

Bold Proclamation and Hollow Professions

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 7:25-36

Preached on: Sunday, July 6, 2014

It's my joy to minister the word of God to you again this morning. Will you take your Bibles and turn to John's gospel, chapter 7, as we continue our verse-by-verse study of this amazing gospel. We are in verses 25-36 this morning. John 7:25-36. Follow along as I read our text,

“25 So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, 'Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill? 26 Look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they? 27 However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from.' 28 Then Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, 'You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. 29 I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me.' 30 So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. 31 But many of the multitude believed in Him; and they were saying, 'When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?' 32 The Pharisees heard the multitude muttering these things about Him, and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to seize Him. 33 Therefore Jesus said, 'For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me. 34 You shall seek Me, and shall not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come.' 35 The Jews then said to one another, 'Where does this man intend to go that we shall not find Him? He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He? 36 What is this statement that He said, “You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come”?’”

I've entitled my discourse to you this morning “Bold Proclamation and Hollow Professions” and I trust that this will make sense to you as we unpack this amazing text this morning.

Before we do, I want to get you to focus upon the culture in which we live. One of the more subtle and deadly powers of sin and human nature is its ability to elevate our pride: we are a self-centered, self-willed people by nature. The result is quite predictable. Anytime we experience any kind of criticism, we react with anger, we get defensive. Because of unfettered self-centered pride, we live in an easily offended culture where any kind of moral judgment is met with hostility. Try curtailing the spread of AIDS by condemning the moral evils of homosexuality that has spawned it and other forms of

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immorality that spread it, well, you can't do that, you will offend people. Try curtailing the spread of terrorism by condemning the evils of Islam which has historically been nothing more than a revolutionary political ideology that seeks to dominate the world under shariah law. Try curtailing the spread of abortion by condemning immorality and teaching moral convictions in our public schools, oh, you can't do that, you will offend women and people that don't believe that way. And on and on it goes. In fact today, every scandal in our decadent society must be white-washed so today we call evil good and good evil.

It's fascinating, to avoid offending anyone's sensibilities, our culture has invented a new ethic called political correctness, an ever-increasing unwritten speech code controlled by invisible thought Nazis usually in the media and in our universities and colleges. Here of late perhaps you've heard how the government is banning the Washington Redskins name because it might offend Native Indian people. In fact, I was reading where some are calling to ban naming military helicopters after Native Indians like the Chinook and the Apache; some are even offended because we call some of our missiles Tomahawks. And some are outraged that the raid on Osama Bin Laden was called Operation Geronimo. In a recent article of "Judicial Watch," according to a new Army manual, US soldiers are now instructed to avoid "any criticism of pedophilia." They are not allowed to have conversations mentioning homosexuality and homosexual conduct or making any derogatory comments about the Taliban or discussing anything "advocating women's rights" or "anything related to Islam." I was reading that the Obama administration has banned all US government agencies from producing any training materials that link Islam with terrorism. In fact, the FBI has gone back and literally purged references to Islam and terrorism from hundreds of old documents. Of course, we've seen over the years how the authorities are cracking down on public expressions of the Christian faith all over the nation and yet atheists in New York are allowed to put an extremely offensive billboard in Times Square, maybe you saw it this last holiday season. It shows a picture of Jesus on the cross underneath a picture of Santa with the following tagline: Keep the Merry, dump the Myth." Imagine if they did that at Ramadan with reference to Mohammed.

Go into a food court sometime when it's crowded and holler, "I love Jesus," and watch the reaction and then have your friend follow-up and say, "I love gays," and watch the difference. Today, every abhorrent political system and every deviant lifestyle must be laundered by the rhetoric of political correctness. It has now reached the point of insanity. The chimpanzees are running the zoo. Folks, this is how sin works: it metastasizes. This is evidence of what Paul spoke about in Romans 1 with respect to the wrath of divine abandonment and finally God just takes his hands off of a people and allows them to experience the consequences of their iniquities. He says that he finally "gives them over to a depraved mind to do things that are improper" and he gives a list.

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Only the most biased and hardened person would deny that our culture is in a moral freefall. People are ruled by their lusts; they have no fear of God. In fact, the most applauded virtue of our day is not holiness, it's not godliness, but it's tolerance. We have to accept anything and everything except the one true God and his word. Sadly, when every man's immorality is acceptable, then it is no longer immoral and everybody is happy except God. But men who have no fear of God actually hate God and they worship self, not God. In fact, in our United States, we really need to change the name or the tagline on our dollar. Rather than "In God We Trust," we need to put "In Self We Trust." You know, this was what made Satan's temptation in the Garden so appealing, you remember? "Hey, just disobey God and then you will be like God."

