

THREE BIG INTERRUPTIONS **(John 7:30-32, 37-39, 45-46)**

How do you feel about being interrupted? Interruptions are a daily occurrence. You are watching a show or movie on TV. You are getting into the story. The climax is building, and then, suddenly, there is a commercial break. You are enjoying a football game. Your team is building momentum. They are moving down the field, but then play is halted by a yellow flag, an injured player, or again, a commercial break.

A few weeks ago, I was at my mom's house on a Sunday night. We turned on the TV to watch another episode of the show we had watched the Sunday before. We were on the right station at the right time, but the show was interrupted by wall-to-wall storm weather coverage. The weather guy was not content to break in every 15 minutes or so with a one-minute update. Oh, no. To accommodate all their technology and all their teams in the field, they needed to pre-empt the entire hour and the next. They didn't want my mom or me to miss a single radar forecast or a storm-chaser report, but they lost both of us after about 5-minutes. We interrupted their interruption by changing the channel.

Throughout the day interruptions happen often. You are reading or involved in a certain task, and the phone rings. It turns out to be an automated message or a telemarketer.

Sometimes our sleep is interrupted. It might be a loud noise in the middle of the night. It might be voices in another room. It might be nature calling. And if you are in the hospital, forget about getting uninterrupted sleep. The nurse will come in regularly to check your vitals, to give you your medicine, to fiddle with your I-V machine. And as they say, "She will wake you up to give you a sleeping pill."

Some interruptions are good interruptions. A friend comes by, or a family member you have spoken to in awhile calls out of the blue, or it is lunchtime, or you take a snack break or a coffee break.

Our plans can be interrupted by illness, our day by an emergency, and our schedule by the request of a friend or a family member. Whether good or bad, long or short, interruptions happen, and they happen with great frequency.

Jesus was often interrupted. While He was teaching, He was interrupted by a question from the disciples or from the crowd. While He was going from one place to another, He was interrupted by those who sought healing. On one occasion, He was interrupted by a nameless woman who in faith reached out to touch the hem of His robe. By doing so, power went out from Jesus, and that woman was healed. Jesus stopped, turned around, and asked, "Who touched Me?"

Jesus was also not above interrupting others. Jesus sat by a well outside the town of Sychar in Samaria. A woman came to draw water. She came in the heat of the day because she didn't want to face the glares and disapproving stares of the women who came in the cool of the day. Jesus interrupted this woman who didn't want to be bothered by asking her a question. The question turned into a conversation, one that changed her life.

In today's text, we are going to look at three different interruptions. One came by

Jesus, one by John, the author of this gospel account, and the third involved some men who had been tasked with a job, but they were interrupted to the point they were neither able nor willing to complete their assignment.

Turn with me to John's gospel, the 7th chapter. We don't have time to look at the entire chapter, but I want you to see the flow of the chapter because as the chapter moves along, it builds in intensity and drama. The chapter starts out in a rather disturbing way.

Look at v. 1. By saying that *the Jews* were seeking to kill Jesus, John doesn't mean all the Jewish people. Jesus was loved and revered by many Jewish people. John has in mind the Jewish leaders, the ones I like to call the muckety-mucks. These were people of position and power in the Jewish religion. They viewed Jesus as a threat, and they were correct. He was a threat to the religious system they had devised and had added on to the teachings of Scripture. Jesus was careful to obey what they Scriptures taught and commanded, but in no way did He feel obligated to keep, protect, and honor their teachings and traditions that stood outside the Scripture.

Because He was odds with them, and because they sought to do Him harm, for a time, Jesus stayed away from Judea where the religious authorities mostly congregated. The beginning of John 7:1 covers a six-month time-period, April to October. Matthew, Mark, and Luke cover many of the things that happened during that period. During that time, Jesus toured through villages of Galilee. He went northwest to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, north and east to Caesarea Philippi and the Decapolis, and back to Capernaum. John entirely omits those ministry travels and events.

John picks up when it is time for the Feast of Tabernacles. It was a week-long celebration of how God protected His people in the wilderness after God had delivered them from their captivity in Egypt. The religious leaders expected Jesus and His disciples to show up for the feast, and they planned on capturing and killing Jesus when He arrived.

Wisely, Jesus waited. He shows up midway through the week-long celebration. Look at v. 14. Some of the leaders were present, and they heard Jesus teach. Privately, they were impressed by what they heard, but they had a complaint: "He hasn't earned a degree from one of our approved seminaries; so, he can't be trusted."

