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Congregation:	Free Reformed Church of Launceston, Tasmania Tasmania, Australia	Psalm 29
Title:	Jesus knew the right moment	Psalm 25:4 (after the law)
Text:	John 7:1-9 (View)	Hymn 23:1-3
Occasion:	Regular Sunday	Hymn 23:4-6
Topic:	Christ's Suffering	Psalm 79:5
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Beloved congregation of Christ,

Very few of us were alive the day it happened. The end of the Second World War finally came into view on the 6th of June, 1944. On that day, tens of thousands of soldiers stormed the beaches at Normandy in France. Most of them were British, Americans, and Canadians, but there were also a few hundred Australians involved. It was the largest amphibious invasion in history. Nazi Germany's days were numbered from that day onward. Even most of the Nazi generals recognized that with the D-Day invasion the war was lost.

Have you ever thought about why it was the 6th of June, 1944? Why that particular day? It turns out it was just the right moment. There was a full moon – the invasion started well before dawn and they needed the light of the moon. The tides were right – they needed the lowest tides to get the equipment and men on the beaches. The weather was right – the invading force needed to have relatively calm seas. Everything came together for the invasion to happen on that day, the day we now remember as D-Day. It was just the right moment.

The Greek language has a special word for a time like that. The word is *kairos* and it's used in our text in verse 6. Jesus says, "My time has not yet come..." The word for time there in the original

Greek is *kairos*, and it means just the right time, the opportune moment. The 6th of June, 1944 was the right moment for the D-Day invasion at Normandy. In our passage for this morning from John, Jesus says that just the right moment for him wasn't yet there. He knew the right moment and that wasn't it.

As I preach to you from God's Word in John 7:1-9, we'll see:

1. How Jesus' brothers humiliated him
2. How the world hated him
3. How he remained faithful

There was a gap of about six months between the end of chapter 6 and the beginning of chapter 7. So, when verse 1 says that "Jesus went about in Galilee," that means he did that over several months. And we're told he stayed in the north, because going to Judea in the south would have meant a confrontation with the Jewish religious leaders who already wanted him dead. If you think back to John 5, even at that time they wanted to kill Jesus. Why? Because they thought he broke the Sabbath and made himself equal with God.

In verse 2, we read that it was the time for the Jewish Feast of Booths. Our reading from Deuteronomy 16 tells us about this feast. It was the most important and popular feast for the Jews. It was also known as the Feast of Tabernacles. It was held in September/October each year. It centered on the harvest of fruits like dates, grapes, and olives. It was a celebration of thanksgiving for the completed harvest. The Feast of Booths was a joyful occasion, praising God for how he had richly blessed his people in the Promised Land. It was one of the three feasts all Jewish men were expected to attend in Jerusalem. As a Jewish man, Jesus was also expected to make the journey to Jerusalem.

But notice the tension here between verses 1 and 2. On the one hand, he doesn't want to go to Judea because the Jewish leaders have a death warrant for him. But on the other hand, there's God's law saying he has to go to Judea, he has to go to Jerusalem for the Feast of Booths. So what is Jesus going to do?

To add to this tension, the brothers of Jesus come on the scene. We know a little about these brothers from elsewhere in the New Testament. We know their names: James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude. They're actually the half-brothers of Jesus. They're the children of Mary and Joseph – you remember that Joseph wasn't the biological father of Jesus, but only his foster-father. They were Jesus' younger siblings and they grew up with Jesus as their older brother. We also find out from elsewhere in the Bible that they didn't always look up to their older brother or respect him. In fact, in Mark 3, they tried to take Jesus away and stop his ministry because they thought he was crazy.

Their attitude towards Jesus at this point in their lives is evident in John 7 as well. In verse 3, they urge him to go up to Jerusalem. That way his disciples can see the works he's doing. They appear to be referring to the broader group of his followers who were down south. How are they going to see his awesomeness if he doesn't ever head down there? In verse 4, they explain their thinking a little more. If you want to be a religious somebody, you have to get out there and be where the crowds are. Jesus obviously wants to be someone important, so he should be where the important people are. He should be trying to get their attention rather than spending all his time in little old Galilee.

