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JOHN 7

John Series: Get a Life in Jesus

[PRAYER] Lord, you know each of our hearts. You know what's going on in our lives and we all have requests that we bring before you. At this moment, Lord, we just want to lift up Tess and her back pain she's experienced for quite several months and it's challenging for her. We're asking you would bless her through this procedure tomorrow and you'd heal her. We're also asking for your protection on Caroline and her surgery tomorrow that you would also work in her heart and her life. Just thank you for her commitment to you and her love for you, and ask that you would bless her as well. For each of us today, Lord, we're asking that you would speak into our hearts. We're opening your word and asking you to do a work in our hearts and our lives. So as we look at your word now, we ask that you would teach us and lead us. In Jesus' name, amen.

If you would please open your Bibles to John 7. It's very, I think, encouraging when someone takes a stand or someone says, "I know the truth," or something. You pay attention. There's a lot of confusion going on in our world today. So when someone actually makes a statement and says they believe something or they know something, our ears go up. We start to listen to what they have to say.

In our story today, we're going to experience Jesus speaking in a long story. So we're looking at John 7 verse by verse. We're going to go right through the passage. But in verses 37-39 we have Jesus speaking out in the midst of that. He's going to be talking throughout the passage, but in 37-39 He speaks pretty dramatically and in fact says some things that I think are very applicable to us and to our own lives.

So what I want to do first is start with... I don't usually do this. I usually read the whole passage together, but I'm going to just have us read verse 37-39 at first. Then we'll sit down. I'm going to take you back through the whole story as I put the whole story in context. I think if you understand the cultural background of what's going on in the passage and you understand the history, it's going to ring these bells inside of your heart and you go, "Wow. That's really, really cool what Jesus did."

So let's stand together and I want to read these verses. If you have your Bible open, it's John 7:37-39

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed

in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Man there's a lot there. I trust that God will use this in your lives. Go ahead and have a seat.

Notice it talks about the festival. We're talking about *the last and greatest day of the festival*. I've just got to tell you about this festival because of all the festivals and feasts in the Old Testament, this is my favorite. There are three main festivals that people within twenty miles of Jerusalem were expected to attend. So you'd go up to Jerusalem to celebrate this. But the festivals are even celebrated today in Jewish culture. The Feast of Tabernacles was a festival that tabernacle means a little house or a tent. Sometimes it's called the Feast of Booths. Because on this day the people would get together for an eight-day feast and in this feast they would camp out. So it's like a camping experience for all of the Jewish people and it's a family experience. So they'd be getting together in order to do this as a family. For eight days they would go camp out.

What they would do is they would find natural products to build their little tent out of. Usually it would be something from harvest and it would be a family experience. So they could pull this all together and they'd build a little booth and in this booth then they might eat their little meal. Ideally they'd camp out in it and they'd sleep there.

But they would all build these booths and they'd have these natural ingredients, leaves or other things there, to remind them of what? It's a feast that would remind them of the wandering of the Israelites from the time they left Egypt to get to the Promised Land. The feast was designed in Leviticus. So we can read about it there. But the feast is something that looks back on God's provision because all during that time, God provided for them.

Did you know that during that forty years the Bible says that their shoes did not wear out. There was no Zappos you needed to go to. You didn't have to get your Adidas replaced. The shoes didn't wear out. God provided for them. Wow. They traveled around.

The only reason they had the booths is because it was portable. They were moving around a lot and God provided wherever they went. Remember God provided food for them every day in the form of manna and quail. They would sleep out during the feast and even today this is a modern picture of Sukkot it's called, the Feast of Tabernacles, where the Jewish people would go sleep out in their camping out place. They'd look up at the stars and they could see up through their little tent to see the promises of Abraham. Do you remember God says – *I will make your descendants as great as the stars of the sky*. There's so many stories in the midst of all of this that they would talk about and they would celebrate as they were celebrating Sukkot together. So they would put together this little kind of tent made out of whatever they wanted, but it was this portable tent that celebrated God's provision. They would put lights out symbolizing the pillar of fire that would lead them around. All of it is about God's provision, that God was providing for them. I was an eight-day festival and people would come up.

