

Divided: Belief and Unbelief; November 26, 2017; John 7:14-52

I. [Intro]

A. Let's think this morning for a moment about life in the desert

1. The desert is hot, dry, and not much can survive

2. We live right smack in the middle of the Sonoran Desert – a 120,000 sq mile death trap!

a. It's been 95 days since a drop of rain has fallen in Tempe.

b. It's going to be nearly 90 degrees today!

3. The desert is a place of scorching harshness.

4. **But water brings life!** With water, the desert comes alive

a. After a good rain, the desert turns green. Water brings life.

b. Over 4,000,000 live in the Valley – largely because water is brought here

B. Without God, our *souls* are barren deserts

1. We are worn out, dry, and dead
2. But God offers himself as living water – as life itself
3. What water is to physical life in the desert, God is to our spiritual lives.

C. This is the backdrop to the passage we are in today, John 7.

1. We'll find this morning that – **Jesus is the ultimate provision from God.**
2. Some believe that and others don't. Some trust God and others reject him. Just like that's true today, it was true in Jesus's day.

John 7:14-52 ESV About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. ¹⁵The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?" ¹⁶So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. ¹⁷If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. ¹⁸The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no

falsehood. ¹⁹ Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?" ²⁰ The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?" ²¹ Jesus answered them, "I did one work, and you all marvel at it. ²² Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. ²³ If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well? ²⁴ Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

²⁵ Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, "Is not this the man whom they seek to kill? ²⁶ And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? ²⁷ But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from." ²⁸ So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. ²⁹ I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me." ³⁰ So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. ³¹ Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, "When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?"

³² The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him. ³³ Jesus then said, "I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. ³⁴ You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come." ³⁵ The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? ³⁶ What does he mean by saying, 'You will seek me and you will not find me,' and, 'Where I am you cannot come'?"

³⁷ On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes

in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' " ³⁹ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

⁴⁰ When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This really is the Prophet." ⁴¹ Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee?" ⁴² Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" ⁴³ So there was a division among the people over him. ⁴⁴ Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

⁴⁵ The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why did you not bring him?" ⁴⁶ The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man!" ⁴⁷ The Pharisees answered them, "Have you also been deceived? ⁴⁸ Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? ⁴⁹ But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed." ⁵⁰ Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, ⁵¹ "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" ⁵² They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee."

II. [Feast]

A. John 7 takes place during what was called the Feast of Booths.

Its origin is all the way back in the earliest days of God's people.
Third book in Bible.

Leviticus 23:39-44 ESV "On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD seven days. On the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. ⁴⁰ And you

shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. ⁴¹ You shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. ⁴² You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths, ⁴³ that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”

⁴⁴ Thus Moses declared to the people of Israel the appointed feasts of the LORD.

1. This passage falls in a list of commands God was giving the nation of Israel as they were headed from being slaves in Egypt to freed people in Israel.

2. These feasts or festivals were huge community events. They were national holidays infused with religious significance.
 - a. These festivals were communal celebrations of God’s goodness.

B. The Feast of Booths was one of the most popular festivals.

1. As Leviticus 23 prescribed, it lasted an entire week!

2. It's hard to describe, but think of a holy mix between Woodstock and Burning Man.
 - a. People would build makeshift booths or tents to live in for the week
 - b. And there were so many of them that they were everywhere – down an alley, on the side of the road, up on rooftops, everywhere little tents
 - c. And when you were out of the tent for the day it was a big celebration with singing, dancing, eating, and making offerings to God
 - d. It was such a popular week that you could buy clay souvenir jars commemorating that year's feast
3. Originally, the feast recalled God's gracious provision for the Jews during their years of wandering in the desert. That's what Lev 23:43 was referencing.
 - a. For 40+ years, God's people lived as nomads in the desert between Egypt and Israel;

- b. The desert is a place of barren harshness, yet over a million Jews survived 40 years in the desert because God took care of them.

- c. Here's a passage from Nehemiah remembering God's gracious provision...

Nehemiah 9:19-21 ESV You in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night to light for them the way by which they should go. ²⁰ You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and **gave them water for their thirst.** ²¹ Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing.

- d. So, the Feast of Booths remembered God's provisions in the desert. Especially, God's provision of water for drinking and for crops.
 - i. Where'd the water come from? That's a fascinating story. Take some time later today to read Exodus 17.

 - ii. The people were complaining that they didn't have water, so Moses asked God to intervene and he did.

- iii. He had Moses strike a rock and that rock became a spring of wonderful endless water.
- iv. This miracle would have been a powerful reminder to all the Israelites of God's power and his love for them.
- e. Every year, after the fall harvest, the Jews would gather in Jerusalem...
 - i. And they'd have a big party...to remember God's gracious provision for them in the past,
 - ii. and to thank him for again providing for them in the present.

C. Jesus strategically choose the Feast of Booths as a critical moment to reveal something powerful about himself.

1. To really grasp what he's saying we've got to very carefully consider the feast.

III. [Eschatological Hopes]

A. Think about the Feast of Booths in three words: past, present, future.

1. We've talked about the **past**: They would travel to Jerusalem, build little tents, and remember how God sustained their ancestors in the desert by miraculously providing food and water.

2. And we've talked about the **present**: They would do all of that at the time of the fall harvest.

a. So, they were thanking God for providing water for the crops again.

b. Just like he provided in the past, he was again providing in the present.

c. I hope this week at the Thanksgiving table you did that – looked to the past at how God has provided for you, and looked to the present as well.

3. But what about the **future**? Here's where the brain exploding stuff starts happening.

B. God created the people of Israel and put them in the promised land, so that through them the whole world could see what a great God he is,

-and Jesus would come through the Jews,

-and some people from every people group on earth would become his followers.

