

XX. Personal Evangelism in Biblical Perspective  
*iShare—Encounters with Jesus in John's Gospel*  
“An Encounter with Unbelieving Brothers”

John 7:1–13

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July 8, 2012 – Morning Sermon

We have been doing this series on sharing the Gospel, iShare. We have been specifically looking at Christ sharing the Gospel and His encounters in the Gospel of John. We will be looking at John 7:1-13 but we will start off by reading from John 20. This is the Word of God. It's the Truth. John 20:30-31 says [30] *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; [31] but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is writing a narrative of the life and ministry of Jesus. It is a unique narrative and we've already seen how unique it is. Two thirds of the book of John is focused on the last week of Jesus' life. The other third of it is largely focused on the first week of Jesus' ministry. In between that he gives us encounter after encounter and it's kind of chronologically put together but it's clearly selective. So why has he put it together the way that he has? Thankfully the Holy Spirit through John gives us what led John in the selection process as he is writing out this narrative. He is writing and recording what Jesus said and did. In John 21:25 he says [25] *Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.* But we have written these things that you might believe in the Son of God and that by believing you may have life.

In John 20:30-31 there are many signs that Jesus did but these are the ones we have written so that you might believe Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God and that by believing you may have life. In other words, John selected what Jesus taught and did to put into this narrative with one purpose in mind. That is that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of sinners and the Son of God and by believing that you may have eternal life. So what is he telling you? The reason I want to look at this is one to remind you that everyone is a sinner, they need to be saved and they cannot save themselves. The second thing is there is only one Savior and that's Jesus Christ.

Another thing that we know is that you are saved in Christ when you believe IN Christ as your Lord and Savior. Christ is the singular Savior of sinners offered to us in this world. The way that you're saved is by believing in Him. The way people believe in Him is by God's Spirit, with God's Word, bringing them from death unto life and He uses God's people in the process. We don't save people but we bring the Message of the Savior. We don't convert people but we bring the Message of the Savior who converts people, but God works through us. So we have looked at how we share the Gospel as well as ourselves and we try to learn how Jesus did it. So we are looking at not only the Son of God but the Son of Man and His humanity and how He did it. John put these encounters all together so we could see what it means to truly believe in Christ and how you share that.

Underneath that there is a backstory that is coming through and I don't want us to miss it. In this narrative of the Gospel of John, the backstory is he keeps telling us what unbelief is. He is not only describing what it means to believe in Christ and how you share the Gospel of Christ with people so that they might believe, but underneath this he is showing us what unbelief is and unbelief is multi-faceted. There is religious unbelief and there is irreligious unbelief. There is reticent unbelief and there is vulgar, profane unbelief. There is in your face, aggressive unbelief. In fact in the text in John 7:1-13 there will be three aspects of unbelief found in those verses. In this text there is an amazing comment inspired by the Holy Spirit, through John that even His brothers did not believe in Him.

What does unbelief look like? I'm going to throw a curve at you but hang with me. I believe that the Gospel of John, while it's describing saving faith in Christ, the backstory is describing what unbelief is but the curve is there is really no such thing as unbelief. Everybody believes something. You would not be able to function in life without some faith paradigm – who am I, where did I come from, how did I get here, why did I get here and where am I going. Everybody has an answer to those questions.

Who is the greatest adversary of the one true and living God? It is a fallen angel named Satan. The Bible tells you in the book of James that the devil believes. Now Satan doesn't have saving faith. So when we're talking about unbelief we're not talking about the absence of faith. We are talking about a condemning faith that is called unbelief in the Bible as opposed to saving faith that has a vital, personal relationship with Christ. So unbelief is not the absence of faith but it's wrong headed faith, wrong directed faith. It is faith that condemns. It is unbelief because one refuses to believe in Jesus Christ.

Here is a question to ask yourself - why would someone not believe in Christ? Here is the uniqueness of Christianity. Here are all these religions that tell you what you have to do to get things and it's unbelievable. There are bizarre things that the religions of this world teach. Here is one that say there is a God (which is pretty obvious) that dwells as Father, Son and Holy Spirit that so loved you He gave His Son to die on the cross to save you from your sins. You couldn't save yourself but in grace He met the demands of His holiness to give you eternal life and it's a gift. Come and surrender to Him. Trust in Him alone for salvation and here's the gift of eternal life. It's simple, glorious and attractive but it is utterly despised by everyone and anyone unless God changes the heart. Why would we not jump at that offer and believe? John tells you that while unbelief is multi-faceted and appears in many, many ways, it is singular in its origin.

