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An Invitation, a Promise and a Division

John 7:37-53

37-39- throughout the course of a year, each of us receives many invitations. Some or most are gladly received: the wedding of a close friend, the chance to share a meal, go to a concert or movie as a group or even just hang out with friends. Other invitations are not so welcome (no examples needed) and we find ourselves hoping that our calendar is already full for that day. Well, here in this section of **ch7**, we've come to the most important and joyous invitations any of us could ever receive; and we find that there is also a great promise that accompanies this invitation.

Before we dig into the meat of the text, let's set the scene and point out that these are the last words Jesus utters in this chapter. Remember, Jesus had gone up to the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem and had begun to preach in the temple. Most of those who heard Him were astounded at His teaching and wondered if this could really be the Messiah they all were expecting. But not the religious rulers; their hatred for Jesus only increased and they busied themselves with scheming about how they could have Him arrested and finally removed from the scene altogether. Within 6 months, their blatant hatred would come to a head and Jesus would be crucified. But for now, since many in the crowd were visiting Jerusalem for the Feast and soon would leave, this was the last time they would ever see or hear Jesus. Because of this, we notice a new intensity in Jesus' teaching

last day- of an 8 day feast; the crowds will all be gone after this. To take full advantage of this final opportunity, Jesus stands up and cries out with a loud voice and extends this wonderful invitation. He does so with great intensity and great simplicity. Here is the core of the gospel message. There would be other times for deeper teaching but this was not the time for that. This was the time to touch men's souls and draw them to Christ for salvation because for many of them in the crowd, it was now or never! So the invitation is given, "Do you have a thirst? Do you want salvation? Then come to Me! There is no other place to find salvation than right here, right now." A great invitation!

Notice the extent of this invitation: "If anyone..." it is as broad as all

humanity! All are included; all are invited! Just think about the audience Jesus was addressing here: Jews from every part of Palestine and from every part of the Roman Empire. Plus, if Acts 2:9-11 is any indication of normal procedure, there were probably quite a few Gentiles mixed into this crowd as well; no doubt proselytes from all corners of the known world at the time. Yet, Jesus doesn't limit His offer to Jews only. All may come! Today, this same offer flows out from every Christian pulpit and from every believer who bears faithful witness to Jesus in their life. Have you heard this invitation? Have you listened to it?

It's interesting to me that Jesus doesn't even bother to detail the nature of the thirst. In [Matt 5:6](#) Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness," a specific kind of thirst. He could have said the same here. He could also have stipulated, "If anyone is thirsty for Me, let him come and drink," but He was not specific. There were no limitations. Are you thirsty? Then you are the one Jesus is speaking to!

What constitutes thirst? Thirst isn't anything in itself – it is actually a lack of something! It is a felt emptiness, a crying need. What are you thirsting for? Some people thirst for pleasure and the pleasure they seek is not godly at all. But, if you want *real* pleasure; pleasure that lasts and is truly satisfying, you won't find it in the direction you're heading, you'll only find it in Jesus Christ. ([Ps 16:11](#)). Some people thirst for wealth. Will they find it in Jesus? Not in a worldly sense; but in a better sense – an eternal sense. To be God's child is to be an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ ([Rom 8:16-17](#)). Not the wealth you were looking for? Well consider what Jesus said in [Mark 8:36](#)!

This invitation is as wide as all humanity but, despite its great scope, there's actually 1 condition: "If anyone...thirsts."

The invitation for anyone to come is delivered within a conditional statement: they must be thirsty. This condition itself serves to remind us that there may not be many. Think of the crowd Jesus was speaking to, the expression of the faces looking back at Him as He spoke. Some were callous – filled with hatred. These were the ones bent on His destruction. Some were indifferent – eyes blank and uncomprehending. The reality for every preacher of the gospel is that there are always some who do not understand the gospel and worse yet; there are some who do but refuse to receive the Savior! Tho they are in the middle of a spiritual desert of their

own making, they will not drink from this fountain of living water! If you warn them of their danger, they casually dismiss it. Why? They do not thirst for salvation, or they do but refuse to recognize it.

