

**The Word Became Flesh  
(Week 20)  
John 7:1-13  
“Steps Ordered By God”**

**Introduction**

**Your eyes will see your Teacher, and whenever you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear this command behind you: “This is the way. Walk in it.”**

**Isaiah 30:20b-21**

Many people in this world today have absolutely no concept of what it means to have one’s steps “ordered by God”. They go about their lives, living as if they are in complete control over what they do. While every man has been granted a “free will” to make decisions for themselves, it is ridiculous to believe that we have any sort of control over what happens in this wicked world. Life on the earth is akin to being on a worn and much embattled ship, sails frail and torn, aimlessly drifting from one tempest at sea to the next. Anyone who has lived long enough to have some degree of wisdom will tell you that we have absolutely no control over our situation.

And yet, men still somehow are able to convince themselves that their destiny lies within their own hands. I am reminded of the poem “Invictus” by William Ernest Henley, that we learned in college. It is based on the ridiculous assumption that a man is able to control his own fate. The poem ends with the famous line that many football players have heard repeated as they “take the field of battle” as it were.

*“It matters not how strait the gate, how charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.”*

That kind of nonsense may fire up an athlete, before he goes out to play a game, but it simply is not, and never has been, true. It is not man who controls his own destiny. It is The Almighty Everlasting God, Who is sovereign over the universe. Oh, we can make a few choices here and there, but listen to what *The Bible* says about our ability to decide which course is best for ourselves.

**There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way of death.**

**Proverbs 14:12**

**A man’s heart plans his way, but the Lord determines his steps.**

**Proverbs 16:9**

Now, I don’t know about you, but it seems to me that we need more than a little help in order to navigate the twists and turns of this life. We need to be guided by someone. Someone who is a lot more qualified. Someone who can guide us safely through the storms of life. Someone who can save us from ourselves. That “Someone” is The Spirit of The Living God. If ever there was a man who lived upon this earth that fully understood how to live by the direction of The Holy Spirit, it was The LORD Jesus Christ. He was constantly being tempted to “go His own way”, as it were. Satan tempted Him in the wilderness to “be His own man” and forget His Father’s plan. And when that didn’t work, Satan disguised himself and let others do his bidding.

The crowd at Bethsaida, who wanted to make Jesus a king by force, were acting of behalf of Satan. And when that did not work, the devil tried to use The Savior’s own family to tempt Him. This temptation can be found in the *Seventh Chapter of John’s Gospel*. And once again, Jesus does not give in to it. For you see, His every thought, His every word, His every step was ordered by God The Father. And because it was, the course that had been charted for Him was always perfect. How much better off we would be if we were to strive to be led by The Holy Spirit, in all that we say and do! This is what every child of God should aspire to be; Spirit filled and Spirit led.

**I say then, walk by The Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh.**

**Galatians 5:16**

So, as we look to this portion of Scripture today, let us not just see how Jesus responded to yet another temptation, but also how we must respond. Let us choose this day not to be carried along by our own inclinations as to which is the right path. But instead, let us look to The Spirit to guide us in the way that has been preordered by God. Let us open our “spiritual eyes” and see that when we choose what we think is the right path forward, without looking to God for guidance, we can find ourselves in a lot of trouble. Today’s lesson is one of *Teaching, Timing*, and the foolish *Talking* of men.

### **Teaching (vs. 1-2)**

**After this, Jesus traveled in Galilee, since he did not want to travel in Judea because the Jews were trying to kill him. The Jewish Festival of Shelters was near.**

The elapsed time between *Chapter Six and Chapter Seven of John’s Gospel* is approximately six months. We know this because at the beginning of Chapter Six, we are told that the Jewish feast of Passover was near (**6:4**) and as Chapter Seven begins the time was near for the Feast of Tabernacles. Passover occurs in the springtime and is the first of seven Jewish feasts, and Tabernacles is the final feast of the year. On the Jewish calendar, these feasts are six months apart from one another, the Passover marking the beginning of the year and Tabernacles marking the mid point. During the feast of Tabernacles, the people would “camp out” in booths made of palm branches (and other specified greenery) in order to commemorate God’s abiding presence with the children of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness living in tents during the days of Moses.