We'll go back to Jesus' time now, not just modern time, but back to Jesus' time people would come up to Jerusalem and they would celebrate this. Every day they would go up on the Temple Mount area, which was a large area with little porticos around the edge where rabbis would come

and teach or people would hang out and talk about things. There would be ceremonies every day, parades as it were. They would sing the songs. We know the songs. They're in Psalm 113-118. You can look at them, those psalms. One of them even talks about the water that's flowing out that we learn about in our story today. So that's the background. That's the setting. There's this festival going on and that's what we're going to be talking about.

Now let's go back to take our story back to verse 1 in chapter 7 and take this right through and try to understand what's going on in the passage. We'll talk more about the rain and the water and the freshness it provides as we go forward.

First one. *After this, Jesus went around in Galilee. He did not want to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him. But when the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near, Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world."* For even his own brothers did not believe in him. And I'm going to put the word 'yet' there. Did not believe in Him yet.

When I talk about people who are not Christians, I usually say they're not believers yet. Because you never know what's going to happen in a person's life. And it's often the case that a person who's confronted with the gospel comes to that place where they realize I need this. This is something I need in my own heart. So we're going to say that. That his brothers did not believe in Him yet.

In fact we do know two of the brothers did believe Him and actually wrote books of the Bible. James and Jude are brothers of Jesus who ended up writing books in our Bible that we have today. So they did come to a place where they received Christ as their own personal Lord and Savior, not just as their brother. But in this part of the story, they did not believe in Him.

They said, "Look, if you want to be great, then you need to go up to Jerusalem. You can't just be a public figure here in Galilee. Go up to Jerusalem, which is the religious center where other people can see how great you are," kind of maybe even sarcastically making this statement. Because you go to Jerusalem where the religious leaders are, it's like today. If you are a musician, particularly a singer, where would you go? Nashville. Right. So you know there's a place to go. If you were going to be involved in drama and want to be in part of a play, where would you go? New York. Right. If you were going to be involved in film and in the film industry, where would you go? Ah no, no. Now it's Atlanta. Atlanta is the new Hollywood. Did you know that?

So last month Joanne and I went to film a commercial down in Atlanta and I learned this. I didn't know this before. Okay? Atlanta gives a 30% tax credit to anyone who produces a film in Atlanta. Films it, produces it, whatever. So now if a film costs you 10 million dollars in Hollywood, it only costs you 7 million in Atlanta. So now Atlanta is the new Hollywood. Totally unrelated.

But it's just if you want to be involved in a religion or you want to show yourself as a religious leader, go to Jerusalem. Be part of the feast of what's going on there. That's where you can display your works, they're saying.

Well notice Jesus says in verse 6 – *Therefore Jesus told them, "My time is not yet here; for you any time will do. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil. You go to the festival. I am not going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come."* After he had said this, he stayed in Galilee.

I just want to point out these words because I spent some time pondering these words this week in my own heart. And this became one of those new things for me in my own walk with the Lord this week. He says – *My time is not yet here; for you any time will do.*

There are two words for *time* in the Greek New Testament. One is *chronos*, which is your watch. The chronological time that has to do with the calendar or the feast days or the schedule. That's not the word being used here. The word being used here is *kairos*, which is the word for opportunity. Appointed time, opportune moment, divine appointment, however you want to use it. But He's saying here my time is not yet come. *My time is not yet here; for you any time will do.*

I was thinking I'm dictated in my life a lot by *chronos*, the schedule, the clock, when I get up, when I go to bed, the calendar. My to-do list is surrounded by the days of the week. And if those things dictate my life, sometimes I miss the *kairos*, the opportunity that God puts right in front of me because my calendar keeps going and I've got to stay on track and I've got to do these things. I'm saying, "Lord, how can I be more *kairos* centered than *chronos* centered in my life? How can I allow the interruptions that happen in my life to be those opportune moments?"

See, Jesus was in control of those things. He didn't allow them to control Him. So He's telling His brothers – *My time is not yet here; for you any time will do.* There's an opportune moment. Just worth pondering for me. I thought about just stopping here and preaching a sermon just about this. But we're going to keep going today. Just pause and think about what God might have for you in that application of that particular verse.

