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Teaching: Carlon Tschetter
Series: The Gospel of John
Message: Is This the Christ?

Transcribed Message
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John 7:25-36

A few years ago, a man by the name of Aaron Wren wrote an article for *First Things Journal*. And in this article, he wrote about how it is that our culture views evangelical Christians. Now, I always like to say there's a difference between evangelical and evangelism. People oftentimes mix those words up. Evangelism is the sharing of the gospel. Evangelical is a term that was coined to describe Christians who basically believe certain fundamental things. They believe the Bible is the word of God. They believe Jesus is the son of God. They believe his death on the cross was necessary for sin. They believe it's such an important message that we need to take it to the world. They believe Jesus is coming again. So, in effect, an evangelical Christian is likely most of us in this room this morning.

As he wrote this article, it was his observation that pre-1994, the world and culture looked at evangelical Christians in a rather positive way. And then he observes that from '94 to about 2014, he felt there was a turning, and the culture became somewhat neutral in their view of evangelical Christians. And then he said from 2014 to the present, he believes that it largely has become somewhat negative in terms of how they see us. Of course, he pointed out that that is particularly true of what he called the elite within the culture, the academia, the media, the entertainment industry, all of those that have oftentimes very strong opinions. Well, whether those are valid observations or not, it certainly is true that the world sees us as Christians in a different way than oftentimes we might even want them to see us.

When we come to John 7, I thought it was interesting that in this seventh chapter of the Gospel of John, there are three distinct groups that John highlights and points out to us, and they have three different responses and attitudes towards Jesus. So, we look this morning at John chapter 7. If you're a guest with us, I welcome you as well. We are working our way through the Gospel of John. We're in the seventh chapter. We're looking at verses 25 through 36. And I say to you this morning, it's as true today as it was 2,000 years ago, that you can

ignore Jesus to your own peril, but you can't silence him, and you can't silence him because he is the Christ. He's the Son of God, and he makes himself known to us in that way.

Let's look again at how we understand this seventh chapter. Well, let's make some observations by way of the perspective that I think John would want us to have. And the first one is simply this, Jesus himself links chapter 7 to chapter 5. Because Jesus links chapter 7 to chapter 5, John, the human author of the Scriptures, of course, does the same. But Jesus in this seventh chapter keeps taking us back to the fifth chapter and to the events of that fifth chapter. And particularly, you remember the healing of the lame man, which we'll see again this morning. But you can note in your Bible from John chapter 5, verse 18, there's just this downhill trajectory in terms of how it is that people were looking at Jesus.

The second thing we notice all through this chapter is the hypocrisy of the religious leaders, and it is exposed time after time. The same storyline is in chapter 5. And it's kind of shocking on one level that Jesus heals this lame man, and the religious leaders, the only question they seem to be able to muster up and ask is, why in the world are you walking around with your mat? No questions about how did this happen? No questions about the miraculous nature of having been a lame man for 38 years, and all a sudden they miraculously see him literally walking down the street. None of that, because they're so hung up on their perspective. You see the same thing as we did last week in verses 21 through 24, just the outright hypocrisy of the religious leaders of that day.

Then the third thing, Jesus is simply unrelenting in his claims that he is in fact the Son of God. He does it in different ways. But I think the most common way that we have seen him bring this to the forefront is he's continually talking about who sent him. And he talks, of course, of the Father being the one who has sent him. And he talks about where it is that he has come from. And he talks about where it is that he's going. And all of it is, of course, just going over the top of them as we're going to see again this morning. But Jesus is unrelenting in his presentation of himself as Israel's Messiah.

Let's look this morning from Sabbath breaker to Savior, who is Jesus? And this interaction that takes place in the passage before us this morning, as I said, is going to bring before us three groups of people. I guess if we wanted to go back to the beginning of chapter 7,

you could say in this chapter there are four groups of people, because we started off the chapter with Jesus's own brothers wondering who it is that he was and how it is that he could have his popularity elevated.