The way they talk reflects their attitude. They're not giving serious advice to Jesus. From the rest of Scripture we know they didn't take their brother seriously. They're not interested in his well-being or the advance of his ministry. They're having a go at him.

Verse 5 tells us why they did that: "For not even his brothers believed in him." At the end of the last chapter, we saw how many of Jesus' disciples forsook him. They didn't believe and they stopped following him. But even his brothers didn't believe in him. Even his brothers refused to eat his flesh and drink his blood in faith, and so have eternal life. They didn't take their brother seriously as the Messiah. They had grown up with the Son of God in their household. Their brother was Jesus – surely their mother Mary had explained to them that he was only their half-brother, that Jesus didn't have Joseph as his real father, because he was miraculously born of the Holy Spirit. Surely they'd been told. But their family bond with him and what they knew about him didn't result in faith at this point in their lives.

Loved ones, there are a couple of things we need to learn from this.

First, the unbelief of Jesus' brothers should be a warning to us. See how they grew up with Jesus and yet didn't believe in him. See how they knew him better than anybody else and still they didn't trust in him as their Saviour. They knew all kinds of facts and information about Jesus, but that didn't work out to salvation for them. Still today, people can grow up with Jesus, and yet they don't believe in him. You can have Jesus in your home through the faith of your parents, and yet you might still be in unbelief. You can know all sorts of information about Jesus, and yet not be personally committed to him. The Bible calls all of us not to just have familiarity with Jesus, but to believe in him, to rest and trust in him as our own Saviour.

The second thing we need to see here is how this is part of Christ's humiliation. Imagine your family has no respect for you. Imagine that everyone in your family thinks you're crazy. You're the Son of God come in human flesh, but they won't listen to you. Even though you are God incarnate, they will not believe in you. Can you see how humiliating that must have been for Jesus? This is part of his suffering. This is part of what he endures for your salvation. When Adam and Eve fell into sin, they brought the curse of death and dysfunction on the human race. They created a world

in which families don't work the way they're supposed to. Alienation and loneliness are all part of the curse. Christ takes that curse on himself. He endures the humiliation of alienation and loneliness, even from his closest family, so we can be a beloved part of the family of God forever. You see, there's more going on here than just some siblings treating their brother badly. This isn't just any brother being mistreated. What you see going on here is Jesus willingly being humiliated for your salvation. He takes it because of his love for you. He endures the curse so you can receive the blessing. Loved ones, look at your Saviour and what he does, love him, and place your faith in him.

Before we go on in our passage, I'd just add that unbelief isn't the end of the story for Jesus' brothers. Later on, early in the book of Acts, we find that they do come to faith. After Jesus has risen from the dead, they finally do believe in him. In fact, two books of the New Testament were written by two of Jesus' brothers, James and Jude. So here in John 7, you see them before regeneration and faith. But later they'd be born again and believe. That reminds us too that just because a person is one way at a certain point in their life, doesn't mean they're always going to be that way. If you'd been an eyewitness observer to the conversation in John 7, you'd have been wrong to conclude that the brothers of Jesus were reprobates, eternally condemned. They were unbelievers, yes, but it's apparent from later developments that they were certainly not reprobates. So too, we ought to refrain from making judgments on unbelievers about whether they're elect or not. We just don't know and we should never pretend to know.

We're now at verse 6 of our passage. Here Jesus begins to reply to his brothers. He tells them it's not the right time for him. What he means is that it's not the right moment for him to make a glorious public appearance. It's not the time for him to go up to Jerusalem with trumpets announcing his arrival. They don't understand how his ministry isn't about grand displays of power. So they don't get the timing either. He adds that their time is always here. It's always a good and opportune moment for them to go up to the feast and do so however they like. They don't have to think about it or reflect on it. For them, they could up to Jerusalem any time they want.

Verse 7 gives the reason. They don't have the world hating on them. The world doesn't hate Jesus' brothers, because Jesus' brothers are part of the world. By "the world" here, Jesus means they're part of the world of unbelief. Even though they're part of the church of God, even though they're members of the covenant, because they don't believe, they're part of the world. That's why there's no hostility from the world against them. The world doesn't view them as a threat. No, they're allied with the world. That's why unlike Jesus they can move about freely whenever they want without having to think about the consequences.

