

SELF-INTEREST BLINDS THE TRUTH

John 7:10-36

Remember the childhood game of Hide or Seek? If you are a parent or a grandparent, it may not be that long since you last played it. In today's passage in John seven it seems that the various people, or players, fall into one of the two categories: Hiding or Seeking. Let us read John 7:10-31 NAS:

¹⁰ *But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret.*

¹¹ *So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, "Where is He?"*

¹² *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."*

¹³ *Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews.*

¹⁴ *But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach.*

¹⁵ *The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?"*

¹⁶ *So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.*

¹⁷ *"If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.*

¹⁸ *"He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.*

¹⁹ *"Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?"*

²⁰ *The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?"*

²¹ *Jesus answered them, "I did one deed, and you all marvel.*

²² *"For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man.*

²³ *"If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath?"*

²⁴ *"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."*
²⁵ *So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill?"*
²⁶ *"Look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they?"*
²⁷ *"However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from."*
²⁸ *Then Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, "You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know."*
²⁹ *"I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me."*
³⁰ *So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.*
³¹ *But many of the crowd believed in Him; and they were saying, "When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?"*

Jesus Himself seems to be wanting to hide in the first part of this passage. Note that in verse 10 He secretly goes to the Feast of Booths in Jerusalem.

We will find there are two groups of seekers. The first group is one we encounter in verse 11: The Jewish leaders. They were looking for Jesus at the Feast. They expected Him to be there, but could not find Him.

John 7:10-11 NAS:

¹⁰ *But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret.*
¹¹ *So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, "Where is He?"*

Jesus knew that the Jewish leaders were probably waiting for Him at the feast in order to seize and kill Him. They undoubtedly figured that He would come to the feast where there would be huge crowds to which He could preach. They may well have posted lookouts along the roads leading to Jerusalem as well as all around the city to spot Jesus even before He arrived at the feast. They also probably expected Jesus to be traveling with a group of His followers which would make Him even more obvious as He approached. So Jesus waited a few days and then headed up to the feast shall we say by the back roads so He could enter Jerusalem undetected.

John 7:12-13 NAS:

¹² *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."*
¹³ *Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews.*

The people that had come to the city for the feast were very much divided as to how they felt about Jesus. Some were saying He was a good man and others were saying that He was nothing more than a liar. Those that either believed what they had heard about Him or were at least leaning in that direction were reluctant to speak openly about it because they feared punishment by the Jewish leaders. They were hiding their belief from the Jewish leaders. The truth about Jesus is that He is one of two things. He is either the Son of God or He is a liar. He cannot be anything else. It was true then and it is true today.

John 7:14-18 NAS:

¹⁴ *But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach.*

¹⁵ *The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?"*

¹⁶ *So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me."*

¹⁷ *"If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.*

¹⁸ *"He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.*

Most people going to this feast would arrive in time to spend the entire week celebrating. So the Jewish leaders probably expected Jesus to arrive on the first day. When they did not find Him and heard nothing about Him for the first two or three days of the festival they probably relaxed their guard thinking that perhaps He decided not to come. This would have made it even easier for Jesus to enter the city undetected. Jesus went immediately to the Temple and began to teach. The seekers, those Jewish leaders who were seeking to kill Him, had not found Him, so He makes it easier for them. Jesus goes directly into the Temple which would at this time be filled with large crowds as well as many of the Jewish leaders. Jesus knew that many of the people would accept His teaching and the Jewish leaders would be reluctant to arrest Him at that time for fear of angering the crowds. Then as Jesus is teaching we see that this first group of seekers is astonished at the wisdom of His teaching.