But let's look, first, at the perspective from the Jerusalemites, you know, easy for you to say. The people of Jerusalem who are living in and around Jerusalem have developed an understanding and opinion about Jesus. And you see that in their reasoning in verses 25 and 26. Look at verse 25, and we see, first, what it is that they know and what do they know? Well, some of the people of Jerusalem, verse 25, therefore said, is not this the man whom they seek to kill? Now, there's going to be a lot of questions in this short group of verses. This is the first of them. And this one, just by the way it's constructed, expects a yes answer. So when they ask the question, is this not the man whom they seek to kill, they're expecting in that question that the answer is going to be, yes, it is. They live in and around Jerusalem. Jesus has come for the third time now to Jerusalem, specific to the Passover or a feast that all the Jewish males were required to come to. In being in Jerusalem and doing the miracles that he did and doing the teaching that he did, they knew who he was. They were familiar with him. And they were also familiar, of course, as we're going to see, with the antagonism of the religious leaders towards Jesus. So they're the informed group as to who this man is from their vantage point of perspective and the understanding that the religious leaders had.

Look at verse 26, what they think they know. Here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him. Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? Now here is the second question, and this second question expects the answer is going to be a no. They're expecting when they ask this question that the answer is going to be no. Now it kind of reminds me, way back in chapter one, remember when Andrew came to Peter and said, we have found the Christ. Of course, Peter was processing all that that meant too. But there was, in that instance, we have found the Christ, a sense of belief and of welcoming that news. Well, here is the exact opposite. Here is a heart of unbelief. Here there is a blindness to this statement of the possibility of this man being, in fact, the Messiah. Isn't this the man they're looking for? Well, if this is the man that they're looking for, and it is, and they've already made their plan known that they want to do away with him, how is it that he's out here speaking in public with

hundreds and thousands of people seeing him, and these religious authorities are not doing anything about it? And you can bet that the conspiracy theories begin to go crazy at this point as to who this man is, what he's doing, why the religious leaders who want to kill him aren't taking any action against him, and so you have this part of the story unfold. No sooner do they raise this question, could he, in fact, in the eyes of the religious leaders be the son of God, they shut it down.

Look at verse 27, their error. But we know where this man comes from. And when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from. Now this was their thinking. You can just take and develop a logical syllogism from what we have just read, and it would look like this. The major premise of their syllogism is no one will know where the Messiah comes from. We'll talk about that a little bit later. Their statement, nobody knows where the Messiah is going to come from. That was a belief that had grown up in the first century, that the Messiah, unannounced, without anybody having any idea, he was just going to show up and be on the scene. Well, of course, that wouldn't be true. The minor premise is, we know where Jesus comes from. So, their conclusion is, therefore, Jesus can't be the Messiah.

Now what's the problem with their syllogism? The problem with their syllogism is their major premise is wrong, and their minor premise is wrong. And when your major premise is wrong and your minor premise is wrong, then you're going to have the wrong conclusion. And that is the case here. The Old Testament, as you know, is literally filled with prophecies about the coming Messiah. This idea that had grown up in the first century, that nobody's going to know where he comes from, was just simply false. I mean, we have the very place that he was going to be born revealed in Micah chapter five in verse two, don't we? When the Messiah comes, he is going to be born in Bethlehem.

I look at that, and here's what I want to draw by way of just a practical application for us. You'll never know if somebody is mixing truth with error if you don't know the truth, because that's what's happened here. This syllogism that they're putting forward is a mixture of truth and error, mainly error. But you and I will never know, we'll never be able to be discerning about what we hear, about what we read, about what we're listening to, if we don't know the truth. And that's why when Paul writes to the Ephesian believers in the fourth chapter, and he

says this beginning at verse 13, until we all attain to the unity of the faith of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes, rather speaking the truth and love we are to grow up into always like Him. That's it, isn't it?

This past week, maybe the week before, I can't remember which it was, Ligonier Ministries and Lifeway Press, every few years, they do a survey of the beliefs of Americans, and then they compare that to a survey of evangelical Christians. By the way, Joe Carter just this last week said, we ought to just do away with the term “evangelical Christian”. It's lost its meaning. It's lost its significance. It's become a confusing word. People don't adhere to even the points of doctrine that the word originally intended to convey. But here's what's shocking about this survey. It's not at all shocking what Americans believe about God and about the Bible and about spiritual things. What's shocking in this survey every year is what evangelical Christians—remember, they're people who believe the Bible is the Word of God, people who believe Jesus is the Son of God, people who believe that His death on the cross was necessary for salvation, that it's so important that we should take it to the world and that Jesus is coming again.

Listen to some of these questions and answers. Question one, God accepts the worship of all religions. Well, you can imagine that the average American would obviously agree with that. What is absolutely astounding is that almost 50% of evangelical Christians don't know their Bible well enough to know that God doesn't accept the worship of everybody. Jesus said in John 4, we must worship God in spirit and truth. We don't get to come to God any way we want. We don't get to come to God with what we believe about Him or what we don't believe about Him. Not in true worship.