Now, it should be no surprise to us to see the serpent's influence even in the Christian church and Christian institutions. Think about it: regardless of the heresy, regardless of the lifestyle, everything must be accepted. Every profession of faith must be accepted lest we violate the spirit of the love of Christ and the result has been catastrophic. Today, we have man-centered churches rather than God-centered churches. We have a diluted gospel that damns rather than saves. We have gays and lesbians and transgendered people being ordained as ministers. We have malnourished Christians banished to an island of spiritual infancy because they're never challenged, they're never nourished, they're never taught by the word of God. We also have genuine believers who love Christ, who love his word, being mocked and maligned because they are starving for the glory and the greatness of God. But God have mercy on the man who dares to courageously confront this charade invented by the father of lies.

I grow weary of pulpits filled with pusillanimous pastors whose main goal is to avoid offending anyone's conscience. No wonder so many genuine Christians fear man more than they fear God. They live as if God doesn't even exist and their lives are miserable, bereft of spiritual power. My friends, where are the fearless warriors of the faith that will lead the charge of the true gospel of grace for the glory of God? Where are the fearless Greeks that once held the pass against the Persians? Men who will stand firm and stand up and say, "Thus saith the Lord," and be willing to fight the good fight for the glory of God? Men who will come out and be separate from the world; men who will have a heart burning with zeal for the glory of God? Pastors whose arms of faith have been strengthened by years of battle and whose hearts are ignited with holy zeal because they have spent much time with God in their closet of prayer?

One Scottish pastor by the name of Maurice Roberts put it this way, "Whatever weaknesses a minister may have, let him not be spineless. A spineless prophet is a contradiction in terms and an unnatural monster. Society and the modern church alike both need to hear the prophetic voice of men who call evil and sin by their proper names. They need men whose sermons will life their hearers above the here-and-now to the great

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transcendental realities of God's ultimate judgment and will, in that way, show the conscience what God thinks of his wayward world. The pulpit's task," he goes on to say, "is to declare the sinfulness of sin and the one divine remedy for its removal. It may be wondered whether one pulpit in a thousand is doing its God-given work as it should. There is too little thunder. The lion's roar is absent."

Well, my friends, such was not the case with our precious Lord Jesus. Never once did he play the charade of political correctness in his day to avoid offending the conscience of his listeners, especially those who were very religious, even those who were immoral and ungodly. And how refreshing to come here to John 7 and behold our Lord's fearless proclamation of the truth motivated by an unyielding determination to tell people what they need to hear, not what they want to hear and the reason for that is because of his great love for them.

As we come to our text here in John 7, I wish to focus on three primary categories which prove to be most informative to our lives and to our theology. We're going to see first the supreme model of bold proclamation; secondly, the anesthetizing power of hollow professions; thirdly, the invincibility of God's eternal purposes. Now, I want to remind you of the context: knowing that the Jewish authorities are seeking to kill him, Jesus privately enters into Jerusalem from the north, from Galilee, during the Feast of Booths. There are thousands of Jewish people that have come as pilgrims for this great eight day celebration and he goes straight to the temple, the very temple that he had previously purged and he begins to speak and teach publicly. Imagine the scene: being the Incarnate word of God, his omniscient grasp of Scripture is beyond compelling, it's beyond authoritative, it is that which astounded the listeners. So the angry and jealous authorities tried to undermine Jesus' teaching by attacking his credentials, suggesting he was just merely speaking from himself and for his own glory, an argument Jesus destroys with compelling force. Then he has also now, exposed once again their religious hypocrisy because they have indicted him as a law breaker for healing a man previously on the Sabbath and yet he demonstrates to them they they violate the Sabbath as well and for good reason when a child needs to be circumcised and that eighth day falls on a Sabbath. Moreover, they were Sabbath breakers because they had murder in their heart, violating the sixth commandment.