But with Jesus things are different. The world hates him. Unbelievers have an intense hostility against Jesus. Why? He says in verse 7, "...because I testify about the world that its works are evil." We need to unpack that. Jesus has come to be the Saviour. His name means "God saves." And what is it Jesus saves us from? He saves us from the wrath of God we deserve for our evil works. When we fail to obey God's commandments, we are doing evil works and earning God's righteous judgment. Jesus has come to save us from this mess we've created for ourselves. But in order to see him as the Saviour, you also have to see what it is he's saving you from. Before you can understand and believe the good news, you must have a grip on the bad news: your works are evil. You're not a good person. The world hates Jesus because Jesus says you're a broken, messed up person who needs rescue. The world hates Jesus because Jesus says you have a rebel heart, a perverted mind, and a corrupt will.

Our Lord Jesus **testifies** these things. It's important that you note the word "testify" there. That's a courtroom word. There's someone on trial and there's a witness giving testimony. In this case, the world is on trial, and Jesus is testifying that the world is rebellious and evil. God is the Judge. He will judge rightly based on the testimony given. But like a hardened criminal in the courtroom, the world hates the one who's speaking the truth and advancing the case against it. The world hates the witness for the prosecution.

That was why the Jewish religious leaders were seeking to kill him. When you really, really hate someone, you want them dead. If you're really intense about your hatred, you'll do whatever it takes to make sure that person is in the morgue. Murder is the child hatred conceives.

Again we have to look at this in terms of Christ's humiliation. How awful for him to endure this intense hatred because he simply speaks the truth! He testifies truth which hurts, but truth which saves. And that hatred is coming from people whom Christ created. Jesus was involved with created this world for God's glory, but now these creatures are despising their Creator. But even worse, it's God's covenant people who are part of the world of unbelief, it's the church that's joined up with the world. That hatred our Saviour endured would have grieved him enormously. It too was part of his suffering the curse for us.

But we also should look at verse 7 in terms of our union with Christ. In 1 John 3:13, the Holy Spirit says, "Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you." That's addressed to Christians. The world is going to hate you too – expect it. And let's also read together from John 15:18-25. **Please turn there with me and let's hear what Jesus says there [read John 15:18-25].** Look, if you are a Christian, you are going to face hostility. You might have it in your mind that you're going to be nice and friendly to everyone, but if you refuse to compromise and back down on calling sin what it is, people are going to hate on you. If you refuse to celebrate sin the way the world does, people are going to hate on you and then they'll call you the hater. The Word of God guarantees it. If you're

united to Christ by faith, you represent a major threat to the world's twisted way of thinking. The reality is that you represent the way of hope and rescue. But sin has corrupted and clouded the world's thinking. The world doesn't want hope and rescue. The world just wants to carry on in sin and wickedness, carrying on celebrating what's destructive and hurtful. They're not going to allow anyone to stand in the way of that. So, loved ones, don't be surprised when the world hates you for being a Christian and standing your ground on what the Bible says. Expect it.

In our passage we also see how our Saviour remained faithful. Here we're at verses 8 and 9. Jesus told his brothers to go on ahead to the feast. But as for him, he had a different plan. Look with me at verse 8. I want you to notice that there's a footnote there behind the word "not." Now look at the bottom of the page and it says, "Some manuscripts add yet." The truth of the matter is that most New Testament Greek manuscripts include the word "yet." There's good reason to believe the word belongs in the text. It certainly helps to make sense of what follows. In what follows, Jesus does go up to Jerusalem. That creates an issue – if he said he wasn't going to the Feast and then he did, did he change his mind or was something else going on? No, it makes more sense in the context to read him saying, "I am not yet going up to this feast..."

But why was he not yet going? He says at the end of verse 8, "...for my time has not yet fully come." Again, Jesus is aware of the timing. He knows the right moments appointed by God for his ministry. He's not going to follow his brothers' agenda, but God's agenda, God's timing. Christ is faithful to the will of the Father and he remained so.

