's been spending time in the region of Galilee, about 60 or 70 miles north of Jerusalem, but now he returns to the epicenter of the Jewish faith, just as one of their big annual religious festivals - the Festival of the Tabernacles - is in ramping up. So, let's turn to John 7 beginning in verse 14.

Not until halfway through the festival did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. The Jews there were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having been taught?" (John 7:14-15). So, Jesus gets to Jerusalem but stays a bit under cover at first. We saw last week that was Jesus' plan – he wasn't going to go and put on a big show and do a bunch of public and impressive stuff as his half-brothers wanted him to do. Rather, he went "in secret" as John puts it. But then, about halfway through the festival, Jesus goes to the temple courts, and begins to teach. And the first thing people start saying is, "Wait a minute, this guy didn't go to our rabbi training school...he didn't go to seminary...how does he know so much?"

This is like people coming to my house and asking about it and when they find that I did a lot of the work on it myself and they're like, "Wow! I didn't know you had the knowledge and abilities to do something like that. Where did you learn?" Of course, part of the reason they ask is that they're now standing in my house and they want to make sure it's not going to come crashing down on them, right? They want to find out if the thing is built solidly, and if it's safe for them to be there. That's what's happening here in the text. They are impressed with what Jesus says, it's resonating as right and

true...but they're perplexed because they don't recognize him as having gone through their religious educational system. So, how'd he get this knowledge, and is it really trustworthy?

So, verse 16, says, **“Jesus answered, ‘My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me’” (John 7:16)**. Now, hang on for just a minute in regards to the second half of this verse, because it's a little cryptic sounding, right? “It comes from the one who sent me.” We'll get more on that in a moment. But Jesus says, “Hey, the message is not my own.” Kind of like the good parenting any of us have done, or the wise financial investments we've made, or whatever else it may be we've done that was a good and worthwhile thing that has its foundation in someone else's idea: so it is with Jesus. He's not speaking on his own authority or out of his own self-knowledge, in his humanity. His knowledge, his teaching, is not his own. It comes from the one who sent him. He explains more about that in the next verse.

“Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own” (John 7:17). So now, we get more insight into who it is that sent him and where his teaching comes from: God. That is his claim. He doesn't speak on his own, but he speaks only what comes from God. But also, in here he gives them an invitation to find out if what he says really is from God or not: Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether or not what he's teaching really comes from God or not. It's interesting that he doesn't invite them to do what he says. He keeps it safe for them. “Do God's will – the one you already know about and are familiar with – and see if it doesn't line up with what I'm teaching.” How would a person in their day know what the will of God is? Primarily, from what was written in Scripture, what you and I call the Old Testament.

So, they can test if what Jesus says is true or not by living what God's word says, and seeing if in fact what Jesus says lines up with that. It's really kind of an invitation to faith – to really live as God's Word says to and compare it to what Jesus says. It's quite the invitation from Jesus, as he invites them to put their faith into practice by doing the will of God. They've been great at studying God's Word; they know what it says...but living it is a whole

different ballgame. And Jesus knows they haven't always lived it very well. They've gotten hung up with human traditions and regulations and so forth, that have prevented them from doing the will of God.

Let's continue on: **“Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him” (John 7:18)** Here, Jesus broadens the topic of who has sent him to a more general statement about anyone who speaks on their own compared to those who speak on behalf of God. People who speak on their own, of their own ideas, of their own authority – which will always pale compared to the authority of God – those people speak for their own glory. But, and now Jesus seems to be speaking about himself again though he leaves that a little open to interpretation – he who wants to glorify God is the one who speaks truth and is trustworthy. This applies to anyone, really, but specifically right here Jesus clearly is referring to himself. He has been sent by God, he speaks what God gives him to say, and so there's nothing false about him. Let's continue on...

“Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?” (John 7:19). He then appeals to Moses' law, what is more properly known as God's Covenant with Israel, which Jesus accuses them of breaking because they are plotting to kill him. Even just planning and plotting how to kill another human being is breaking the commandment that “thou shall not commit murder.” You may recall that in Jesus' sermon on the Mount, this is exactly what he teaches: that even looking at someone with anger is the same as killing them. Jesus always raises the bar, rather than lowering it, when it comes to loving God and loving our neighbor and living out our faith.

The text continues, **“You are demon-possessed,’ the crowd answered. ‘Who is trying to kill you?’” (John 7:20).** So, now they think he's mad, imagining their plotting against him, after just a short time ago being amazed at his teaching and having a sense that he speaks with wisdom and authority. So, at least some of them in the crowd have done kind of an about-face here. And then Jesus responds with the rest of what we'll look at today: **“Jesus said to them, ‘I did one miracle, and you are all amazed. Yet, because**

Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a boy on the Sabbath. Now if a boy can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing a man’s whole body on the Sabbath? Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly” (John 7:21-24).

