God's Truth
John 7:14-18

As we come to this passage we are still in the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, and that was the time where the Jews celebrated the coming in of the fall harvest, and also they dwelt in booths around Jerusalem to remember the Exodus, and also remember that God was with them. Now look at verse 14, "**About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching."** Here Jesus is God in human flesh goes up to Jerusalem and makes himself known in the middle of this feast. Here is the feast that celebrates the presence of God with the people as they brought in the harvest, and here is God in human flesh teaching them right in the Temple. And the fact that he began to teach at such an important celebration meant that Jesus is claiming some sort of position and authority. This is not something hidden.

And look at the response in verse 15 to his teaching, '"**The Jews therefore marveled, saying, 'How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?**'" The meaning of marvel is that they were in awe at his insight and his ease at handling the Scriptures and how he explained them. And the question of the last section among the people about who is Jesus? Was he a good man or just an imposter? Here the question is different and that is about his teaching. Where did this man get the ability to teach and the education needed in order to teach? And notice who is asking this question - "the Jews." This is a reference to the religious leaders - those who had studied in the various different schools. They marvelled at his handling of the truth.

And the big question really is: can we trust that teaching? The various rabbis would quote various different schools of thought as they explained the Scripture in order to validate their teaching. You had to go through the prescribed educational system in order to teach. Jesus did not go through those channels but is the son of a simple carpenter from an outlying region of Galilee. Can we trust his teaching? Can we know for certain that what he says is true? And again, the reason why they would be asking this question is that authority is a big question. Can we trust what he is teaching? Can we trust the message? How can we know that it is true?

People have often asked that very question. When the Jewish religious leaders ask the question, they are probably not wondering if they should trust his teaching but more of a denunciation of his teaching. "This man" is probably a statement of derision, and basically saying since he has no credentials He has no right to teach. How dare he stand up at this solemn festival and instruct others about God, the kingdom, and heaven and hell. How dare he not come through us and gain permission through us to teach! But it does bring up an important question of authority, because we say the Bible itself and the teachings of Jesus are authoritative. But how do you know? Everything that Jesus teaches about is heavy and weighty, and what he teaches are not just temporal things about how to make life work. So much preaching today is about temporal matters - how to have better relationships, or where you should invest to get the greatest return on your investment, but what he teaches and what we believe about that teaching will have eternal ramifications.

And therefore Jesus responds to their question and teaches in such a way that it devastates the Jewish leaders whole system of authoritative based teaching. And what it gives is a classic statement on authority that I believe every preacher, teacher, and listener of God's word would do so well to listen to. And also those who are sceptical of the words and claims of Jesus need to hear these words because they establish his authority. And they also establishes the authority of every preacher of the word of God when he says, "Thus says the Lord," and bases it in the very text of Scripture. So let us look at this answer that Jesus gives here to the challenge of his teaching. And I want us to see two points. The source of his teaching, and how one can know about his teaching. He gives a glorious promise.

1. We need to see the source of teaching. V.16.

I am always amazed looking at different sources and different authorities. We have been going through a pandemic, and we realize that there are health restrictions and mobility restrictions placed on us. I remember Premier Ford standing up and saying the reason we have these restrictions is I am trusting the expects - those that are authorities and experts in this area. And we do that all the time. If your car has problems you would not bring it to me, because I am not an authority. We trust in authorities. Well, when we want to know the truth about God, and about the afterlife, about final judgment where do we turn? The religious leaders would say to them, but Jesus says you need to turn to the ultimate authority. God has made himself known.

So look at Jesus' answer right here, "**So Jesus answered them, 'My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.'**" Now when Jesus say, "My teaching is not mine," he is not denying that he is not God in human flesh, after all he is the Word who has come in human flesh. No, he is teaching that his teaching did not originate in humanity or through his imagination and observation or through the experiences of life. He came to teach and preach and do the will of the one who sent him. Everything he did and said was in complete obedience to God the Father. Some popular preaching today emphasizes what I have observed in life or experienced this week. It is taken from so-called "real life," or "real people" situations. It might quote a text here or there, but the main message is what I have experienced and what I have gleaned from that experience. So the source of authority is none other than experience. But every preacher and teacher called by God should have this as his motto, "my teaching is not mine." It does not originate from me. If it does, we are desperate trouble. When we witness and testify to family members or neighbours or friends about God and eternal issues, this has to be our motto, "my teaching is not mine," or our words are of no value. They are just our opinion but certainly have no authority.