He uses the word *kairos* in other places in the Bible. Here's one. Maybe you're here today and you're not saved yet. When I use the word saved, I mean you haven't accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. You haven't turned yourself over to God. If that's the case, you want to know that there's *kairos* and that's the word used in this verse in 2 Corinthians 6:2. *For God says, "At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you." Indeed, the "right time" (kairos) is now. Today is the day of salvation.*

Maybe this is what you need today. You come here and you have not yet trusted Christ as your Lord and Savior, and God is saying today is that day. Today is the day when you can become born again. There's lots of words to describe this believing in Jesus Christ, but there's this sense of entrusting yourself to Him in a way that allows Him to control you. He's saying now, today is the day of salvation.

But the *kairos* isn't just for people who aren't moving into salvation. It's for anybody. All of us who are already Christians. It says in Ephesians 5 – *So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every kairos.* Make the most of the time is what it's saying. Wow. I look at that and I say I don't want to live like a fool. I want to be wise. I want to take advantage of the *kairos*, the time, the opportunities. God places these opportunities in front of us. Jesus is evaluating opportunities, not just the schedule.

Well let's go back to our story. In verse 10 it continues this way. It says – *However, after his brothers had left for the festival, he went also, not publicly, but in secret.* So now we have the incognito Jesus here. *Now at the festival the Jewish leaders were watching for Jesus and asking...*

Before I go further, there are at least seven group of people here that are going to be referred to now in this passage. I'm intrigued by the confusion that's demonstrated in these conversations that you'll see. The number of questions in this passage, it's just going to... At first it created some internal frustration in me. Maybe it will do that for you too. There's question after question after question about Jesus. Who He is, what He's doing here, what's going on by different groups of people. Seven different groups of people are mentioned. And in the midst of that, Jesus is going to speak with authority. It's like the spotlight in the midst of all of the confusion. So I'm giving you just a little preview here.

Let's go back here. It says in verse 11 – *Now at the festival the Jewish leaders (that's one of our groups of people) were watching for Jesus (like they anticipated for Him to show up) and they were asking, "Where is he?"*

Among the crowds (now we have a second group of people) there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, "He is a good man." Others replied, "No, he deceives the people." But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the leaders.

I was thinking that's how it is in our world today. There's a lot of people who have opinions about Jesus. But they don't want to say anything for fear of the leaders or for fear of public opinion. I mean we don't talk about religion and politics. Right? Well in this case, the people are hesitant to say anything publicly because they would be attacked or they feel like they would be under pressure. So no one would say anything publicly about it. But they've got these questions, these things that are running around in their minds.

Verse 14 – *Not until halfway through the festival (now remember I told you the festival is eight days long. So it must be around day three or day four. So that means Jesus was hanging around in Jerusalem and He was interacting and He's hearing people talk. But now on day three or four then He goes up to the Temple Mount area, the large area with the porticos and covered porches where people would teach and hang out and talk about spiritual things. Not until halfway through the festival did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. The Jews there (this is another group of people, the Jews, some of them overlapping, obviously) were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having been taught?"*

Jesus answered, “My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. 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.” Do you see how someone finds out whether the teaching is from God or not? Do you see that? The person who chooses to do the will of God. See, what we say in our mind is show me and then I’ll believe. What Jesus is saying is believe and then I’ll show you. That’s what faith is about.

Verse 18 – *“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. Has not Moses given you the law?”*

We’re going to make reference here in just a moment to a miracle that Jesus did two chapters before when He saw a man who was lame (he was an invalid) and He healed him. It happened to be the Sabbath day. That’s why we’re referring back to the Moses situation here. He says – *“Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?”*

“You are demon-possessed,” the crowd answered. “Who is trying to kill you?”

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.” So it’s eight days after birth that they would circumcise a child that came on the Sabbath they would do that, even though it violated 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.”*

So He’s dialoguing with the crowds and He’s moving somewhere. We’re coming to where He’s moving here. Hang with me as we continue the dialogue for just a little bit.

At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, “Isn’t this the man they are trying to kill?” Now notice we’ve moved to a different people group, overlapping the others, whether this is the crowds. But they are called the people of Jerusalem. *“Isn’t this the man they are trying to kill? Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Messiah? But we know where this man is from; when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from.”*

Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, “Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own authority, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, but I know him because I am from him and he sent me.” Now He’s talking about God the Father sending Him. You want to know where I’m from? I’m from the Father.