So in his faithfulness Jesus intended to go to the Feast of Booths, but he intended to do it in God's way. He wasn't going to make a grand entrance and make a big scene. Rather, he intended to go quietly and without any fanfare.

To go a bit deeper with this, we need to see everything here in a big picture kind of way. We need to think more about the Feast of Booths and what it represented and how it relates to Jesus. As I mentioned earlier, this Feast, the Feast of Booths, celebrated the completed harvest. It was a Feast of great joy at how God had provided in the Promised Land. But like all the feasts of the Old Testament, this one wasn't an end in itself. It pointed ahead to fuller and richer realities. The Feast of Booths pointed ahead to the great harvest at the end of the age. The Feast of Booths pointed ahead to the great joy that God's people would have when the number of the elect is complete, when they've all been drawn in, and Christ returns with glory. It was a Feast pointing ahead to the end.

Timing is everything here. Jesus knew the time. Though the calendar said it was the time for the Feast of Booths for the Jews, Jesus knew that God's agenda for him said it was the time of his humiliation and suffering. He couldn't have the glory foreshadowed by this feast until he first suffered the curse of the cross. So Christ couldn't go up to the Feast like his brothers wanted, like

a religious celebrity with the spotlight on him. Because he was going to be faithful to God's plan, he'd go up to Jerusalem, but meekly and quietly – in a way that fit the moment.

Brothers and sisters, the divine plan for Christ was that he go through suffering to glory. First the cross, and then the crown. To that plan he remained faithful – and that served for our salvation. His obedience is part of our righteousness in God's sight. But his obedience also meant he willingly went to the cross to pay the debt we owe to God's justice.

And what is God's plan for his church in this age while we still wait for Christ's return? It's that we work towards the completion of the harvest. The church is to be busy with gathering in souls, so that the gathered number of the elect is complete, and Christ returns. Then the greatest harvest festival ever will begin. And as we work in the harvest, we should expect our experience to mirror that of our Saviour. The Bible teaches us to expect that. In Acts 14, we read that Paul and Barnabas encouraged the disciples in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. They encouraged them to continue in the faith, but they also said that "through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." And in 1 Thessalonians 3:3, Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica and encouraged them. He said that even though they face afflictions, they shouldn't be moved by them. Then listen to what he says in 1 Thessalonians 3:3, "For you yourselves know that we are destined for this." Life as a Christian is going to be hard. Scripture doesn't mince words about that. There are tribulations and afflictions – like Jesus our Saviour, we go through suffering to glory. First the cross, and then the crown. To produce diamonds, God uses great pressure. It was the way of our Saviour, and it's the way of everyone united to him as well. Jesus knew his time involved that, and we're to know that our time here is the same.

But loved ones, let's not lose sight of the joyful hope the gospel gives. If you're a Christian, there is glory ahead. There is a crown for you. After you have endured, after you have persevered, there will be unadulterated joy. Do you know what I mean by "unadulterated"? If something is adulterated, it has other stuff mixed in. We have joy now already in the Lord. But it comes adulterated with the tears and griefs of this world. But the gospel promises that the beautiful moment is coming when we'll have unadulterated joy. Pure joy, unending joy, the kind of joy no earthly feast or party can ever provide. Because Jesus knew the right moment in our passage and throughout his life on earth, we can be sure it's coming. AMEN.

PRAYER

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus,

You experienced horrible humiliation from your brothers. You did it for us. In your love for us, you bore our curse and shame. We thank you for that. Lord, you experienced the hatred of the world. You exposed the world's evil deeds and you still do. The world you created hated you for shining

your good light into the darkness. We see that and we know that this too was part of your humiliation and suffering in our place. We love you for what you endured. Lord, you also remained faithful. You obeyed your Father and went exactly according to his plans. You did it for our salvation and for that we worship and adore you. Lord, please work in our hearts with your Holy Spirit so that when we face the world's hatred, we too endure. Please work in us so we remain faithful. Help us so that we go through our trials and afflictions with hope and confidence. Please help us not to lose our way. We pray for your return with the clouds of heaven. Come, Lord Jesus, Maranatha. Come quickly, Lord. We look forward to the pure joy we'll have on that day with you. We pray: make us long for that day with deeper earnestness.

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