

Misunderstood, Controversial, Fearless

In today's text we see that Jesus always had a keen sense of timing. He knew when it would be "his time" to offer His life in sacrifice as an atonement for our sins. Until then, He made the most of every opportunity to proclaim the kingdom of God. So Jesus continued ministering in Galilee, performing miracles, teaching, and facing opposition and criticism from religious leaders. He even had to deal with provocative advice from His brothers who believed He should spend His time elsewhere.

John 7:1-13

1 After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. **2** Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. **3** So his brothers said to him, "Leave here 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." **5** For not even his brothers believed in him. **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 feast, for my time has not yet fully come." **9** After saying this, he remained in Galilee.

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.

In this passage, John shows us the determination and fearlessness of Jesus.

I. **Even Jesus' brothers do not believe in Him and misunderstand the purpose of Jesus' ministry (vv. 1-8).**

Jesus' brothers, in spite of having grown up with Jesus in the same household, did not believe that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. Surely by this time some or all of them had witnessed some of Jesus' miracles and heard His teaching. Yet they remained in unbelief, proving the truthfulness of Jesus' words in John 6:44—"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." Jesus' brothers believed that Jesus' time in Galilee, considered by them to be removed from the religious hub in Jerusalem, was wasted time. With the day approaching for the annual Feast of Booths in Jerusalem, the brothers invited Jesus to travel with them to the feast. They believed that if Jesus wanted to build a movement and gather a crowd, He should go "where the action was" and make a name for Himself in Judea. The brothers misunderstood who Jesus was and what He was about. Their attempt to persuade or goad Jesus to follow their advice is similar to the temptation of Satan in the wilderness. In that temptation Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the Jerusalem temple and tempted Him to jump, telling Jesus that angels would keep Him from harm. The people below would see the miracle, believe that Jesus was divine, and hail Him as the Messiah. Jesus knew peoples' hearts and knew His time and would not be diverted by temptation and opposition.

II. **Jesus went to the feast in Jerusalem on His own schedule (vv. 9-10).**

Some translations of verses 8-10 do not fully convey Jesus' response to His brothers. A surface reading of these verses may leave the impression that Jesus said one thing to His brothers but did something else. What Jesus said in the language of His time was that He would not accompany His brothers at the time they were planning to travel to Jerusalem. He intended and did stay longer in Galilee. Jesus planned to travel to Jerusalem privately and

alone, arriving after the feast was underway. Verses 14-44 will be discussed in the future but clearly show that Jesus was unafraid of His enemies and resolute in His mission to proclaim the kingdom of God and offer up His life.

III. **Jesus was a controversial figure in His time (vv. 11-13).**

People were sharply divided in their opinions of Jesus. Some hated Him and wanted to kill Him, but others thought He was a good man. Throughout history even the name of Jesus continues to be controversial, even divisive. As the light of the world, Jesus came to expose our sinfulness, to call us to repent, and to bring us eternal life through faith in Him. His message is welcomed by some and rejected by others. What a person believes about Jesus has an eternal impact on her life and future.

Discussion Questions

1. Why could Jesus' brothers, who grew up with Him, misunderstand Jesus' identity, His mission, and His methods? How have we, too, misunderstood Jesus Christ?
2. Why did religious leaders hate Jesus? Why did they perceive Him as a threat?
3. Jesus was controversial. Everyone had an opinion about Him. Yet people feared open discussion. Why were people reluctant to discuss Jesus openly during the Feast of Booths?

Going Deeper

1. Have you ever asked people what they think about Jesus Christ? If so, what have they said? If you have never asked people that question, why haven't you?
2. Jesus fearlessly followed His Father's will in spite of misunderstanding, hatred, and controversy. Would you describe your walk with Christ as timid, lukewarm, or fearless? Why?