By the way, saving faith is singular in its origin. If you believe in Jesus Christ today as Lord and Savior, do you know why you believed? It is because God intervened in your life and brought you from death unto life. [8] *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV)* Today if you believe in Jesus, it's not only that God sent His grace to save you through the gift of His Son, but His Son sent the grace of saving calling by sending the Holy Spirit to you to bring you from death unto life. Saving faith has a singular origin. It is the sovereign, sufficient grace of God that has been poured out upon you. Saving faith has one origin and it's the praise of the glory of God's sovereign, searching, saving, sufficient grace.

Unbelief has a singular origin. What is it? As we work through this text in John 7 we'll find it. I'm going to divide this text up three ways. The first thing we'll look at is the advice that comes from His brothers. Then we'll look at the answer from Jesus and thirdly the actions of Jesus. John 7:1 says *[1] After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him.* When John arranged this Gospel it's not in depth but it's very selective about what Jesus taught and did to accomplish his purpose and show us what is saving faith to reveal to us what unbelief is and its origin. Having said that, there are things that he leaves out because this one verse covers months upon months upon months. In other words, when Jesus returns from His first year of ministry He had healed someone on the Sabbath and said He was the Son of God and because of that they were going to kill Him in Jerusalem and Judea.

Matthew, Mark and Luke then record for us what we call the retirement ministry of Jesus. This doesn't mean He stopped doing His ministry. His retirement ministry means He retired from the presence of the people and the leaders in Jerusalem and Judea. He went to Galilee and then out of the country. He went to Tyre, Sidon and Decapolis and did many things. He taught many sermons. He fed the five thousand and the four thousand. He did teachings and all kinds of miracles. All kinds of things were happening during that retirement ministry. The time that John 7 is talking about is in the Fall of 29 AD at a time called the Feast of Booths. John 7:2 says *[2] Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand.* This feast happened in the Fall in October.

They are celebrating the Feast of Booths because there was a great leader who came to them to help them rebuild a wall. When he rebuilt the wall he rebuilt the people in the process and when he rebuilt the people they started having six hour worship services. Amen! They were reading from the Bible during one of those times and they realized there was a whole feast they hadn't been celebrating. The leader who led them in that was named Nehemiah. They resurrected the Feast of Booths and now it's continuing in the days of Jesus. The kids loved the Feast of Booths because they would go outside their house either in the front yard, back yard or on the roof and build a leafy branch arbor. They would camp out under these arbors. As they did this they were remembering how the Lord delivered them out of the wilderness with the manna and all and they are celebrating God's goodness during this time. It is kind of like the pilgrim's feast, our Thanksgiving. They would also celebrate God's good harvest that He would bring time and time again.

When this time of year arrives the brothers come to Jesus and have an admonition for Him. John 7:3-4 says *[3] So his brothers said to him, "Leave here (Galilee) and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. [4] For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world."* They give Jesus some advice and basically tell Him He is wasting time in these backwoods country cities. They want Him to go where the people are like where they are celebrating the Feast of Booths. There will be thousands and thousands of people there. They say "No one does these kinds of things in secret so what are You doing up here? Go to where the people are and show Yourself. Do the works there so the people can see them. When You do them so they can see it they will make You King."

They have decided to be His campaign consultants. They tell Him how He ought to be conducting His election campaign by telling Him He is in the wrong place. They

are affirming this is Jesus. He is a miracle worker and they think that anyone who wants to be known needs to show themselves. They don't do things in private. They should do it in public. Now why did they give this advice?

I know you know what the next verse says but it kind of sounds like pretty good advice doesn't it? The next verse is what the Holy Spirit gave John to write as an editorial comment. John 7:5 says [5] *For not even his brothers believed in him.* In other words their advice manifested their unbelief and the advice was propelled by their unbelief. It was their unbelief in Jesus that caused them to give the advice and the advice reveals their unbelief. What is Jesus' answer to this advice?