So look at where Jesus gets his teaching, "**but the one who sent me.**" God the Father who sent him into the world is the source of his teaching. He is the one who has given him the message and also the authority to preach. And this also should be the motto of every preacher that this is the message from the one who sent me. In other words there is a calling of God, but the message is taken from the Word of God; from God himself. It is explained and applied to the listeners. Only God can explain who he is, and how to approach him, or even explain who we are. God is the only one that can give the big answers about heaven and hell. He is the expert. And the religious leaders prized authority. The Jewish Talmud is full of quotes from previous rabbis that had

lived, and they would often quote them to prove their point. Here, Jesus says his authority is the highest, and that is the One who sent me, none other than God. And for preachers and teachers of the One true God, our authority is none other than the Bible. We preach and teach not our own thoughts of what God might be like, or our own ideas of who man is, or how to approach God. More and more from the pulpits all over North America we see people stand up Sunday after Sunday and they are the authority of how one gets to heaven. God would never banish anyone to hell, he is love. God wants you to be happy and express your sexuality according to what you say your orientation is. I heard of a testimony just recently of a man who goes into the pulpit every single Sunday, and he doesn't believe in God, but takes the name Christian. I heard a woman minister say that God comes in many forms, not just the Christian tradition.

And this is so common today. And think why it is so necessary to preach the message of God, and therefore the message of the Bible and only the message of the Bible. God says in Isaiah 55:8-9, "**For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.**" In our pride and arrogance man thinks he can talk authoritatively about God. This is who God is. But it should be so apparent from Isaiah 55:8-9 that unless God chooses to reveal himself there is no way that we can know him. God says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts." There is no way that finite man can know the infinite God. Therefore, to speak for God outside of his Word is the height of arrogance. To make an announcement that this is who God is or this is his will is the height of rebellious pride, because there is no way to know. Most people when they think about God think that he is uninvolved in the everyday affairs of the world. Or that he is an indulgent grandfather. But whoever he might be, he is on my side.

When people start to look at the Scripture and see that he is the sovereign, majestic, all holy God who is all-knowing, all-wise, all powerful, and ever present, they are blown away with how big God is. Their God, however they have fashioned him has always been too small. The God of the Scriptures is the massive God whom every single person is accountable. There is both an awe of him and a trembling before him. No one could have dreamed up the glorious God of the Bible. And Jesus says "**My teaching is not my own, but him who sent me.**" Our teaching is not our own, but our God who sent us. He speaks through us as we convey his authoritative and inerrant word to make him known.

2. We need to see the glory of the promise. V.17

I can remember several years back I had the privilege of marrying this young couple, and one of the things that they wanted me to do during the marriage ceremony was clearly define the biblical roles in the marriage relationship. They wanted to me to actually say in the wife's vows, "Will and love and obey your husband until death brings your separation". And as we went over the vows in the rehearsal one of bridesmaids was really incensed by the language. She was literally angry and red in the face, and the look that she gave me was one of rage. But the look that the young couple gave was one of gratitude and thankfulness. Why the difference? Why anger here and

gratitude over here? And the answer is right here in this verse. The one who truly and sincerely wants to do the will of God will know that the words spoken of Christ here, and that are taught throughout the Scriptures are none other from God.

Jesus follows his statement about the source of his teaching with the message itself. The Jews challenge his ability to teach, and Jesus counters that with their inability to hear the message. It is an incredible statement. Look at what he says here, "**If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.**" According to Jesus the key to knowing the truthfulness of his words is not found in some verifiable external evidence, but it is found in the attitude of the heart. The will is something internal. And here is the desire of one of God's true children and that is to do the will of God, and those who truly desire God know the truthfulness of the words and teachings of Christ. There are two kinds of people before Jesus all the way through the gospels. Those who sit at his feet and learn, and those who argue whether his teaching is right.