So for this reason, he exhorts them in verse 24, "Do not judge according to appearance," in other words, based on your own self-righteous legalism that is obsessed with externals but ignores the inner man. "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." Then in verse 25 we read, "Therefore some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, 'Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill? Look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they?'" Obviously, some of the folks in Jerusalem knew that their

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authorities wanted to murder Jesus. many of the others did not know that so they are bewildered as to why the authorities aren't arresting him. They even suggest that one possible explanation might be that they were privately considering the fact that maybe Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the Son of God.

But John goes on to tell us that they immediately dismissed such a possibility on the basis of a very popularly held view which, by the way, was based on misinformation as we will see, a popular view concerning how they would recognize the Messiah when he came. Verse 27 speaks of this, they say, "However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from." You see, the Rabbis taught that the Messiah would be born of flesh and blood and would remain unknown until suddenly he would appear out of nowhere to redeem Israel. That's what they believed; that's what they understood. This was based, by the way, on a misunderstanding of Malachi 3:1 which reads, "The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple." But what they failed to understand is that is not a reference to Messiah coming to Herod's temple in the first century but the final temple, the millennial temple that Ezekiel describes in Ezekiel 40-42 when the Lord himself will come to his temple to judge his people on the basis of their faithfulness to his covenant with them. Nevertheless, based upon this and some other legends that I won't go into, they believed that the Messiah's origin would be unknown to them until he just suddenly appeared but this is not the case with Jesus. They know where he's from, "This guy's from Nazareth up in Galilee!" Now, you'd have to understand if we put it in our vernacular, they would basically say, "This guy's a redneck. He's from Nazareth. Not only that, his family is living in Capernaum right now so we know where he's from so this can't be the Messiah."

Now, I want you to go back to the beginning of verse 26. Notice what they say, "Look, He is speaking publicly." That word "publicly" can also be translated "boldly" or "confidently; with authority." This brings me to the first of our points in my little outline for you and that is the supreme model of bold proclamation that we see coming from Jesus. Like the self-centered, arrogant people of our day, the Jews of the first century were easily offended if anyone dared to challenge their religious beliefs or their spirituality. But Jesus has already exposed them as hypocritical law breakers who judge according to appearance and not with righteous judgment.

Now, John doesn't record all the other things that Jesus was teaching but we see that he spoke in such a way that it captivated their attention. In fact, in verse 15, we see that whatever he was teaching caused them to marvel and then as a result of that, in verse 30, they seek to seize him. But what I want you to see in your mind is Jesus standing in the temple and all of the people there with their veins bulging and their teeth gritting, they're shaking their heads, they're rocking back-and-forth as the Jews would do. They are seething with rage and Jesus is oblivious to it all. Why? Because he loved them and

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because he came to do the will of his Father, to put the glory of God on display and only the truth can do that. He was not seeking his own glory but the glory of the Father, verse 18. This is the kind of heart that the Spirit endows with power and boldness and confidence.

It's interesting, Isaiah predicted this. Back in Isaiah 50:4-11, we have there the third of four what we call servant songs or Messianic soliloquies that Isaiah records that predicts Jesus' perfect obedience and how he is going to operate when he comes to do the Father's will. Beginning in verse 4 of Isaiah 50, we read, "The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word." Verse 6 goes on to say, "I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. For the Lord GOD helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set My face like flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed. He who vindicates Me is near; Who will contend with Me? Let us stand up to each other; Who has a case against Me? Let him draw near to Me. Behold, the Lord GOD helps Me; Who is he who condemns Me? Behold, they will all wear out like a garment; The moth will eat them."

Dear Christian, I ask you this morning: are you willing to follow the Lord's example and boldly proclaim the truth even in the face of hostility? Or will you bow to the insanity and the deception of political and religious correctness? My friends, it's not enough that we have the truth, we are called to speak the truth. Many times you hear the little phrase, "Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary use words." Hogwash. That is not a biblical concept. Don't fool yourself into thinking that your life is so godly and so powerful that people are going to observe it and come to Christ. None of us have lives that are that attractive. None of us have lives that are that compelling. In Romans 10:14, Paul says, "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?" Literally, a proclamation. He goes on to say that, "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ." But, my friends, we will never speak with bold proclamation and conviction unless we first love the truth and love the God who has revealed it. You see, truth is not something we simply maintain in our heads. Yes, we are to live it but if we really love it, it will be a force so powerful deep within us that it will erupt with a power so great as to move men and mountains by the power of the Spirit. You see, to boldly proclaim the gospel is to demonstrate our love for the glory of God who, by the way, has commanded us to love the truth. Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 2:10 that we must "receive the love of the truth so as to be saved." To boldly proclaim the truth is to demonstrate our love for the lost who will never be saved apart from it.