John 7:6-9 says [6] *Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. [7] The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. [8] You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this (authorized) feast, for my time has not yet fully come."* [9] *After saying this, he remained in Galilee.* Remember He hasn't gone to up to Galilee, Judea and Jerusalem because of the Jews that wanted to kill Him. When you see the word Jews here it's not referring to the nation but the religious and political leaders. These are groups that are in power. He's not avoiding these areas because He didn't want to be killed. He is avoiding it because He was not to be killed at this time.

There are two Greek words for 'time.' There is *Kairos* and *Kronas*. *Kronas* is the word for time that refers to a succession of moments. *Kairos* is the time meant for a season, a moment. Jesus is talking about the right season has not arrived. He is using *Kairos* here. In fact, the right feast has not arrived and neither has the right moment for Him to be killed. So it is not His time to go up to a feast to be killed. It's the wrong feast and the wrong time but by the way, He says "It's always your time."

In John 7:4 they say to Him to show Himself to the world but Jesus basically responds to them by saying it's not His time and then He makes a comment about the world in John 7:7 which says [7] *The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil.* My very ministry brings hatred to the world and My life and ministry brings leaders to kill Me. My time hasn't come for the world and these leaders to kill Me. He says in John 7:6, "*My time has not yet come, but your time is always here.*" I think He means that you're free to go anytime. He can't go because it's not His time yet but you can go anytime.

Now let's look at the action of His statements. John 7:10-13 says [10] *But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. [11] The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, "Where is he?" [12] And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," others said, "No, he is leading the people astray."* [13] *Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.* So He did go up. He didn't go up when they went up at the beginning. He went up later.

Secondly, He didn't go up the way they wanted Him to go up which was publicly but He went up privately. Thirdly, He didn't go up doing miracles. He'll end up doing some teaching which we'll look at in the next study to see what He said at the Feast. He goes up privately, at a different time, in a different way, for a different purpose but He eventually goes up to the Feast. People are talking about Him and there are basically two opinions about Him. He's a good man and the other is He's a bad man for He leads people astray. No one would say anything in public about Him lest they get identified

with Him and the people in power would kill them. Because of their fear of the Jews (religious and political leaders) no one would do anything in public because of that.

So how does this help us? Here I want to give you a takeaway and then I will develop it some for you. First, let's remember what we have learned. To be saved you must believe IN Christ which means you trust in Him, surrender to Him, and to follow Him. It's not your following that saved you. Saved people follow, why? It is because they surrendered and why did they surrender? It is because they put their trust in Christ alone for salvation. We trust and obey. It is not our obedience that saves us. Our obedience is our testimony that we have put our trust in Christ as Lord and Savior. Saving faith is in Christ and we trust, surrender and follow. That comes by the grace of God in your life.

The takeaway is the origin of all unbelief is the relentless commitment to self-exaltation propelled by our self-absorption and that can only be broken by God's saving grace. The Bible tells us we will not believe because we cannot believe. Why is it that we cannot believe? The world doesn't believe in Him so what do they do? They hate Him. Here are these religious and political leaders who want to kill Him. The world doesn't believe for it hates. These leaders don't believe and therefore they want to kill Him. Then His brothers don't believe. The same unbelief of the world and the Jews (leaders), is the same unbelief of the brothers.

I want to look back at John 5 which was something we covered a couple of studies ago. John 5:39-41 says [39] *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,* (In other words, the Scriptures don't save you but the Scriptures reveal your Savior) [40] *yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.* (Why is it that they refuse to come to Him?) [41] *I do not receive glory from people.* In this service we have assembled together to worship and give God glory. We did not give God any glory. We gave God and reflected to God His glory. We don't give glory to God. The Word became flesh, dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory from the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1). He is full of glory in His grace and truth. We don't give Him glory. We reflect back to Him with praise His glory as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. He does not receive glory from us. We bring His glory back to Him. We bring Him the praise of the glory of His grace.