At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. His divine appointment, this kairois had not yet come. Still, many in the crowd believed in him. They said, “When the Messiah comes, will he perform more signs than this man?” So I think it’s like a contemporary world today. There are people who are responding, people who are

rejecting, there are people who are confused. There's lots of dialogue going on at times about such things.

Verse 32 – *The Pharisees* (another people group – these are the religious leaders) *heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards* (there's another group of people; these temple guards are going to be significant) *to arrest him.*

Jesus said, "I am with you for only a short time, and then I am going to the one who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come."

The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? What did he mean when he said, 'You will look for me, but you will not find me,' and 'Where I am, you cannot come'?"

Now we come to our verses in verse 37. We're in this feast. Halfway through the feast He began teaching and dialoguing with the people. Now we come to this great day of the feast. *On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice* (authority, speaking to everyone), *"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."*

One of the ceremonies that they did in this special feast was that every day the priest would go down to the Pool of Siloam and they would bring big buckets of water up and out of the ceremony they would pour them out, just reminding everybody that it was from the rock that the water flowed when they were wandering through the wilderness. That God provided again. He provided the nourishment, the satisfaction. You can imagine wandering around in the wilderness how parched you would be. In the desert how lack of water here would be and you would be thirsty. So there was this real thirst that people had that was satisfied by God.

Now in the midst of this on the greatest day of the feast, this is the last day, they did this one ceremony where they brought the water up seven times. They go down to the water, they bring up the buckets, they pour them out, everybody would cheer, they'd go down and get them again, and it would last quite a bit of time now. Seven times it would come up and they would pour the water and everybody would cheer. They would sing songs. It was a celebration.

In the midst of all of that ceremony that's going on, Jesus speaks in a loud voice and He says – *"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink."* Wow. What is He talking about here? We have the explanation here. He says – *Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.* But notice where that comes from and how that takes place as shared in the next verse. It says – *By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*

You see when Jesus was here on earth, He said, "I'm going to leave you, and when I leave you I'm sending the Spirit to come. The Holy Spirit is going to come and He's going to guide you

into all truth. He's going to convict the world of guilt in regards to sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Holy Spirit is going to come. He's going to be with you always. There's nowhere you can go without the Spirit of God is not there."

The Holy Spirit is just this really powerful person that Jesus is sending when He goes up to heaven and it hasn't happened at this point. He's giving a prophecy really of what's going to happen. But it has happened already for us. So we today have access to this living water that flows up as a river inside of us. And that is something new and fresh and something really special that we can enjoy in our lives every day, the Holy Spirit.

Do you have a relationship with the Holy Spirit? You know when you accept Christ into your life the Holy Spirit comes into your heart. The Holy Spirit is present. But do you need a second blessing? The answer is yes. In Ephesians it talks about be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. You need a second and a third and a fourth. Every day you need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. You need to come into contact with the Spirit. Because what does He do? He flows like this river of water, the satisfaction, this fulfillment that He provides in our lives. That's what He gives. And we all need that.

So if you're not experiencing that newness, that freshness that water provides in your soul, you want it from the Holy Spirit. God promised it, Jesus is prophesying it here, and we now experience it in our lives. You want that.

I'm going to come back to this idea in a moment and I want to end with it, but we're not finished with the passage. So I want to get through chapter 7 this week. So we're going to continue on and read the last part of it here.

On hearing his words, some of the people said, "Surely this man is the Prophet." Others said, "He is the Messiah." Still others asked, "How can the Messiah come from Galilee? Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David's descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?" Of course we know the story. They were confused at the time. Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him.

Finally the temple guards (remember they were sent to arrest Him) went back to the chief priests and the Pharisees, who asked them, "Why didn't you bring him in?"

"No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards replied.

"You mean he has deceived you also?" the Pharisees retorted. Notice the authority. See Jesus spoke with so much authority even the guards didn't even want to arrest Him. "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them."

Now look at verse 50. Nicodemus. You must remember him from three or four chapters earlier. Right? He's the guy who came to Jesus. religious leader, a Pharisee comes at night to Jesus and asks, "How can I be born again?" And what did Jesus say to him? *You need to be born of the*

water and the Spirit. Wow. Interesting. The power of the Spirit transforms a person so they can understand who He is, who Jesus is, and have this new birth, this new experience inside their lives.