A second statement said God is Trinitarian, that is, one God, three persons, right? Wonderful. Ninety-five percent of evangelical Christians understand that their God is a triune God. That's good news. Here's the bad news. The second statement that they asked: is the Holy Spirit a person or a force? Fifty-three percent of evangelical Christians either agree with that or strongly agree that the Holy Spirit isn't a person, He's a force. Well, now how in the world can you be Trinitarian and affirm on one hand that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three

persons in one, and then turn right around and answer another question and say He's a force? Well, there's only one way. People don't know their Bible. They don't know their theology. They don't know their doctrine. They're being carried around by every wind of doctrine. Something sounds good and, well, yeah, I think that's probably true.

Here's the last one. Everyone sins a little. Most people are good by nature. So, everybody sins a little, but at the end of the day 53% of evangelical Christians either agree or strongly agree that, in fact, we're all born good into this world, and we may sin a little. Now, if I was a preacher, I'd be discouraged at that point. No, I'm kidding. That would be, wouldn't it? I mean, for people to believe that, they're not being taught the Word of God if they believe that. This was the perspective of the people of that time, right?

Jesus' response. Look at Jesus' response in verses 28 and 29. 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 I know Him. You do not know Him. I know Him, for I come from Him and He sent me. Now, these are a couple of interesting verses. John doesn't tell us how it is that Jesus knew what they were thinking. Maybe He overheard it, but it's also true that in other times the writers of Scripture say Jesus knew their thoughts because He is the Son of God. But He doesn't tell us that here. What He does put forward, I think, is what John loves to do. John loves to use the literary form of irony, and I think he's doing that here. He basically is saying in Jesus' words to these people, you think you know me, and you think you know where I'm from, because that's what they've said, right? We know this man. We know where he's from. He couldn't possibly be the Messiah because we know Him, and we know where He's from.

Jesus in verses 28 and 29 basically says, you have no clue who I am. You don't have any idea who I am. You don't have any idea where I came from. You don't have any idea who has sent me. You don't have any idea where I'm going. I mean, you talk about a stinging rebuke of the people of Jerusalem who have been exposed to Jesus now on several different occasions, and what an indictment of their understanding. This is right in front of us, chapter 1, verse 11, He came to His own and His own did not receive Him.

The whole Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi, points to Christ the Messiah with every image, every picture, beginning as far back as Genesis chapter 3 and verse 15, right? With the preaching of the gospel, that there is going to come one through the seed of the woman who is going to bring redemption. All the way to the book of Malachi, the Holy Spirit packed into every chapter of the Old Testament in some form or another, a picture of the coming Messiah. And these people have no idea who He is.

I just want you to consider this. Here are some of the most religious people in the world. Here are some of the most religious people in the world. They have no idea who God is or who His Son is. It takes me to Isaiah chapter 1. Isaiah begins his prophecy this way, Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken. Children I have reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master but Israel does not know. My people do not understand. Now, how do you describe that? How is that possible? Well, at the core, it speaks to the fact that there is a spiritual battle going on for the hearts and minds of men and women and young people and boys and girls every day. Every day.

I don't know about you, but I have found over the last couple weeks, just with everything that's happened, assassination of Charlie Kirk and some of the horrific things that have come after that. I've just found myself sad. I've found, you know, there's at times just a sense of the oppression of the evil that's in our world. And it just takes us to Ephesians 6, doesn't it? We don't wrestle against flesh and blood. We wrestle against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places. That's the importance, again, of the gospel message. Because it's only the gospel that can open the eyes of people.

But here, I just want you to see, are the most religious people of Jesus' day and time, and they have no clue about who He is. The whole Old Testament, as Paul says in Romans 9, that God's people have been the possessors of for centuries. They have no idea of the message contained in that book. And how sad is it today, if that survey is in any way accurate, how sad is it today that some questions reflect half of evangelical Christians don't know their Bible at all. They have no idea what's in that book. They've heard stories, they've heard personal antidotes, they've heard this and that, but they have no idea. What God has made known to us in His Word.

Well, their feeble attempt in verse 30 is they were seeking to arrest Him, but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. I want you to understand a couple of truths that are part of this 30th verse. I mean, they are so offended by the truth. Now, it is true. Jesus said to them, you don't know me. You have no idea who I am. And that was a stinging rebuke, and that was an indictment of their religiosity. And so, maybe from the human perspective, yeah, we understand they're offended. But they're offended to the point that they want to kill Him, just as the religious leaders do, as we'll see in just a little bit.

