

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups 8th June 2008

Being Witnesses with Jesus – at the festival

John 7:1-13 (extended reading 6:14 - 7:52)



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

We are half way through our series on...being witnesses with Jesus. We have found ourselves being with Jesus by the river, in the city, at the well, by the pool, in the town and country and last week by the shores of Galilee as Jesus fed the 5,000. As we have witnessed what Jesus did with real people in real places in first century Palestine so we too are challenged and changed as witnesses for Jesus today in the real places of our world, the real people in our lives.

Today's encounter with Jesus at the festival of Tabernacles is a particular challenge and needs to be set in context with what happened after the feeding of the 5000 in Galilee up to the attempt to arrest Jesus at the festival ie John6:14 -7:52.

6:15 – After the feeding of the 5000 Jesus escaped to a mountain as the people wanted to make him King.

6:21 Jesus scares the disciples in the middle of a storm as they cross the Sea of Galilee.

6:25 The crowds form the miracle of the feeding of the 5000 find Jesus at Capernaum on the shores of the lake

6:26 Jesus preaches a sermon in the Capernaum synagogue which alienates some of his congregation and leads to many of his disciples giving up their discipleship (6:66).

7:1 His family do not believe in him and seek to goad him to attending the Feast in Jerusalem to prove himself.

7: 14 Jesus leaves for Jerusalem secretly where his teaching in the Temple courts reawakens the authorities desire to seize and kill him.

One of John's key themes at this point in his gospel is the growing opposition to Jesus which provokes some towards physical violence and others towards plotting his death. This whole episode from the storm on the lake to the turbulence in the temple courts is full of confrontation, argument, disagreement and especially grumbling! –see 6:61, and 7:3-5 as well as 7:12-13. However such grumbling discontent and opposition far from being a negative, is an active and positive sign that people are engaging with the person of Jesus and the Kingdom of God. One of the challenges we face as the Church both collectively as a community and in our individual lives is whether our witness provokes any reaction at all! Only when people have seen something in us that is provocative will they be intrigued enough to question what is going on. We need provocative churches which disturb others to ask 'what does this all mean?'

What was it about Jesus that caused such grumbling, such provocation, even such offence?

Simply put it was his claim to be the source for the meaning, purpose and fulfillment of life.. People simply could not get their head around the fact that it is Jesus who brings life in all its fullness. In our extended passage John gives us three such '*lifelines*' that have their source in Jesus:'

1 *Life* in all its fullness:7:32 -35. Read v35. With Jesus we will find satisfaction, a life that is full and complete.

2 *Life* everlasting:7:38 -40. Read v40, 47, 50 and 54. Faith in Jesus gives us hope of life that is beyond death. Not a vague, vain or sentimental 'pie in the sky hope' but a sure and certain 'resurrection hope' of eternal life. solidly founded in the resurrection of Jesus himself.

3 Spirit Filled *life* Read 7:37-39. Streams of Living water are nothing less than the gift of the Holy Spirit pouring out the life of Christ through his church into the world.

People complained, people grumbled, people were offended but some said 'surely he is the Christ 7:41' and 'many put their faith in him 7:31.'



Witness: questions to discuss

1 What opposition have you encountered living out your Christian life? Do people complain and grumble about you living out your faith?

2 Jesus was let down by his family and friends. How do your family and friends react to your faith in Jesus?

3 Have you ever felt that Jesus' teaching is 'too hard' and felt like no longer following him?

4 Should we expect increasing public opposition to the Church nationally and locally?

5 How do Jesus' claims to being the source for the meaning purpose and fulfillment of life match with your own experience of him?

6 We need provocative churches which disturb others to ask 'what does this all mean?' Do you think our church is a provocative church?