My friend, aren't you glad that someone loved you enough once upon a time to speak the truth into your life? And I would imagine that most of you didn't like what you heard at

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first. Oh, that more men and women of God will shun this politically correct spirit of our day and be filled with Spirit empowered boldness. In fact, I would ask you to pray for me as your pastor to speak with boldness. That's what Paul asked the church at Ephesus to do for him. In Ephesians 6, beginning in verse 19, he said, "pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly," and I love this last line, "as I ought to speak."

To be sure, if there is no courage from the pulpit, there will be none in the pew. If there is no fire in the furnace, there will be no heat in the church. And there is nothing more dishonoring to Christ than to see cold, shivering Christians afraid of their own shadow. We either fear God or we fear man and I pray that each of us at CBC will not only love the truth but boldly proclaim it. By the way, that's what the early saints did. For example in Acts 4, the Jewish authorities commanded Peter and John "not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus," verse 18. To which they replied in verse 20, "We cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard." But they never assumed they could do this on their own power so they met with other saints and together they prayed in verse 29, listen to this, "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence." In verse 31, they say, "And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness." My friends, think of the power that our church could have if we had more that would pray in such a way. Think of the advancement of the gospel if we all echoed the heart of the Apostle Paul who said to the Philippians in Philippians 1:20, "It is my earnest expectation and hope that I will not be put to shame in anything but that with all boldness Christ will even now as always be exalted in my body whether by life or by death."

Now, let's return again to Jesus in the temple. Let's go back there. Imagine the crowd now; imagine Jesus standing before them. In light of their foolish insistence that he couldn't be the Messiah because, "After all, we know where you're from," he says to them in verse 28, "Jesus cried out in the temple," which, by the way, means that he cried out with a loud commanding voice. The term means literally "he yelled with a commanding voice." He had something that they needed to hear; he wanted to demonstrate the profound importance of what he was, notice, "teaching and saying." Teaching carries the idea of imparting knowledge, doctrinal truth, and saying carries the idea of application. And here's what he says to them, "You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know." Now, you must understand that Jesus is speaking with the voice of irony here in order to expose their ignorance. He's saying this, "So, you really think you know me and you know where I am from. Is that what you think?" The implication is that they

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were too ignorant to even know they were ignorant which is inevitably true of those duped by a false religious system.

Then he makes this stunning indictment in verse 28, “I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know.” He who has sent me is true. The term literally means “real.” Obviously, the knew that the Father was true, the issue here is that he is real, “The Father really is the one who sent me whether you believe it or not.” then he says this, “whom you do not know.” Oh, my goodness. I'm sure you could have heard a pin drop when he said that. Talk about offensive. Basically, what he's saying is, “You pride yourselves in knowing the law, you're experts in the law and you boast of your ability to be able to spot the true Messiah when he comes and here I am standing right before you and you don't recognize me.” Beloved, don't miss what Jesus is saying here because the implication is so profound: he is simply saying, “If you cannot recognize Jesus as the Christ then you can't know the Father.” It's as simple as that. If you can't discern the Incarnate Word of God, the living Christ, the Son of God, you cannot possibly know God.

I hear religious charlatans all the time on television in particular and through some of the things that I read on the internet, talking about Jesus and it's obvious that they don't have a clue who Jesus really is which is a dead give-away that they do not know God. This leads me to my second observation and that is the anesthetizing power of hollow professions. These people professed to know God due to their traditions that they kept. They were absolutely convinced of it. After all, they were sons of Abraham; they were recipients of the ancient covenants; recipients of the law. They were to be the custodians of divine truth and yet they were anything but a witness nation. If we look all the way back in Jeremiah's prophesy, chapter 2, verse 8, God condemned the priests and the prophets saying, “Those who handle the law did not know me.” He went on to say, “My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.” In Jeremiah 23:16, he says, “They are leading you into futility. They speak a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the Lord.” We see the same thing in Isaiah's prophecy. God spoke through Isaiah in chapter 5, verse 13 and said, “My people go into exile for their lack of knowledge.” And he even lamented through the prophet Hosea in Hosea 4:6 saying, “My people are destroyed for the lack of knowledge.”