But here's the two things I want you to see in that 30th verse. So, they were seeking to arrest Him, but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. The first thing John wants us to see is there's a human effort, a human plan, a human scheme to do away with Jesus. Now, it's clear that when he says they are seeking to arrest Him, the verb tense there is this is a continuing desire. They had these thoughts, and they're acting them out. Now, John doesn't tell us how it is that it was prevented. What did Jesus do Himself to avoid what they were wanting to do? They were wanting to arrest Him.

But here's what I want you to see. Their will, and their desire, and their plan was they wanted to do away with Jesus. So, I ask you, why did it not happen? Within the heart of man, within the will of man, within the desire of man, and within the scheming that was going on, they were putting together a plan to get Him and grab Him and arrest Him. Why didn't that happen? John tells us not from the human perspective, but he tells us from the divine perspective. It is because of divine sovereignty. It is because of divine sovereignty. A sovereign God overruled the human will and the human desire at this point. And I hope that's not a shocking truth to you, that a sovereign God will overrule a human will and a human desire.

Sometimes we're so enamored with free will and what it is that we can do, and when we can do it, and how we can do it, that we kind of lose our way theologically to understand, no, over every human will and every human desire is a sovereign God. Our God reigns in the heavens. He does all that He pleases. And He will, in fact, accomplish His will, won't He? When Jesus talks about the fact that His hour had not yet come, there it is, isn't it? He is looking forward to what is, of course, to come in terms of the death on the cross. At that appointed time, during the Father's time, that would take place. And, of course, that is the point that He is

making here. Even then, even then, Jesus will tell His disciples that nobody takes it from Him. He lays it down of His own accord. Now, that's the first group. These religious people of the city of Jerusalem.

Now look at this second group from the perspective of the out-of-towners. People from all over the region of Israel and beyond the borders of Israel. As you remember, every male was required, age 12 and older, to come to Jerusalem for certain feasts that were celebrated in Jerusalem. And so, they've come from all over the region. Hundreds of miles away, they come to Jerusalem for this special time. So, these are the out-of-towners now in verse 31. And look what we see by way of their perspective. Yet many of the people believed in Him. They said, when the Christ appears, will He do more signs than this man does? How do they respond to Him? These out-of-towners. How do they respond? They believed in Him. Many believed in Him. What a contrast.

Remember the statement, the gospel never does nothing. The gospel never does nothing. Which is to say, the gospel always does something. The gospel is either heard, and it is believed, and it is received, and it is welcomed, and it is embraced. Or it is rejected. There are just two choices. There's not a third choice or a fourth choice. When the gospel is pronounced, and when the gospel is proclaimed, there are only those two possibilities. Many, we are told, believed in Him. They accepted the fact that Jesus was the Messiah, that He is the Christ, that He's the Son of God.

Now, here's what I find interesting. And we've talked about this before in our study of the Gospel of John. Some people, for whatever reason, read verse 31. Yet many of the people believed in Him. And they arrive at the question of, well, just what kind of belief was this? And they begin to add qualifiers to a statement that the Holy Spirit, through the human author John, simply records for us in verse 31. Many believed in Him. Now, here's one example of what that looks like. One writes this, and says, what kind of belief is this? As if there are many kinds of beliefs. Maybe the kind of believing of the disciples in chapter 6, who followed Him, and followed Him, and followed Him, and then eventually abandoned Him. A kind of temporary faith.

Now, the problem with that statement right there is, in John 6, John never says that those people believed in Him. It says that they followed Him. They were disciples of His. But it doesn't say that they believed, and then stopped believing, and didn't follow Him any longer. Oh, we talked about that in John 6. There were those disciples who were curious. They weren't committed or convinced. But that's not what John says. Here he says that many believed. The earlier writer I spoke about said there's nothing here to indicate that this was some permanent, genuine, saving faith. How in the world is it anything other than permanent, genuine, saving faith, if the Holy Spirit of God says many believed in Him? I believe they did. I believe they were saved. I believe they put their trust in Jesus as the Messiah. Many believed. Many were saved.

Then John, I think, gives us some insight into how it is that we know of that belief, because he says they responded, third question, verse 31, right? At the end of that statement, when Christ appears, will He do more signs than this man has done? The expected answer is no, he won't do more than this man has done. They have been convinced and rightfully so because that's what John says he set out his gospel to do. Many other signs did Jesus in the presence so that you may be convinced that he is the Christ, right? That was the whole basis of the signs that John puts forward in the gospel. He's the Messiah. He is the one who is reversing the sinful state of the curse of sin. These are messianic signs and miracles that Jesus is doing. Many saw and many believed.