John doesn’t give us any information on the activities of Jesus during the six months between these two holidays, but two other writers, Matthew and Mark, most certainly do in their respective gospel writings. ***Matthew 15-18*** and ***Mark 7-9*** offer the missing details of Jesus’ ministry during this time. We can learn by reading those gospels that Jesus was in fact quite busy between Passover and the feast of Tabernacles that year. But it is also important for us to know what His priorities were during this time period. After all, at the end of ***John Chapter Six***, He had lost the attention of the crowd, and many of His disciples had deserted Him as well.

Common (worldly) wisdom would suggest that a preacher who had just lost the majority portion of his flock, would concentrate himself on bringing them back into the fold somehow. But when we read the gospel accounts of Jesus after the feeding of the five thousand, we see no sign of this at all. In fact, He spent those months primarily teaching the small number of disciples that He had left. He wanted to see to it that they knew all the things that they would need to know, when He left them to carry on the mission that He had called them to fulfill. For you see, we The Church, have not been called to draw great crowds. We have been called to make disciples (***Matthew 28:16-20***). And this was also the priority of Christ, after the massive throng of “fair-weather-followers” had deserted Him. He continued to pour into His true followers.

Most pastors I know would be in a state of depression if they lost the majority of their congregations. In fact, most of us would feel like total failures. But Jesus didn’t operate by human emotion or human reasoning. He did not let the whims of the crowd detract from what His Father had sent Him to do... which was to make disciples. And He knew that all those that The Father brought to Him could **never** be lost. You see, it is not the size of the crowd that matters. It is the change being made in the hearts of those who truly come to Jesus for salvation! We would all do well to remember this truth. God builds the Church, not us. He calls whomever He chooses, and not a single one of those whom He calls will ever be lost.

**“This is the will of Him Who sent Me: that I should lose none of those He has given Me but should raise them up on the last day.”** **John 6:39**

You see, Jesus wasn’t concerned with drawing crowds for the sole purpose of entertaining them. But rather, He was focused upon the mission that The Father had sent Him to fulfill. He came to make

disciples. And THAT is accomplished by teaching The Word to any who will hear it and believe. So teach The Word and leave the rest to God. This should be the mandate for every believer. A huge crowd does not necessarily mean a large number of true followers. Jesus knew this, and so should we. When we leave human wisdom behind and allow ourselves to be led by The Spirit of God, we learn not to stress ourselves out over the things that are far above our “pay grade”. Just keep planting the seeds, and let God provide the increase as He sees fit.

### Timing (vs. 3-9)

**So his brothers said to him, “Leave here and go to Judea so that your disciples can see your works that you are doing. For no one does anything in secret while he’s seeking public recognition. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.” (For not even his brothers believed in him.) Jesus told them, “My time has not yet arrived, but your time is always at hand. The world cannot hate you, but it does hate me because I testify about it — that its works are evil. Go up to the festival yourselves. I’m not (yet) going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come.” After he had said these things, he stayed in Galilee.**

Here we see, Jesus’ own brothers (yes Mary and Joseph had children after Jesus’ virgin birth) trying to give Him advice. They wanted Him to put on a big public display of His miraculous powers so that all the people in Jerusalem could see with their own eyes. After all, human wisdom dictates that if a person wants to be famous, then he needs to get up on the stage. They had absolutely no understanding of Who Jesus was, or what He had come to do. They, like everyone else, were looking for a Messiah who would come to overthrow the Romans. They were trying to get Jesus to do the very same thing that the crowd at Bethsaida had wanted; to start a revolution and take over the government by force. For even His own brothers James, Joses, Simon and Jude could not see Him for Who He was. (But after His resurrection from the dead, they most certainly would).

Jesus’ answer to them was much the same as it always was when He was tested with the temptation to be His own man and neglect His Father’s will. He told His brothers that “My time has not yet come”. Now, by Jewish Law, He was required to attend the feast of Tabernacles (***Exodus 23:14-17***). So He was most certainly planning to attend. Jesus never broke a single *Old Testament* commandment. But what He would not do was go and publicly make a spectacle of Himself by presenting Himself to the crowd as The Messiah. No, that wasn’t The Father’s plan for Him at this time. The time for that would come six months later during the feast of Passover. Then, He would enter Jerusalem by the main gate and hear the crowds singing “Hosannah” (save now). This was when God had foreordained Him to present Himself to the crowds. And Jesus would not go a minute before His appointed time. His steps were ordered by The LORD.

