

Barriers to Living Water

John 7:1-52

Bethany Assembly of God

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Central Proposition: Beware of the barriers to Living Water.

Introduction

As we jump back into our series through the Gospel of John, we hear the questions and conversations concerning Jesus coming from a variety of different groups. There are three primary questions they were asking: Where does Jesus' teaching come from? Where does Jesus Himself come from? And where does Jesus say He is going? In fact, the answer to all the questions is the same: heaven. But this was far from obvious to the groups gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Booths.

We're going to start with Jesus' own answer to these questions. It came on the last day, the great day, of the feast, and we need a little context to understand what Jesus claims. The Feast of Booths was an annual festival of the Jews not only celebrating the autumn harvest of fruit, but also commemorating the period of Israel's wandering in the wilderness and the tents and temporary shelters they lived in. For seven days, they lived in these huts, celebrating God's provision and remembering their time in the wilderness after God led them out of slavery in Egypt. Every day a procession of priests and people would leave the Temple carrying a golden pitcher and make their way down to the Gihon Spring. There, a priest would fill the pitcher and then lead the procession back up to the Temple. As the procession continued, the crowd would wave branches in thanksgiving for the harvest and sing Psalms 113-118. When the procession arrived at the Temple, the priest would climb the steps and pour out the water on the altar in the courtyard. On the last day of the feast, this procession took place seven times.

The imagery of this water was not only a prayer for literal rain, but a remembrance of when God provided water from a rock during the wilderness journey and a prayer for salvation and the Holy Spirit. It is reminiscent of prophecies like Isaiah 12:3, Zechariah 14:8, and Joel 3:18. It's in this context, where everyone is aware of these water offerings and the hope they express for abundance, salvation, the Messiah, and the Holy Spirit, that Jesus stands up on the last day of the feast and cries out, *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"* (John 7:37-38) But there are a lot of barriers that keep people from sincerely coming to Him for living water. How do we overcome those barriers?

1. Recognize the pride that comes from familiarity. See John 7:6-8; 27.

The people thought the Messiah would appear suddenly and dramatically, not like Jesus who had been traveling and teaching for several years. They *assumed* they knew that Jesus was from Galilee but that the Christ would come from Bethlehem. The irony is that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, they just didn't know it.

2. Surrender your mixed motives. See John 7:15-19 and Romans 1:21-22.

When we come to the Word of God with everything figured out, all our systems in place, and some assurance that our way is the best way, the right way, the only way, then we may be unable to discern the will of God because of our prior commitments to our own will. Jesus shines the light on our messed up motives that don't really love God and He calls us to repent and believe in Him because He does love God and came from God and has gone back to the Father and if we believe in Him, we will receive the Holy Spirit and have living water.

3. Confess your fear of looking like a fool. See John 7:45-52.

The Pharisees and priests basically called the officers and Nicodemus "ignorant fools." I'm sure that most of us can think of experiences where we felt humiliated and we never want to feel that way again, but don't let barriers of familiarity, mixed motives, or fear get in the way of you coming to the Giver of living water.