Isaiah 35, remember, says when the Messiah comes the lame are going to walk. John 5. The blind are going to see. John 8. Those who can't speak are going to be able to speak. Those who can't hear are going to be able to hear. All those things were pointing to the Messiah. Jesus did those signs. He did those wonders. Many saw it. Many believed.

Now look at this last group. The perspective of the religious leaders in verses 32 to 36. Their intentions in verse 32. The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to arrest him. Their intentions of course are evil, aren't they? There are Pharisees here. There are chief priests who are most likely the Sadducee. There are the officers and the temple police. Apart from their hatred of Christ, these groups did not get along. The enemy of my enemy is my friend. They come together out of their hatred for Christ.

Here's one of John's favorite words, right? The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering. *Goguzzo*. Remember that one? *Goguzzo*. Have you used that one since we saw that last time? Do you have any Goguzzoites in your family? Any murmuring ever? Well, this is what they heard. They heard the murmuring of the crowd. Nobody wanted to speak up and loudly say, I have believed. I think this is the Messiah. They didn't want to say that. They were quietly murmuring. It's clear that any response that was positive to Jesus was going to be viewed with suspicion. And so, the utter desperation of the religious leaders.

Look at Jesus's response in verses 33 and 34. Jesus then said, I will be with you a little longer and then I am going to him who sent me. You will seek me, and you will not find me. Where I am, you cannot come. He's looking ahead only six months. We're six months away from the cross in this passage. And Jesus is looking ahead. He's looking to the cross. He's looking to his death on the cross. He's looking to his burial. He's looking to his resurrection. And he's looking to his ascension. And he's basically declaring what is going to come. He's going to say something very similar in John 13 to his disciples. Only there he's going to say to his disciples, you can't go where I'm going. Not now, but you will be able to later. To these, he says, you can't go where I'm going. You can't go there now, and you can't go there later. You're going to be looking for me, but you're not going to be able to find me.

What a sobering truth. You read that, and what do you conclude? Today is the day of salvation. That's what you conclude. You conclude that the gospel never does nothing. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul said to the Philippian jailer, and you will be saved.

Now, tragically, it ends with their confusion in verses 35 and 6. 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? What does he mean by saying you will seek me, and you will not find me, and where I am you cannot come? Now, if you've been with us in the gospel of John's study, you know that this is another picture that John gives to us of how it is that when Jesus taught a spiritual truth and a spiritual reality, what did people so often do with that? When Jesus taught a spiritual truth and a spiritual reality, they could never unhook it from what? The material world. Nicodemus, you've got to be born again. I can't figure that out. The woman at the well, you can get water that you'll never drink again. I have no idea

what you're talking about. Jesus saying to them, where I'm going, you cannot come. You have no idea who I am and where I'm going. And they get lost, and they get stuck in the material, physical world, and they look right beyond the spiritual. The only reason we can see spiritual things is because we have eyes of faith. We walk by faith and not by sight, the scriptures say, and that's what we need, isn't it? Lord, give me eyes of faith to see the spiritual truths that you have before me.

So, what do we take away? Heaven is for those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from the penalty of sin and no one else. Heaven is for those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from the penalty of sin and no one else. My friend, I don't think it can be any more clear than that. The choice that Jesus puts before the people of Jerusalem, the choice he puts before the out-of-towners, the choice he puts before the religious leaders is the same choice that he puts before us today. And that is, if you want to enjoy life forever with God, you don't get it by going to church every Sunday, and you don't get it by being baptized, and you don't get it by being a good person. You get it one way and only one way. You get it by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that his death on the cross was payment for sin, yours and mine. By believing in that and that alone, God gives you the forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life.

Let's pray. Father God, thanking you again for the Word that speaks so strongly, so powerfully, so clearly to us of who Jesus is, very God of very God, the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, thank you for this revelation of your Son. Thank you for opening our eyes to the glory of the gospel. We ask again this morning, on this day of salvation, that the gospel would do that good work in every heart, every life that is here this morning, and those that are listening, Father, that they would believe that what Jesus did is all that needed to be done. Then they would have their sins forgiven, and they would have the gift of eternal life. We thank you, in Jesus' name, amen.