Are you thirsty? “How do I know?” Take a good, hard, honest look at your life: are you dissatisfied with something? Is there some area of your life that’s unfulfilled? If so, then God has placed that hunger and thirst within you. Rejoice! But don’t stop there – come to Jesus, for He is the only source that will fully satisfy your deepest hunger and thirst.

What does it mean to “Come to Jesus?” the answer is expressed in 2 parts but the parts are really the same in that they reinforce and interpret each other. First, you must come. This isn’t hard, because Jesus is so lovely. And it doesn’t take long because Jesus has already accomplished the greatest part of the journey in coming to you. Come means to believe, have faith in Him, commit yourself to Him. Will you do that? If you come to Jesus, you’ll come to the One who came to earth to redeem you, who died on the cross for your sin, and who rose again and was glorified by the Father. Second, you must drink of Christ, just as you would from a fountain. All that has been said about coming applies to this word also, but drinking involves one more idea: appropriation. What you drink becomes part of you. If it’s wholesome, it helps you grow. Similarly, Jesus wants to become part of your life and personality. Will you come? Will you drink? There is no other prescription for the thirst of the human soul; no other drink but Jesus.

We’ve looked at the invitation; now let’s look at the great promise that accompanies it (38-39). We might expect that the great result of coming to Jesus would be that we’d be completely satisfied as our thirst is thoroughly quenched. Of course, that result is implied in the invitation but it is not the nature of this promise. Our complete satisfaction will be realized in Christ but that’s not all that will be realized. It’s not our satisfaction that Jesus mentions in this promise but rather that we will become the means by which others will be satisfied, in addition to ourselves! This means that to be Christ-centered is not to be self-centered but to be others-centered. It means to be made a blessing.

Of course, we ourselves will be satisfied; we must be satisfied! Jesus is speaking about an overflowing vessel and a vessel cannot be overflowing unless it is first filled. We must be filled if this is going to happen. The point

here is that, if we drink of Jesus, our minds will not be on our own satisfaction but on the satisfaction of others. Having said that, the reason many believers fail to be a blessing to others is they fail to constantly seek the filling of the Holy Spirit.

In fact, much of this point is lacking in modern Christianity. To hear most Christians talk you'd think the only reason for Christ's coming was to save them and satisfy them. That is one purpose, of course; but that's not the way the Christian life described in the Bible. That type of Christianity produces a shallow, experience-centered, and selfish approach to life and those around us. That's not the kind of life we're called to live. Jesus didn't die to give us warm feelings. The work of the Holy Spirit is to make you exactly as Jesus was in this world. That means getting outside yourself, getting interested in others, and becoming useful. Have you entered into this promise? Are other people experiencing an abundance of blessing through your life and witness for Christ?

If not, then you need to ask God to make you not just a satisfied believer who has drunk of Jesus for yourself and have found your own needs met, but also a useful believer who overflows into their family, community and church with blessings. This is important because the truth is, you'll never really know the full extent of your own satisfaction until you become the channel for such blessing for other people. Full satisfaction lies in being a blessing to others. What would happen if every believer would become such a blessing? There'd be a veritable flood of God's blessing! Wouldn't that be something to see? How much affect would that have on the world – on the church?

40-44- Once again, we see that the mere presence of Jesus produces divisions. We don't have all the answers as to why this happens but, Jesus did say this would be the case ([Matt 10:34-36](#)). Besides, divisions are natural when truth is involved. It's sad that divisions occur over Jesus; it means that some will not come to Him for salvation. Of course, we must notice that in our text, the divisions over Jesus occur among the nonbelievers.

Some thought He was "the Prophet" ([40](#)), meaning they were willing to accept part of His claims but not all of them. "The Prophet" was the coming Messiah foretold by Moses in [Deut 18:15](#) but by this time, the phrase came

to refer to the forerunner of the Messiah, someone who'd point to the answer to man's need but was not that answer himself. By referring to Jesus this way, they were merely acknowledging that Jesus was a good man who spoke wisely but they were not admitting that He was God and that people could only find spiritual satisfaction by coming to Him.

There were people in the crowd who went further. They were willing to acknowledge that Jesus was all He claimed to be. They said, "He is the Christ." (41a) But, tho they willingly admitted Christ's claims, they failed to do that 1 additional thing that is absolutely necessary – they failed to give full evidence of their belief, they didn't come to Him!