When the people heard His message they were shocked that someone without a formal education could know so much. That in itself should have told them something about how special a person Jesus was. He had no formal education and yet He seemed to have wisdom, knowledge, and authority far superior to the religious leaders, scribes, and teachers of the Law. Matthew wrote in Matthew 7:28, 29 NAS: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

Churches today expect their pastors to have a doctors degree, or at least a masters degree, or they will not even consider hiring them. As a matter of fact, if Jesus were to send His

resumé to most churches today, they would probably send Him back a polite letter wishing Him well but saying that His qualifications did not match what they were looking for. Just imagine what

Jesus' resumé would look like:

Formal Education:	None
Experience:	Carpenter
References:	Angels, shepherds, herdsmen, and tradesmen

Most churches do not have people who are qualified to hire the most effective pastor. Many of the candidates with doctor's degrees obtained those degrees from liberal universities that teach false doctrine. The most important qualification to pastor a church is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and a thorough understanding of the Bible, along with a sincere belief that it is the authoritative Word of God to be used in determining one's actions and behavior.

Jesus had the ability to teach with both wisdom and authority because He knew He was sent by God to be the fulfillment of all that was taught and predicted in the Old Testament. And that is exactly what He explained to those He had been teaching. He was not teaching just what He believed but what He had been told to teach by God, His Father. Anyone who attempts to convince others of what He or she personally believes may be selfishly attempting to use other people for their own personal gain, not really caring about those people. Jesus did not in any way seek honor for Himself. Jesus is saying that if they know and believe the truth of their own Old Testament that was given to them by God, and they are trying to live in accordance with God's will as specified in that Old Testament writing, then they will know that everything that Jesus is saying is from God. Jesus is not teaching anything that is not in some way connected to God's will for the people, nor is there anything in His teaching that benefits Him over the good of the people. As a matter of fact, exactly the opposite is true. Everything that Jesus teaches is for the greatest possible benefit for each and every person without there being anything of material benefit to Him.

Thus it would seem perfectly logical to accept such teaching. Why would anyone reject the teaching of Someone who could promise them eternal life in Heaven while promising that God would be with them and care for them every minute of every day in this life. Jesus was not teaching such things for His own glory but to the glory of God. Everything Jesus taught was directed back to God. Nothing He did was for His own benefit, but for the benefit of others and for all the glory to go to God. Yet in verse 19 He states that this first group of seekers, the Jewish leaders, were seeking Him to kill Him. Why in the world would anyone want to kill Him? Someone would want to kill Him if His teaching interfered with or threatened their own power and wealth. Who then could be more threatened than the Jewish leaders? If the people believed Jesus' teaching, that would be the end of the leaders' wealth, power, and control over the people. It may well be that their true reason for wanting to kill Him was that He was a threat to their deceptive practices. They were the equivalent of the politicians we have today. If an honest God-

fearing person were to come along today and expose their deceptive practices, they would find some way of destroying him/her in order to preserve their own wealth and power. They would not give a lick about the fact that everything this person had said was for the good of the people, and they would convince the people that this person was a liar and a fraud.

John 7:19-24 NAS:

¹⁹ *"Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?"*

²⁰ *The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?"*

²¹ *Jesus answered them, "I did one deed, and you all marvel.*

²² *"For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man.*

²³ *"If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath?*

²⁴ *"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."*

Jesus' teaching was perfect. The people would very likely have accepted it if it had not been for the Jewish leaders filling their heads with all kinds of lies about Him.

Jesus had boldly announced to the crowd that the Jewish leaders wanted to kill Him because He had violated the Sabbath by healing a crippled man and then claimed to be God. We studied that passage in chapter five but let's refresh our memories:

John 5:9-18 NAS

⁹ *Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day.*

¹⁰ *So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet."*

¹¹ *But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.'"*

¹² *They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Pick up your pallet and walk?'"*

¹³ *But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place.*

¹⁴ *Afterward Jesus found* him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you."*

¹⁵ *The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made*

him well.

¹⁶ *For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.*

¹⁷ *But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."*

¹⁸ *For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.*

In John 7:19 Jesus reminded the Jews that they themselves broke the Sabbath laws given them by Moses when they had their sons circumcised on the Sabbath, so what was wrong with His healing a crippled man on the Sabbath? *"Why would you want to kill me for doing the same type of thing that you do?"*

The crowd to whom Jesus was speaking apparently did not know that their leaders were out to kill Jesus, so they challenged what He said about their trying to kill Him, and their reply suggested that Jesus must be demon-possessed to think such a thing.