The prophet Daniel had predicted to the very day, when The Messiah would enter into the holy city (***Daniel 9:20-26***). And the commandments regarding the Passover Lamb given in *Exodus* tell of the precise time that the lamb must be brought into the house to be inspected and later sacrificed (***Exodus 12:3-7***). God’s timing is always perfect and precise. Jesus would do everything just as The Father had prescribed. Why? Because He was led by The Spirit in everything that He did. We too have been called to live our lives based upon The Father’s timing. How much more effective would our witness be, if we allowed our every step to be ordered by the Spirit of God?

Jesus told His brothers that they could come and go as they pleased, but He was not at liberty to do so (***vs.6-7***). Why? Because they were yet *un-believers*. They were not being led by The Spirit. But He, on the other hand, had to do exactly as His Father willed. You see, God is much more concerned about your obedience than the sacrifices that you offer Him.

**...Does The LORD take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying The LORD? Look: to obey is better than sacrifice, to pay attention is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and defiance is like wickedness and idolatry...**  
***Samuel 15:22b-23a***

So make sure that your steps are ordered by The LORD. You are most certainly not the “master of your own fate” nor the “captain of your own soul”. You are a born-again child of The Most High God, and as such, you are called to obey your Father’s will. Your steps are ordered by God, and His timing is always perfect.

**Talking (vs. 10-14)**

**After his brothers had gone up to the festival, then he also went up, not openly but secretly. The Jews were looking for him at the festival and saying, “Where is he?” And there was a lot of murmuring about him among the crowds. Some were saying, “He’s a good man.” Others were saying, “No, on the contrary, he’s deceiving the people.” Still, nobody was talking publicly about him for fear of the Jews.**

After His brothers had left with their large family group to go up to the festival, Jesus privately entered the city of Jerusalem. I personally believe that He came into the city by the sheep gate. I think this was always the way that He came into the city, until it was The Father’s time for Him to come in through the main gate to make Himself known. This would happen, as we have previously discussed, six months later, when He offered Himself up as the Passover Lamb come to deliver us from sin and death. Again, His every step had been ordered by The LORD.

The people in Jerusalem were all looking for Him. The Jews (religious leaders), were seeking him out because they wanted to put Him to death. And why? Because a year earlier, He had healed the lame beggar on The Sabbath! They truly thought He was evil, because He broke one of their man-made rules about the Sabbath. How arrogant, when mere men think that they are more righteous than the God Who created them!

Not only were the religious leaders looking for Him, but many of those in the crowd as well. In fact, His very existence had caused them to talk foolishly amongst themselves as to His identity. Some claimed that He was a good man, while others accused Him of deceiving the people (**vs. 12**). Both claims were wrong. Jesus was not simply a “good man”. *He was God incarnate*. He was The Word made flesh (**John 1:1-14**). And He most certainly was not a deceiver. He spoke the very words of life (**John 6:68**). The world is still arguing to this day about Who He is, and only those who hear His Words and believe will ever come to know the truth.

Not only were the people wrong concerning Him, but they were all afraid to say His Name out loud for fear of what the religious leaders would do to them (**vs. 13**). Let it never be said of us, His followers, that we are afraid to speak His Name, for fear of what others may think. Let us unashamedly proclaim Him to anyone who will hear. Or as the Apostle Paul would say:

**For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. Romans 1:16**

Many today, have no idea what it means to be led by The Spirit of God. But here, we can see the stark differences between those who are followers of Christ and those who are not. A true follower will be about the teaching of the disciples, not allowing the whims of the fickle crowd to distract from the work we are called to accomplish. A true follower doesn’t operate according to the dictates of worldly wisdom, but rather, in all things, he seeks God’s direction and God’s timing. The true follower has no doubts as to the true identity of Christ, and they are resolved to speak His name with boldness and share His gospel to any who would hear. A true follower’s talk matches his walk! A true follower’s steps are ordered by God. What kind of follower are you?

**I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in The Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20**

And let the followers all say... TRUTH!!!