That's Nicodemus in verse 50. We don't know where he went after chapter 3, but here he shows up again in chapter 7. He'll show up again at the end of the book when we come to the crucifixion of Christ.

Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, "Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?"

They replied, "Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee."

Well that's the whole chapter, but I want to go back to the verses that just ring in my ears about what God wants to do in our lives this morning and what He wants to do in our lives. Notice He says, and I underlined the words in this passage from verse 38 and 39, *rivers of living water will flow from within them. By this he meant the Spirit.*

Rivers of living water. I want you to think about that. Because the Holy Spirit wants to do something in our lives today. The *kairos* time, the opportunity for you to connect with the Holy Spirit in a powerful way. It happens every day, every hour. We want to be continually filled with the Spirit and if you don't have that, you want it because the Holy Spirit is going to provide you.

Notice in the passage we have this confidence that Jesus had versus the confusion, the frustration of all the questions in this passage. But Jesus is able to speak with confidence. You remember at the time of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit actually came down, the transformation that took place in the disciples moved them from a hiding out in an upper room to a public arena where they spoke with confidence and 3,000 people got saved.

There are people right around us who need to hear a message. We can speak with confidence because we know what God has done for us. We know that Jesus is real. We know that He is powerful and we have something to share. There is a confidence that we share in our world and in our life. Just in your own personal life there's a confidence you can have because of your relationship with the Holy Spirit. Now it's like a river of water that flows in there. It also powers this sense that the Holy Spirit wants to empower us to be the people that He wants us to be. We know that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth.

The word of God in Hebrews 4 is called the sword of the Spirit. That means if you're a Christian it's like you put on special spiritual glasses because the Holy Spirit illuminates (that's the word we use) the scripture so we go, "Wow. Look at that. I didn't see this before." The Holy Spirit does this work inside of you because the Holy Spirit is the one who reveals to us this truth from God's word. So when you open God's word it becomes a sword of the Spirit that touches the thoughts and the intentions of the heart.

The Holy Spirit does this thing inside of us that produces a peace in a world that's full of anxiety and questions and frustrations and challenges. There's this living water that is a well inside. It's not a well. It's described as a river. A river of living water. If you go out by the river and you just are able to relax there, there's something relaxing, there's something restful about that. And the Holy Spirit wants to do that in our hearts.

I just want to encourage you today. God wants to do something new in your life. He wants to put a new song in your heart. He wants to do a new creation, make you into a new creation. Old things are passed away. Behold all things become new. He does that through the Holy Spirit's work in your life.

I just love this picture that I saw this week of the cleansing rain that comes down. Maybe you look at your life and you go, "Wow, I'm a mess." I just want you to know the rain has this cleansing effect on you. It's the Holy Spirit's power that transforms us and allows us to be the people that God wants us to be. It's something new that God wants to bring in each one of our lives.

I trust the Lord will do something special with that in your own heart, that He'll draw you closer to Himself. That He'll use the Spirit in this living way that brings about something new in your life. When He does that, then you have something new to share with others. A new song to sing. Not just a new song to keep in your heart, but a song that you share with others.

When we come together every week like this, we have a new song that we can enjoy and we can share with each other. I love coming at 9:45 and hearing the stories of other people and what's going on. It's just an opportunity for us to be encouraged by the living water that's going on, that river of living water in each one of our hearts. I pray that God would breathe a fresh breath of His Spirit on our fellowship. That He would do something as we are working together to serve Him, each one independently. But there's a unity of the Spirit that comes. As we serve Him, God does something amazing and powerful through us. I'm excited to be a part of that and I'm grateful that you're here as well.

[PRAYER] So heavenly Father, we come before you. We thank you for the death of Jesus Christ. We thank you for raising Him from the dead. We thank you for sending the Holy Spirit to be on us as individuals and as a church. Holy Spirit, we ask you to fall afresh on us, to cause us to fall down before you in weakness and recognize your power. Lord, we want to embrace that power to serve you every day. Make that a special event in our lives each day as we serve you. In Jesus' name, amen.