Now, you may recall that when Jesus had last been in Jerusalem he healed a man on the Sabbath. It was the guy who couldn’t walk, by the pool of Bethesda – we looked at it several weeks ago. Jesus angered many of the religious leaders when he did that, because it was the Sabbath. And yet, as he says here, they will do circumcisions on the Sabbath. Now, it was not forbidden as a kind of “work” that couldn’t be done on the Sabbath. And in part, circumcision was a sign of God’s redemptive and even healing work that is at the heart of the Old Covenant. In other words, part of God’s promise, his covenant with Israel, is that he would be their redeemer, their healer, the one who brings redemption to them. And circumcision was a sign of that covenant, and was something they did on the Sabbath.

And so, Jesus’ argument here is that he brought a healing to that guy’s “whole body” as he puts it and yet they’re angry – still, even after 6 months have gone by – because he did this healing on the Sabbath. Why can’t he heal a man’s whole body on the Sabbath if they will do a circumcision on the Sabbath? That’s the logic he’s using here. And so, then he brings it all to a conclusion and invites them once again to do things differently. Don’t judge him by appearances, but judge correctly. How does one do that? It’s what he started with: do the will of God and see if it doesn’t line up with what Jesus teaches. Jesus is saying he’s doing the will of God – not only in what he says, but in what he does, including the Sabbath day healing of the man 6 months earlier.

And so, the thing Jesus is communicating here is that what he teaches is not really his own ideas: rather, it comes from God. He invites them to step out in faith, actually live God’s will and not manmade rules and regulations, and see if in fact it is true that what God says and what Jesus says are one and the same.

And that's the invitation to us as well: to let go of manmade stuff that can be so alluring and actually trust God and try living as he invites us to. Whether it's rules, or the allure of power or possessions or following human teaching and ideas that go against God's word and will – His invitation is to let go of that stuff and see that Jesus is true and trustworthy.

And this is not that different than other facets of life – like the parenting advice or retirement fund advice we get or the tips and wisdom on how to build a house. You've got to actually try stuff to fully understand the truthfulness of them and the trustworthiness, therefore, of the one who tells you about them. I've been fortunate enough to have the opportunity to teach my kids, and other people along the way as well, how to waterski. And it can be intimidating at first, especially for a 4 or 5 year-old kid, floating in the water with the unwieldy skis on their feet, trying to manage the ski rope as well (usually have an adult floating in the water with them) to think about letting the boat pull them up out of the water so they can ski. But if they don't do what I tell them to do, they may never get out of the water. The trick is: they have to actually do it. When they do, they find out that what I tell them about how to water ski, is actually true. Knees bent, arms straight – don't you dare try and pull yourself out of the water by pulling your hands in – and keep your balance just a little bit forward as you start to come up out of the water. Do that, and you will be skiing without any trouble. That's the truth, and I've taught a number of people how to waterski. But they have to actually put into practice what they're taught.

And it's much the same with Jesus. He speaks truth. It lines up with God's word. And when you put it to the test by living out God's Word, you see that what Jesus says holds water. It's no surprise to him, because he knows it's not his own word. It's not just a human teaching. It comes straight from the Creator of the Universe, the one who set the hands of time in motion.

So, I invite you to take Jesus at face value, and try doing God's will in some facet of your life where you struggle with that. It could be any of a number of things where maybe you've bought into the world's way of doing

things, and the world's values, and God's way is different. Try God's way. This week, when you're faced with a choice between a worldly value, one that's built on human teachings and human decisions, try God's way instead. Maybe it's something in the 10 Commandments; maybe it's something that Jesus teaches – like in his sermon on the Mount – such as lying or lust or judgmentalism; maybe it's in trying to love your neighbors as yourself; maybe it's in financial decisions. It could be how you respond in a situation – maybe where you'd normally get angry or defensive and perhaps instead you choose to bear the fruit of the spirit and be joyful and open and communicate more positively in that situation. There could be any number of things this week where you're given the opportunity to do God's will, to test it out, and therefore to judge Jesus fairly, from a place of faith...and seeing if what he says is true or not.

And when Jesus honors that and shows himself to be faithful – which I believe he will – and maybe someone in your family or a co-worker, notices that you're living differently than how you normally do, you'll be able to say, just as Jesus did, this happened because “it's not my own. It's from God.” And by doing that, you'll give him glory in that moment, rather than yourself. Let's pray...Amen.