Let's look at the next few verses. John 5:42-43 says [42] *But I know that you do not have the love of God within you.* [43] *I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him.* It an amazing thing when anybody can come up with any idea of religious communication and somebody will follow them. It doesn't matter how bizarre the religion is, someone will follow them. It doesn't matter how debasing it is or illogical it is or how irrational it is. People will come in their own name and men and women will follow them but you won't come to Me. Why is it that we won't come to Him, the One who has brought the love of the Father?

Here is what He says in John 5:44, [44] *How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?* In other words He is saying, you cannot believe because you will not believe and you will not believe is because what manifests the death and depravity of our sin nature is we are on a relentless search for self-exaltation. Any religion that exalts somebody else we'll join

because we'll work out a deal with them. We'll find a way to exalt ourselves but when Christ comes and says to us "I am your glory" it becomes a scandal to us, because when He comes with the gift of grace there is also the message that you're a sinner and you can't save yourself. Your religion can't save you and your good intentions can't save you. That becomes a scandal to us. The one that says salvation is a gift by God's grace because you need a Savior and you can't save yourself, becomes a scandal to us because it doesn't have my glory for it tells me Your glory is found only in the praise of His glory and His grace. There is your glory. So we would reject it.

The world hates Him. Why? It is because His very presence testifies that you're a sinner, you need a Savior and you can't save yourself. The Jews, the leaders, they did not believe and their unbelief was manifested to the point that they wanted to kill Him. It was the same thing with His brothers. Let's go back to John 7. The giveaway is found in two phrases. Their advice was motivated by unbelief and revealed their unbelief. John 7:3-4 says [3] *So his brothers said to him, "Leave here (Galilee) and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. [4] For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world."*

What they have not understood is that Jesus did not come in the manifestation of His glory but He came shrouding His glory. He came with the glory veiled. He came with a cloak over His glory. In Him is the glory of the grace of God and in Him is the glory of the Father but He has shrouded it. He didn't come in glory. He came to a manger in Bethlehem. He went to Nazareth. Can anything good come from Nazareth? He went into the wilderness. He was mocked, rejected and despised by all of humanity. He did not come in His glory. He came shrouding His glory. He came in humiliation.

Philippians 2:5-8 says [5] *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, (laid aside His glory, not His deity) by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* He came in humiliation and not exaltation. Don't you see what His brothers are doing? We call it projection. What is it that is driving them? It is the same thing that drives me and you. It is a relentless commitment to self-exaltation and self-absorption. So the brothers decide they want to be His campaign advisors, His King maker, and their automatic assumption is that Jesus must want to show Himself. No, He has come to clothe Himself in humility. He has come to save us and not to exalt Himself. He didn't come bringing judgment but bringing salvation. He didn't come in exaltation but in humiliation.

They wanted Him to go up there and show Himself and be public about it. They are imposing upon Him what is in their heart. Their unbelief is to seek glory from men so their advice to Him is to lift Himself up and seek glory for Himself from men. They want Him to show His stuff to the world where everybody is. They want Him to get out there. Exalt Yourself and let them see You, they say.

What if I had four people up here today who said to me "Pastor, I'd like to join Briarwood" and I would then say "Can I ask you a few question?" Let's say their names were James, Joseph, Simon and Jude. These are the names of the four brothers of Jesus, which does away with any notion of the perpetual virginity of Mary. So let's say I ask the four "Do you believe Jesus is real?" They say "Absolutely." "Do you believe in the

historical Jesus?" "Absolutely." "Do you believe in the miracles of Jesus?" "Absolutely." "Do you believe that Jesus is a miracle worker?" "Absolutely." "Do you believe He ought to be King?" "Absolutely." We would then tell them "Okay here's your tithe envelope" yet the Bible says they are unbelievers.

You can know about Jesus but not believe in Him. What they don't see is the Christ who humbled Himself to save them from their sins because they were imposing their own exaltation. That is what is at the root of every single one of us today. If you're a believer God's grace broke through to you and instead of self-exaltation it was self-denial. God's grace broke through to you in a powerful way. They want Him to go up to Jerusalem just as they would want to go up to show themselves and show their stuff, but when Jesus goes up it won't be this feast it will be another feast. It will be the Passover Feast. When Jesus goes up it won't be for self-exaltation but humiliation. When Jesus goes up it won't be for a coronation but a crucifixion. When Jesus goes up it will be on a cross. It will not be to be given a crown. When He goes up it won't be on a chariot, it will be on a donkey.