There were also people who rejected Jesus entirely, based solely on a "technicality" (41b-42). They assumed Jesus had failed to satisfy one of the OT prophecies about the Messiah. So they dismissed Him. They had no further use for Him or for His teaching. This response merely revealed their foolish pride. Many in the crowd was from Jerusalem and surrounding Judea. Galilee was considered "the sticks." The implication here is that Jesus wasn't sophisticated enough to be their leader.

Not only were they proud, they were also hypocritical. They were dismissing Jesus on an assumed technicality while refusing to investigate His claims. The conditions they propose are twofold: Messiah must be from David's line and must be born in Bethlehem. Of course, Jesus had fulfilled both parts. He had descended from David in such a way that actually exhausted the Davidic line, combining both the royal line through Joseph and the legal line through Mary in Himself. He was born in Bethlehem, although most people didn't know this because He had grown up in Nazareth. Jesus had fulfilled all the OT requirements for Messiah yet; the people who rejected Him didn't bother to investigate any of these requirements.

Each of these characteristics is found in unbelievers today. There are those who call Jesus a great teacher but they refuse to follow His teachings. That's not rational or even reasonable. There are those who are willing to accept all the truth about Jesus but are not willing to accept Jesus. They know and accept all the doctrine concerning Jesus but are not willing to accept Him as their Lord and Savior. They have orthodox heads attached to rebellious hearts! There are plenty who reject Jesus simply because they don't understand where Cain got his wife or how God could allow childhood cancer. Any excuse is valid if you're just looking for an excuse. Do any of

these characterize your response to the claims of Jesus? If you haven't accepted Him as your savior, then they do. Which one is it?

While there's division among unbelievers, reality is: there's far greater division between unbelievers and believers! The Bible describes the unbeliever as being dead...in trespasses and sins; who walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince and power of the air (Satan); who's only drive is to fulfill the desires of the flesh and who is considered a child of wrath ([Eph 2:1-3](#)). On the other hand, the believer, by God's grace, is alive in Christ; has been seated in heavenly places in Christ and has been created in Christ Jesus for good works ([Eph 2:5-10](#)). The believer trusts Christ. The unbeliever trusts in themselves or others. The believer loves Christ! How could they not? The unbeliever does not. The believer serves Christ, in fact, they are called to service. The unbeliever is not. Any service they perform, no matter how magnanimous it may seem, still has selfish connotations. The Christian is striving to be like Jesus while the goals of the unbeliever are products of this world's culture or their own desires.

Where do you find yourself in that contrast? Do you trust, love, serve, and strive to be like Jesus? Or are you living for yourself and serving yourself? If your life resembles the second option, then I pray that something of the power, love and character of Jesus will reach you so that you will come to Him without further hesitation. The danger in delaying is that the end will come and if it comes before you accept Jesus as Savior, then the divisions of this life will be established for all of eternity.

45-53- Finally, some who heard Jesus wanted to harm Him. It's impossible to completely understand people that want to kill the Lord of glory but we can see glimpses of their own debilitating pride in [vs48-49](#). They looked down on the common folk because they didn't even try to live up to their standard of righteousness. But, it was their righteous standard that led to their pride which led to their hatred of Jesus. It was their hatred of Jesus and utter contempt for Galilee that caused them to lose sight of historical accuracy. There were in fact, 2 prophets from Galilee: Jonah was from Gath Hopher (3 ml north of Nazareth) and Elijah was from Thisbe. It's possible that Nahum and Hosea were also from Galilee.

Nicodemus pleads for restraint from the religious rulers and his appeal to

them is to consider both the words and works of Jesus. That's really all the needs to be considered because if you will consider them honestly, rationally and thoroughly, you will also come to see that His words are true and His actions prove His claims beyond the shadow of a doubt. Have you discovered this to be true? Are you willing to?

This entire lesson has looked at the many reasons that people do not accept Christ as Savior and we have answered all of them. Ultimately, there is no good reason not to accept Jesus Christ. People do not accept Him simply because they do not want to. 😊