When Jesus said that none of them kept the law, the context of the passage suggests that they did not understand the true purpose of the law. Even though they claimed the law was the central focus of their lives, they only used it as a means of getting the things they wanted. Jesus saw through their shallow claims to honor the law by asking them how they can honor and respect the law while at the same time wanting to kill Him. The law commands the people not to kill (murder) in Exodus 20:13: *"You shall not murder."*

Apparently even though they knew the commandment not to commit murder, they conveniently chose not to recognize they would be breaking that commandment if they killed Jesus. That is so typical of people in a sinful world. They overlook what they know to be the right thing to do when it interferes with what they want.

Jesus answered this charge of demon-possession by pointing out how ridiculous it was for them to twist the law around to allow circumcision on the Sabbath but not healing. Basically they were claiming that Jewish interpretation allowed circumcising on the Sabbath, in spite of the law against work, because it perfected the child. But at the same time they were claiming that the law did not allow healing on the Sabbath which in effect did basically the same thing. Jesus showed both love and mercy on the Sabbath by performing work that healed a suffering paralytic. Jesus told them that they did not understand the spirit of the law and why it was given.

The most difficult thing in the world is to teach the truth to anyone who already has set, pre-conceived ideas about something. In other words, *"Don't confuse me with the facts, my mind is already made up."* It was true in Jesus' day and it is true today. If someone wants to believe that the gods of all the religions are basically the same god and there are several different ways of getting to Heaven, the chances are one in a million that the truth you tell them will be accepted and that their minds will be changed. It is simply the

nature of sin to dig in and be entrenched in what one wants rather than embrace what is good or true. But if you go ahead and speak this truth in love, no matter how a person responds, you will plant the seed in the mind of such a person. Then the Holy Spirit can water and grow it over a period of time. And one day the seed you planted may grow into a full-fledged follower of Jesus Christ. In John 7:24 Jesus calls them to a sincere attempt to find the truth when He tells them to look beneath the surface when they are evaluating something. He tells them to use good judgment so they might evaluate a matter correctly. The next few verses express Jesus' feelings in regard to this matter.

John 7:25-31 NAS:

²⁵ *So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill?"*

²⁶ *"Look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they?"*

²⁷ *"However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from."*

²⁸ *Then Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, "You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know."*

²⁹ *"I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me."*

³⁰ *So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.*

³¹ *But many of the crowd believed in Him; and they were saying, "When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?"*

The people began speaking among themselves foolishly, most likely reflecting the things they had heard from their leaders. *"Isn't this the guy whom our leaders want to kill? If it is, how can He be getting away with speaking here in public right under the noses of our leaders? Could it possibly be that they may actually believe He is the Messiah? But that couldn't be because we don't know where the Christ will come from and we know that this man, Jesus, comes from Nazareth."* They were able to justify what they wanted to believe by utilizing information they believed to be true, but really was only partially true.

Then Jesus raises His voice to emphasize again what He is trying to get them to understand. He tells them that in spite of what they believe He is the real thing because He is bringing a message from God and not from Himself, and that if they knew the true God of the Old Testament they would recognize that Jesus' message was from God and therefore true. But because they do not know God, they are unable to recognize His truth when they hear it. This angered many in the crowd and they tried to seize Him but God protected Him because it was not yet His time to be crucified.

However, we also meet the second group of seekers here. This group of seekers are those

who believe and want to know Jesus better. They are the ones in the crowd who believed what He had to say because they could understand He was from God and they had either seen first-hand or heard of the miracles He had done. They had seen and heard enough to bring them to faith.

John 7:32-36 (NAS):

³² *The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about Him, and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to seize Him.*

³³ *Therefore Jesus said, "For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me.*

³⁴ *"You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come."*

³⁵ *The Jews then said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find Him? He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He?*

³⁶ *"What is this statement that He said, 'You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come'?"*

Finally the Jewish leaders realize that Jesus is right in the middle of the city, at the Temple, teaching the people and they have probably been advised by their spies that many of the people are believing Him. So they send the Temple police to arrest Him.