Oh, dear friends, hear this: beware of the power of religious self-deception. These were people that were absolutely obsessed with keeping the law. Moreover, they were constantly making up new rules that they had to obey because, you see, legalism never satisfies that hole within us, it only gives you the illusion of spirituality. In fact, the first century religious elite of Israel that were listening to Jesus with murder in their hearts

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could be likened to those ancient priests, the sons of Eli, whom the Lord described as “worthless men who did not know the Lord,” 1 Samuel 2:12. You see, it was for this reason that Jesus repeatedly labeled the religious authorities as hypocrites. They were blind guides of the blind, he called them. They were white washed tombs: white on the outside but they were filled with dead men's bones. Those who made their followers twice the sons of hell than they were themselves. It's interesting, isn't it, that one of the most prominent Rabbis who was gloriously saved and became the Apostle Paul, described his kinsmen as men “have a zeal for God but not in accordance with knowledge.”

My friends, don't miss this and this is always so hard to preach but hell will be filled with religious people but people who never truly knew Jesus. Oh, they saw him as an historical figure but not as their Savior, their only hope of salvation; not as the lover of their souls; not as the one whose presence they enjoyed in the core of their being; not as the Lord of their life that they joyfully obeyed and joyfully served; not as their primary source of satisfaction; not the returning King of kings and Lord of lords. Think of all the people in church services around the world today, people who have their lives filled with religious activities; they feel good about themselves because they can list certain things that they do for God. Many of them have visible morality. Many of them know a lot about the Bible. A lot of them are even convicted over sin. Many can point to a time when they made a profession of faith or they were baptized. But, my friends, these things neither prove nor disprove genuine saving faith. In fact, they can anesthetize you into believing a lie when, in fact, all you have is a hollow profession. You see, Scripture is clear: genuine saving faith is validated by things like a sincere fear of God, being awed by his holiness to a point where you have placed your faith in Christ as the only hope of your salvation. It's measured by one's selfless attitude towards loving Christ and their devotion to God. It's measured by a love for God: you love what God loves, you hate what he hates. It's measured by genuine humility, a separation from the world, a transformed life, a heart that is committed to obedience resulting in measurable spiritual growth, a person who at the core of their being is hungering and thirsting for righteousness, who mourns over their sin, who has insatiable appetite for the word of God, who has a life of continual prayer because they love to be in communion with the lover of their souls, a person who has a burden for the lost, a person who longs to see Jesus face-to-face. That's the stuff of genuine saving faith. My friend, don't be anesthetized by your external religiosity that may be nothing more than a hollow, empty, phony profession of faith that cannot save. Remember, Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven,” Matthew 7:21.

So don't be like these first century Jews that Jesus confronts. Jesus knows his audience well. In fact, later he exposes them in chapter 8:19, he says, “You neither know me nor

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my Father.” So as we come back to verse 29 of chapter 7, he says, “I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me.” This is more than they can handle. By now, they're saying, “We are absolutely sick of this man's blasphemy.” Verse 30, “So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.” As I meditated upon that verse, I was able to see even more clearly the third point of my outline for you this morning and that is the invincibility of God's eternal purposes. My hour had not yet come. The time for him to be seized and crucified according to the Father's sovereign will had not yet arrived. You see, my friends, neither man nor devil can ever thwart the sovereign purposes of God who works all things after the counsel of his will, Ephesians 1:11. Proverbs 19:21 says, “Many are the plans in a man's heart but the counsel of the Lord, it will,” what? “It will stand.”

Over 500 years before Christ went to the cross, God spoke to the prophet Daniel through the angel Gabriel and in Daniel 9:25 we read, “So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks,” in other words, 69 weeks of years or 483 years. The Spirit of God is very precise here. “It will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.” As we look back in history, we see that this proved to be precisely the case. In Nehemiah 2:5-6, we read how King Artaxerxes issued the decree to rebuild and restore Jerusalem in 445 BC. Then, as God promised, seven weeks and sixty-two weeks or, in other words, 483 years later, that elapsed and that was supposed to elapse until, it says, “Messiah the prince.” In other words: until the time when the Lord Jesus Christ would pass through the multitudes of cheering Jews and enter Jerusalem as their Messiah. Then in verse 26 of Daniel 9, it says, “Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing,” and my friends, indeed after that sixty-two sevens or 483 years, the Messiah was cut off and had nothing which means literally no one. All his followers had abandoned him. He was arrested. He was given a phony trial and he was crucified.

