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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
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Austin, MN 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
February 16, 2014  
6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture Lessons: Daniel 4:30-37; 2 Peter 1:3-11  
Hymns: 41; 243; 307; 309

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord  
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 7:14-18

14 Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple  
and taught. 15 And the Jews marveled, saying, "How does this  
Man know letters, having never studied?"

16 Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but  
His who sent Me. 17 If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know  
concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak  
on My own authority. 18 He who speaks from himself seeks his  
own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is  
true, and no unrighteousness is in Him. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God!

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.  
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow Redeemed.

INTRO: Misunderstood, Mischaracterized.

In the verses preceding our text we see how misunderstood Jesus  
was, even by his own relatives. Jesus' brothers were coaxing Him  
to make a bigger show of all the marvelous things that He could  
do. They could easily see how Jesus could make Himself much

more popular and famous, and so successful, if He would just take advantage of the opportunities before Him. At that time Jesus was conducting His Galilean ministry. He had spent the last several months visiting many small towns throughout Galilee and His brothers couldn't understand why Jesus would "waste" His time in this way when He could achieve so much more by going to Jerusalem and making a spectacular show of His miraculous powers. The people would be amazed and follow Him, and He would surely be much more successful than by touring in the small towns of Galilee. His brothers didn't yet believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior, or their faith was immature.

It was time for the Feast of Tabernacles, a fall festival that combined a harvest thanksgiving with a reminder of the how the Lord cared for the people of Israel during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness. The Lord established this festival as a time for sacrifices of thanksgiving when all the men were to forsake the comfort of their warm beds in their homes and sleep in tents for the week of the festival. Many men made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to observe the Feast of Tabernacles, and so Jesus was urged by His brothers to come to Jerusalem with them so they could make a proper show of Jesus' power and glory. Jesus declined this proposal. They didn't understand what Jesus about. In their minds they had a deep seated mischaracterization of who Jesus was and what He was to accomplish.

This is still a problem today. Many people who are familiar with Jesus' name fail to understand His mission and His message. They mischaracterize what Jesus is actually about. One could say that it is a misplaced emphasis on His miracles over His mission, but it becomes more than that as it alters people's perception of Jesus' mission as Savior. They miss the true glory that is revealed in Jesus because they are looking for the wrong goal and objective in Jesus' life and teaching. The Spirit leads us to see --

**THEME: The Glory Revealed in Jesus' Teaching.**

Jesus didn't travel up to Jerusalem with His brothers, but He did go up to Jerusalem. People were expecting Him and looking for Him, just as Jesus' brothers had understood and expected. People were puzzled that Jesus hadn't made an appearance. For this occasion

Jesus traveled up to Jerusalem quietly, without large crowds following Him. In the midst of the festival He simply appeared at the temple and –

## **I. Jesus Taught.**

That one simple statement in our text is so very important for us to note, and note well.

**John 7:14** Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught.

This was the Lord's focus for His ministry. He came to teach the people the truth about the Kingdom of God. He came that people might know the way to the Father. He came and preached repentance.

We have many of Jesus' sermons and lessons recorded for us in the gospels, but how easy it is for us to be like Jesus' brothers, to focus much more on the miracles and mighty needs which the Lord did. How easy it is for us in our minds also to think of Jesus as the solution for all our earthly troubles and challenges, as the crowds did as people lined up with their sick. They were seeking deliverance from earthly tribulation, but failing to comprehend that Jesus' primary mission was to deliver them from death and the power of the devil.

Jesus' chief critics were found among the scribes and priests, the people that made up the parties of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees were convinced that what was needed for a true spiritual life was a stricter observance of the law, and then all would be well with God both in time and eternity. They despised Jesus for revealing in His teaching that such an emphasis on the law and the righteousness of the law was hypocrisy and could only lead to perdition. The Sadducees were focused on the social and political, and using their spiritual position to consolidate political power to benefit people in that way. They did this to the point that they rejected any notion of true spiritual life in time or eternity. It was all about the here and now. They despised Jesus for leading the people in the exact opposite direction, rejecting the temporal and material for spiritual life and the treasures of heaven.

Many today still fall into these traps, and they are alluring. There is so much pain and suffering in the world which we as children of God simply cannot ignore. We all have many problems to deal with in life and we are encouraged by Scripture to take all our troubles and cares and tribulations to the Lord. It seems only logical to emphasize programs that mobilize Christian love to relieve suffering in this world. It seems proper for us to address the difficult situations and challenges to our faith in daily life by asking, **“What would Jesus do?”**

Consider how that has been twisted around. On the one hand Jesus has been transformed into a second Moses, a lawgiver who is telling you exactly how to live your life in order to please God. Others misconstrue Jesus’ teaching with claims that since Jesus never said a word in any of His recorded sermons about this or that carnal activity or that pursuit of the flesh, then it can’t be wrong! On the other hand, Jesus look to Jesus as the One who came into the world to relieve social injustice and war and disease in the world, and we serve Him best when we focus on such relief.