Verse 32 reveals the frustration of the chief priests and the Pharisees who were united in their opposition of Jesus. Seeing these Temple police coming to arrest Him did not bother Jesus at all because He knew they could not capture Him until the right time in God's plan. Jesus calmly stood in front of them and stated that He would continue to be with them for a little while. He had already proven His ability to control them on several previous occasions. I am quite surprised that the crowds and even the Jewish leaders were not awed by the fact that on so many different occasions Jesus could not be arrested or in any way harmed. They did not know that could not happen until the time God had designated. It could not happen before the time that God had established for His crucifixion, so they must have thought it odd that they could not capture Him even when they had Him surrounded. Jesus could have absolute control over an angry mob who would have, if He was not protected by God, the ability to tear Him limb from limb.

Could anyone but God have such power? Based on earlier verses, imagine that Jesus arrived on the third or fourth day of this seven-day feast (verse 14). So they probably first tried to arrest Him the same day He arrived (verse 30), and yet by the last day of the feast (verse 37) the temple police still could not bring themselves to arrest Him. Jesus knew all along they could not arrest Him at that particular time, because it was before the time that God had established for His crucifixion. This proves the statement Jesus made in Gethsemane six months later, when He finally allowed Himself to be arrested, that He could have called thousands of angels to His defense any time He chose to do so.¹ It also

¹ Mills, M.S.: *The Life of Christ : A Study Guide to the Gospel Record.* Dallas : 3E Ministries, 1999

proves God's timing is what really controls the events in this world.

In Verse 35 where the Jews are speculating about the meaning of Jesus' words that one day they would look for Him and not be able to find Him, the Greek text reads literally, "*the dispersion of the Greeks.*" The Greeks were themselves widely dispersed following Alexander's conquest, for they could be found anywhere in the Roman Empire, and, indeed, beyond its bounds as far away as the borders of India. John 12:20 indicates that some Greeks had been converted to Judaism, so it seems that, with this as a precedent, the Jews saw Greeks as the most likely Gentiles to accept Jesus' gospel of the Kingdom. As it turned out, this was an accurate prediction. Moreover, this said a great deal about what the Jews could foresee as Jesus' potential influence in the world, for it admitted that Jesus was the One who could do that distinctly messianic act of peacefully bringing Gentile nations under the influence of God's kingdom, something which no Jew had been able to achieve in their national history. But this group of seekers missed the real point that Jesus was making.

Of course, when Jesus said He would go to Him who sent Him (verse 33), He was talking of His coming ascension, which is the ultimate proof that He did indeed come from the Father.²

So which side are you on in this drama of Hide or Seek? Are you in one or the other group of seekers? Are you a rejecter or someone who wants to know Jesus better? Or are you hiding from Christ and thinking He is hiding from you? Remember, when Jesus told the leaders that one day they would seek Him and not find Him, He was talking to those who rejected Him, those Jewish leaders who did not really want to know Him.

The Bible tells us, "*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*" (James 4:8 NAS). God also says in many places throughout the Bible that if we truly seek Him, we will truly find Him. God does not hide from anyone who really wants to know Him. For example, Jeremiah 29:13 (NAS) "*And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*"

This reminds me of a poem written many years ago entitled *The Hound of Heaven*. It was written by Francis Thompson who lived in England between 1859 - 1907. He was a considered by himself and others to be a failure for a long period in his life. He was also described by some as a "tortured soul." He had been a one-time opium addict and he eventually died of tuberculosis. Later in his life he began writing poetry, one of which is a rather lengthy one entitled "The Hound of Heaven." It is too long to quote here completely, but it begins:

*"I fled Him [meaning God], down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him. . . ."*

² Ibid.

The gist of the remainder of the poem is that no matter where he ran, or where he hid, though he sought contentment in all that Nature has to offer, though he spent a life indulging himself, it all left emptiness and a bitter taste. But then he hears a voice, God's voice, pointing out that he had been seeking can be found in God's arms. God gives him an invitation:

*"Rise, clasp My hand, and come."
. . . . "Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest!"*

The "Hound of Heaven" wants you to rest in His arms as well. Give up your game of Hide or Seek today and let yourself be found by Him who loves you more than anyone else ever can or will.