When He goes up He'll be crucified between two thieves and laid in a borrowed grave. He will be humiliated and His humiliation will be embraced. He is not seeking His glory. He is seeking for you the glory of His grace to give it to you and the only thing that stands between me and you receiving it is we want our own glory. We'll take any religion that gives us glory. We'll even pervert the Gospel of grace and that's why I hate legalism, the notion that I have to do something in order to add it to the Gospel in order to be saved.

You may be thinking "Don't you have to believe?" Absolutely and He gave me the faith. *[8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)* Do Christians work? Yes, but do my works save me? No. Do they keep me saved? No. I am saved by God's grace powerfully that is intervened with me. That's why I hate legalism because it is constantly trying to put the glory of our puny works as necessary for God to save us. God's grace is sufficient to save us. *[1] There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)* He has paid the whole price and all we do is trust in Him. Then we rise by His grace to follow Him.

That's why I hate the gospel of antinomianism or libertinism that God's grace is coming and the whole point of God's grace is to set me free to do whatever I want to. By the way, when I sin or commit adultery or do this or that "Hey, you're forgiven because you have this little pardon in your back pocket." I hate the gospel of libertinism because when God saves you by His grace, everyday what you want to do, you won't do it perfectly, but what we want to do is die to ourselves every day and hate that sin that sent our Savior to that cross. When He went up to that Feast He did not go up to be exalted. He did not go to a feast where His Father would shout from heaven, "This is My Son in whom I am well pleased." When He goes to the feast He'll go to the cross and the wrath of God the Father with no mixture will fall on Him at the cross that we might be lifted up to the glory of His grace.

I love the way He teaches us to pray. How do we pray? He says here how you pray, start it this way, "Our Father, hallowed by Thy Name" for it's Your glory. Thy Kingdom come Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. For me, would You give me

my daily bread? Would You forgive me of my sins, my debts? I'll forgive my debtors. Freely I have received and freely I want to give. Please help me to do that. Don't lead me into temptation. Deliver me from evil and Evil One. For Thine is the Kingdom and the glory. It's Your glory, not mine. I've been saved to reflect it, extol You and exalt You. That's what You have done. You have broken that relentless impulse of my own glory for Your glory.

Dear friends, you can be in the church and be an unbeliever. You can live in a house with Jesus and grow up with Him and be an unbeliever but when God's grace takes hold of you it's God's glory that you love. Every day you know you have that weed of self-exaltation wants to spring its head. On Sunday mornings I have to get on my knees and pray "God please let me preach this sermon and not let my driving thought be 'what will they say about me?' but what will they say about Jesus." Every single day of my life I want to make it about me but God broke through to save me and every day He'll give us the grace to die to ourselves. Every day He'll help us to falteringly yet growingly lift up praise and glory to Him because we know that self-exaltation and pride is at the root of everything.

Our Lord God has done a great work to bring us to Himself. The only thing that keeps us from doing it is the love of self and the love of our own glory. Do you know what keeps us from sharing the Gospel? It's the love of self or one guy said "It's the fear of the sneer." If I share Jesus someone may sneer at me. Okay just go ahead and die and it doesn't matter if they sneer. I believe this is the root and the back story. Unbelief is rooted in the relentless self-absorption to self-exaltation. It is what is keeping some of you reading this today from coming to Christ and putting your trust in Him. You are looking for that religion that has your glory in it. Christ says "I am your glory and I love you. I replace your relentless pursuit of self-exaltation with My relentless love to keep you to the praise of the glory of His grace." Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the free offer that we come to Christ. Nothing in our hands we bring but simply to the cross we cling. So because of Your grace and Your love, Jesus, we would come. Please forgive me O God, for every moment in my life when the fear of man has taken me because love of man's applause has captivated me and have sought my own glory. Would You give all of us that great desire every morning to die to ourselves and Christ would be our glory? No matter what achievements, accomplishments or attendants You bring to us in our life, they are merely platforms for us to exalt Christ and not ourselves. Jesus, thank You for humbling Yourself and in that humiliation bringing us from the dust of death and sin to the glory of Your grace. Jesus, we come in Your Name, Amen.