Jesus taught. He is not Jesus the miracle worker. He is not Jesus the social worker. He is Jesus our Savior from sin! He came and preached repentance. That fall, during Festival of Tabernacles, Jesus came into the temple of God in Jerusalem and boldly taught the truth about God. He taught the same truth He always taught. He spoke of repentance and life and salvation that was found, not in the efforts or programs of man, but in God and in Him whom God had sent into the world. He directed the people to have faith in Him as Lord, as the Messiah, as the Savior from sin, and the only way to eternal life.

The response Jesus received was mixed, not only that some people believed and others did not, but that the same people both marveled and challenged --

## **II. Jesus’ “Credentials” for Teaching.**

**John 7:15-17** And the Jews marveled, saying, “How does this Man know letters, having never studied?” 16 Jesus answered them and said, “My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. 17 If

anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.”

**Initial reaction -- they marveled!** Jesus wasn't teaching them the way many others had. In Matthew's gospel we read of a similar response to Jesus' teaching the Sermon on the Mount:

**Matthew 7:28-29** “The people were astonished at His teaching, 29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”

In Mark we read of the people's response after Jesus taught in the synagogue of Capernaum.

**Mark 1:22** “And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”

There was a clear and distinct difference when hearing Jesus rather than the religious scholars of their day. Jesus taught with a certainty, with an authority they didn't hear from others who constantly referenced this or that interpretation by this or that writer in the Talmud or others volumes of religious thought. They heard the straight truth from Jesus, the truth of God and the truth that saves.

But then they thought that's not the way it's supposed to be. All the other scribes and rabbis had studied under Gamaliel, or some other renowned scholar or school. Jesus was just a tradesman, a carpenter, or builder. Wasn't He just Joseph's son? What credentials did He possess that He dared to teach, and to teach with such authority, not hedging with “maybes” or “I think this might mean” one thing or another. No, Jesus taught them plainly and clearly the will and Word of God for the salvation of souls. He condemned sin, and called for repentance through faith. Jesus presented Himself to the people as the Messiah, the Promised Seed of Abraham.

So it troubled the people, not only that Jesus spoke so boldly and plainly, but that He didn't seem to possess the credentials to do this. So Jesus responded regarding His authority and His teaching. It was not just His teaching that He made up as He went along. He taught them the message given to Him from above, from the One

who sent Him! Jesus told them that if anyone desired to do the will of God then they would know that His teaching was from God, and not just His own authority. How interesting that Jesus defers to the will of His Father. Of course their will and word would be perfectly aligned in all things, but Jesus, according to His human nature, received His authority and His teaching from the Father.

It is not blind faith and the shutting down of intellect for us to believe the Word of the Lord. As we open the Scriptures, as we read the Word and hear our Savior's teaching we also, by the working of the Spirit in our hearts recognize the authority behind these words. It is the authority of God. It is the truth of God, who cannot lie that is presented to us in Jesus, and not only in the red highlighted words of the gospels, but in ALL of Holy Scripture. When we are told of how God created the world, or delivered Noah through the great flood, or how Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, or how Jesus suffered and died and rose again for our salvation, this message possesses the authority of God and **is** the truth of God.

One cannot question the authority of creation without then also questioning the authority of the statement of Christ Himself **“Your sins are forgiven.”** or as we also hear from Jesus this morning, **“This is my body given for you, This is My blood shed for you for the remission of sins.”** We thank God for the gift of faith that we know and understand that Jesus taught with authority and that we also marvel at His teaching, for He doesn't teach as others do.

### **III. In His Teaching Jesus Glorifies the Father.**

Jesus concluded:

**John 7:18** “He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.”

What we see in this statement of our Lord Jesus is a genuine expression of His humility. Without doubt Jesus' own glory was revealed in His ministry in so many ways. It was certainly apparent in the many miracles of healing which He performed. It was seen also in His omniscience, that He knew all things even what was in the hearts of men. He revealed the power He possessed over nature in calming the storm at sea. Time and again, as we already heard

again today, the people saw Jesus' glory in His teaching. But for Jesus it was not about seeking His own glory. He didn't speak from Himself, on His own, with His own authority. He represented the Father and revealed the Father's express will for the salvation of His people, and also the people of all the world. Jesus glorified the Father in all He did. Recall how Jesus called upon the Father and glorified the Father in raising Lazarus from the dead. Recall how even in the last days before His death, when Jesus was once again teaching in the temple, that He called upon the Father to glorify His name.

**John 12:28** “ ‘Father, glorify Your name.’ Then a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.’”

The Father was and is glorified in the Son, and how Jesus fulfilled the Father's will that we might be saved from the curse of the law. In the greatness of His humility the Father was glorified before all the world, and is so even yet today. In obedience to the Father's will Jesus humbled Himself.

**Philippians 2:8-11** “He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

And so the Father exalted Jesus, He exalted Jesus because Jesus didn't put Himself first, but put us and our great need before Himself. In this Jesus didn't look for His own glory, but glorified His heavenly Father.

In all this Jesus secured righteousness, a righteousness which God has been credited to us through faith in Jesus' name. And so, **Yes!** Jesus has been exalted so that we willingly and joyfully glorify Him before all the world. This is our joy and delight, for in Him we have life. We shall praise His name here in time and hereafter in eternity.

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.