And that is so helpful. There are those when you teach about the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, or the virgin birth, or even the swallowing of Jonah by an huge fish and later vomited out on dry land, never question the truthfulness of those texts. They never say when we preach through those texts, can you talk about how people today can know miracles actually took place and how we can believe miracles in our modern world? They never challenge what the word says. Or as we discuss the teaching of Jesus on marriage, gender roles, God's sovereignty over all events, they never question the truthfulness. They might ask questions to clarify and understand. They never say can you prove that this is the word of God? And there is external proof such as the Bible being composed of sixty-six books written by fishermen, and kings, and farmers and priests and through 1500 years of history but it never contradicts itself. The same God that is found in the first book Genesis is found in the last book of Revelation. He hasn't evolved. There is a wonderful harmony. We could talk about fulfilled prophecy or whatever. But I never need to go through all of that Sunday after Sunday because of the heart of the individual believer. They want to know God and to do his will. They come desiring God. And they know the Bible is truth and none other than God's truth. They want to hear his truth and certainly not my speculations or experiences.

The Scriptures are what we call self-authenticating. And what we mean by that is that the greatest evidence that the Bible is the Bible, and Jesus is from God is reading the message itself. It witnesses with our spirit that these are the very words of Jesus Christ. He is God in human flesh. You do not have to go through extensive seminary training or take a detailed course in Christian apologetics to realize the truth of Jesus' words. Those who truly desire to do God's will, will know that these are the words of Christ.

Now think about how much this must have been a rebuke to those who were listening to him, in particular the religious leaders, who were basically saying as they marvelled at his teaching - show us your credentials. Show us your right and authority to teach. Really challenging whether he should be teaching at all. You are unlearned. They rejected Jesus as the teacher from God, therefore according to Jesus' words, they are not truly seeking to do God's will. So the reason why the religious leaders and others rejected Jesus' teaching was not because of a defect in his teaching, or it just

didn’t make logical sense or he was just contradicting himself time and time again. No. The reason why is because they would rather have their sin, they would rather have their own self-righteousness and pride rather than God himself. They really were not interested in God and his ways and doing his will. And you see that from people so often as they roll their eyes at biblical truth. It is not the truth of God because they do not want and they do not care about the will of God.

John Nederhood explains, “**Those who trust in Christ and are trying to do his will should realize that the people around them who reject Christ are doing so because they have not chosen to do God’s will. Those who choose their own will or the will of others who oppose Christ, will simply not be able to recognize the truth the Christ has come to bring.**” And you can examine many of the proofs of divine inspiration of the Bible but it really doesn't matter when you do not want the God of the Bible to begin with. People do not come to Christ, John says earlier is because they love darkness rather than light. Since they love darkness and have no thought or desire to do the will of God they are really uninterested in the will of God. Maybe that describes you. Maybe your rejection of the words of Christ is because if Jesus is who he says he is then so much of your life has to change. But just because of that does not make Jesus any less true, but more importantly any less necessary in your life. He truly is the only way to God and the only way to have your sins forgiven.

But there is a message here for those who are believers, and a warning. It is so easy to drift away from Christ, where the things of earth instead of growing strangely dim become more and more attractive. We find our hearts longing for them more and more. And the more we drift, the more faint the message of Christ and the less impactful the Scriptures are in our lives. In fact, other voices start to dominate. One of the things we have to do is fight that drifting. And so we do the will of God, such as faith to the preaching at church, fellowship, and saying no to sin even when we do not want to. We fight the good fight of faith by fighting those other voices that we might hear the voice of Jesus Christ through the Scriptures. We turn off the tablet or phone. We get up Sunday morning, and even if we do not feel like doing the will of God we do the will of God. Why? We want to hear his voice through the scriptures. We love him and do not want to drift and silence his voice.

So realize that the Bible that you hold is not like any other book. It is none other than God’s revelation. It is His Book that is absolutely necessary in your life. Seek to know him. Seek to do his will. And seek to listen to him.