Now, my point in that little illustration is simply this: in eternity past, God decreed an eternal plan and that plan is carried out to this very day perfectly through his providence whereby he orchestrates every single variable in his created universe to accomplish his purposes precisely at the time they are to occur. That plan included the very hour Jesus would go to the cross. In fact, Peter spoke of this at Pentecost. In Acts 2:23, he talked about “this Man,” referring to Jesus, was “delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God.” Folks, I hope you find great comfort in this truth, in the sovereignty of our God and his sovereign rule. Think about it: even as an angry crowd could not seize Jesus until his appointed time, neither our enemy nor death can seize us until our hour arrives. Job says in chapter 14, verse 5, “Man's days are determined. The number of his months is with You; And his limits You have set so that he cannot pass.”

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So friends, take courage. Take courage in this. Don't be afraid. The unseen hand of divine providence cannot be shackled. And for a moment I'm compelled to speak specifically to our listeners who are in foreign lands. Some of you I've heard from even this last week who fear for your lives, who have lost loved ones because of their faith in Christ. I take you to Psalm 91:1 and following where we read, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty." Boy, that's where you want to live, isn't it? "I will say to the LORD, 'My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!' For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper And from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His pinions, And under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark. You will not be afraid of the terror by night, Or of the arrow that flies by day; Of the pestilence that stalks in darkness, Or of the destruction that lays waste at noon. A thousand may fall at your side And ten thousand at your right hand, But it shall not approach you." Then in verse 11, we read, "For He will give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands, That you do not strike your foot against a stone." Oh, what comfort we have in the invincibility of God's eternal purposes.

As we close this morning, back to the narrative, they try to seize him but somehow they are restrained by an unseen hand, verse 31, "Many of the multitude believed in Him; and they were saying, 'When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?'" This was another one of the tests of the Messiah. Verse 32, "The Pharisees heard the multitude muttering these things about Him, and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to seize Him." By the way, like all religious hypocrites, they do not want you talking about Jesus. Talk about anything and everything else but don't talk about Jesus and here we see two opposing factions forming: those that believe in Jesus although not savingly as we will see eventually; and those who wanted to kill him. Verse 33, "Therefore Jesus said, 'For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me. You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come.'" Indeed, he would ascend to the right hand of the Father where he sits to this very day. Then with hatred in their heart, they scoff at Jesus, verse 35, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find Him? He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He?" "That's not what he's planning on doing, is he? Is he going to take this blasphemous message to the Gentile pigs?" That's what they're saying. Verse 36, "What is this statement that He said, 'You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come?'" You see, friends, like all who reject Jesus, these people had no capacity to understand divine truth. Little did they know that within six months, Jesus' hour would come and he would give his life as a ransom for many and as a result of that, as a result of the gospel and the person of Christ that they rejected, the gospel would go forth not only to the Gentiles but also to the Jews throughout the world as it continues this very day.

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Bold Proclamation and Hollow Professions

By David Harrell

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So, dear Christian, I ask you this morning: are you engaged in this glorious battle? I hope you are. If you're not, I question your love for Christ. Are you enjoying the magnificent blessings of being in relationship with the living God? Is your life making a difference for the glory of God or are you just living for yourself? May I remind you that there were 12 disciples watching all of this and they're beginning to see very clearly that they are involved in something far more dangerous yet infinitely more glorious than they could have ever imagined, at least 11 of them saw that and all but one gave their life for Christ who gave their life for them. Are you willing to give your life for Christ? If so, I pray that you will follow our Lord's supreme example in boldly proclaiming the word of truth and, moreover, will you rejoice and relax in the invincibility of God's eternal purposes which includes your life and mine?

For those of you who are hearing me today and you're not really sure if you truly belong to Christ, I would plead with you to examine your heart lest you be anesthetized by some hollow profession and then, before you even leave this place, breathe out an earnest prayer to God saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner. I cannot save myself. I am in desperate need of your mercy and your grace so I cry out to you. I place my faith in the living Christ, my only hope of salvation." I pray that you will do that today. May God have mercy on your soul.

Let's pray together.

Father, I thank you for these eternal truths. I pray that they will bear much fruit in every heart according to your purposes. We give you praise in Jesus' name. Amen.

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You've been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.

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