1. But, as the Old Testament shows continually, God's people often rebelled against him.
2. Consequently, they were often disciplined by being taken out of the land of Israel, would later repent, and some would come back.
3. The fullness of the promises in the Old Testament had not been reached.
 - a. God had acted for them in the past, but they longed for him to do even more.
 - b. Many genuine followers of God pleaded with him to fulfill his promises in the future.

4. And so, as Israel's history was unfolding – as it was being written over time – the Feast gradually began to be seen with Messianic hopes and dreams.
- a. In other words, people longed for God to come and make everything right
 - b. They yearned for sin to end and pain to stop
 - c. They ached for people from the whole world to come worship God
 - d. They craved a time when there was no violence, no injustice, no powerful dominating the weak, all things as they are supposed to be
 - e. There was a very real sense in which the miracles God did in the desert were really just a small foretaste of the full and final miracles God would do in the future – permanent ones

5. And so the literal water that God provided in the past in the desert, and was providing again in the present, **became symbolic of God's promises to finish his work of salvation in the future.**

a. Literal water that provided physical life

b. Became a metaphor for the promise of God to provide full and final spiritual life with him forever

c. And this made the Feast of Booths all the more meaningful.

6. Here's a few passages that speak of this future hope that the Jews would pray for God to fulfill...

Zechariah 14:8-9 ESV On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. **It shall continue in summer as in winter.**

⁹ And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one.

Isaiah 44:1-4 ESV "But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen!

² Thus says the LORD who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you: Fear not, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen.

³ **For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.**

⁴ **They shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams.**

The Feast of Booths became focused on the past, present, but especially on the future.

C. When Jesus traveled to Jerusalem for the festival, he found tents everywhere.

1. First thing in the morning, everyone would start at the temple and go in a big crowd to the Pool of Siloam. This is the spot Jesus healed the crippled man in John 5!
2. When they got to the pool, the priest would scoop some water out of the pool in a special pitcher. And out loud the people would proclaim a particular verse in the Bible.

Isaiah 12:3 ESV With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

3. People would make their way back to the Temple singing Psalm 113 – 118 as they walked in celebration. A trumpet would be blown in joy.
4. And when they got to the temple the priest would pour the water out at the base of the altar in rich symbolism of expectation for God to act.
 - a. and the people would eat a piece of fruit and shake a special branch in their hands thanking God for the harvest.
 - b. Then it was party all day.

5. The whole time all of this was happening – people were looking back at how God provided water in the past,

a. and how he was doing it again in the present,

b. and how eventually he would provide eternal water that would end all hardship.

6. On the last day of the feast it was even more symbolic. And, very likely, as the priest was about to pour the water on the base of the altar...

There's all this bent up expectation, Jesus stands up in the crowd and yells something...

John 7:37-38 ESV On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' "

1. Jesus is claiming to be the ultimate provision from God

a. His sacrificial death, miraculous resurrection, and victorious ascension

- b. Jesus is saying, “All your prayers for the future, and all the promises of the Old Testament are about me.”
- c. “I am the ultimate rock that was struck the ultimate death blow, and out of me the waters of eternal life will flow.”
- d. He’s saying, “The One you’ve been longing for to put things back the way they are supposed to be ... that One is here. I am the Messiah. And through me the Holy Spirit will come.”

2. You’ll notice vs 39 saying that the Holy Spirit would come after Jesus’s death, resurrection, and ascension

a. As we saw in John 3 with Nicodemus ... the Holy Spirit brings life where there was only spiritual death.

b. And here in John 7, the Spirit then becomes a continual supply of the life of God in you. He’s the stream of life flowing within – right in the middle of the desert.

c. Friends, Christianity is a very real and personal encounter with God. It’s the experience of God putting his life inside of you.

IV. Vs 38 puts all of this in a particular point of emphasis

John 7:38 ESV “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”

A. Friends, the satisfaction God provides spills out to bless others.

1. When you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of you
2. He’s an endless supply of spiritual provision from God

3. And this indwelling Spirit always leads to an outpouring of the Spirit

B. Life leads to life. The love of God experienced supernaturally becomes the love of God shared with others.

1. Brothers and Sisters, our souls were deserts – dry and dead. But God’s grace in the death and resurrection of Jesus brought us life.
 - a. Jesus took our death and gave us his life.
 - b. That’s the gospel!

2. The Holy Spirit is right now a continual supply of the life of God inside of us!

3. This has enormously practical implications for everyday life.

- a. Christians ought to be the most genuinely loving people on the planet.
- b. Generosity with money and possession ought to be common.
- c. Kindness and warmth to strangers ought to be typical.
- d. Forgiveness when we hurt each other ought to typify our membership in the church.
- e. Sacrificial service ought to fill the time we aren't at work.
- f. The good news of the gospel ought to frequently be flowing off our lips in conversations with non-Christians.
- g. Why? Because the Spirit within us pours out of us to show how good God is.**

V. [Apply]

A. Don't misunderstand me, not everyone is going to get on board with Jesus. Some will reject forever. This whole passage has people rejecting Jesus.

1. Jesus is the ultimate provision from God.

2. Jesus is the ultimate provision from God, whom some believe and others reject.

3. Which will you be?

B. [Apply]

1. Believe this gospel or do you reject it? Will you be a spring of life or will you remain a scorched, dead desert. It all depends on what you do with Jesus Christ. Believe!

2. Brothers and Sisters, drink deeply of the Spirit through the Word and share him!