Jesus had a counter-argument, but then He cut to the chase. He asked point-blank at the end of v. 19, "Why do you seek to kill me?"

We are told in v. 20 that the crowd answered. The crowd would have consisted of pilgrims and residents of Jerusalem who had no knowledge of the secret plans that had been made, as well as some of those who had made those plans. Either, someone who wasn't in the know was shocked that Jesus would ask such an outrageous question, or someone in the know pretended that Jesus was nuts.

When we get to v. 25, I think certain citizens of Jerusalem speak up. These people are close enough to know that there is friction between their leaders and Jesus. They have heard the rumors that something is afoot. Someone goes ahead and voices what others are thinking. Notice also v. 26. Maybe there is a bigger conspiracy at work.

Regardless, let's look at vv. 30-32. When we get to v. 32, the religious leaders have had enough. They are ready to act.

With all that as background, we get to the first of three big interruptions.

Jesus Interrupted a Worship Service with a Dramatic Invitation

Notice vv. 37-38. There are two ways in which Jesus' invitation was dramatic.

1. The Setting of His Invitation was Dramatic.

We need to spend a few moments setting the scene. The Feast of Tabernacles encompassed eight days. The eighth day was a day of rest, but the seventh day was truly, the climactic day. That is the day in view v. 37.

On each of the first seven days, a priest would take a golden pitcher to the Pool of Siloam. He would dip it in the pool and fill it with water. He would then make his way back to the temple. All the while, a procession would follow him. The joyous shouts of the people would be mingled with the sounding of trumpets. The scene would evoke in the minds of the people what we read in Isaiah 12:3, "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." The first six days the priest would march one time around the altar. On the seventh day, the priest would process seven times around the altar. On either side of the altar there was a funnel. Another priest would pour a pitcher of wine down one funnel while the first priest would pour his pitcher of water down the other funnel. This was done each day for all seven days.

The purpose of the ceremony was to thank God for having sustained their forefathers in the desert. The people, no doubt, would recall the story from Exodus 17 where the children of Israel were thirsty and they complained loudly to Moses. Moses cried out to God saying, "The people are ready to stone me." God told Moses to strike a large rock face, and when he did, God promised to bring water forth from the rock and thus give water to all the people, and so it happened.

So, here is Jesus watching the people as they are watching the priest march around the altar and then pour water from the pool of Siloam into the funnel. As the priest is doing that at the high point of this worship service on the last day of the feast proper, Jesus interrupts. He yells out for all to hear: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink."

It was a mic-drop moment.

I wonder: Have we given God permission to interrupt us when we gather to worship Him? On Sunday mornings we are very time-conscious. We begin promptly at 11:00, and there is an expectation that we will end by 12:00. I remember the story about the new preacher at certain church. He asked a deacon, "How long can I preach?" The deacon said, "You can preach as long as you want, but we leave at 12:00."

Even though we have an hour, the hour is pretty much spoken for. We have an order of service to go through, and it is printed in the bulletin. I think some churches have their order of service chiseled into the stone wall outside the front door of the church, and I pity the fool who tries to change the order of their service. They don't have a place for God to show up and interrupt them; so, He doesn't.

Let's not be that church. Let's be the church that God can do whatever He wants to do, whenever He wants to do it, when we gather in His name. When we gather in His

name, that means He is in charge, and the worship is for Him. It is not for us. In the final analysis, it matters little if you don't like certain elements of the service. It only matters whether it pleases Him because He is the One whom we worship.

Not only was the setting of Jesus' invitation dramatic . . .

2. *The Content of His Invitation was Dramatic.*

Jesus was inviting thirsty people to come to Himself. A thirsty person is someone who has a need, and he knows he has a need, and he is willing to admit his need. He doesn't care who knows he is thirsty. He only cares that his thirst be quenched.

We read the words of the psalmist:

As a deer pants for flowing streams,
so my soul pants for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.
When shall I come and appear before God?
—Psalm 42:1-2

Jesus makes Himself available to those who are desperate for Him. If you are not desperate for Jesus you will content yourself with Jesus substitutes. If you are not desperate for Jesus, attending a church service is enough. Singing the hymns you like is enough. Hearing a sermon that keeps you moderately entertained is enough. Enjoying the fellowship of people you like is enough.

Oh, but when you become thirsty for Jesus, nothing will satisfy you except Jesus.

On Thursday night I took the family to the movie theater in Kingfisher to see *Jesus Revolution*. It tells the story of the Jesus movement in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Two of the key characters in this true to life story are Pastor Chuck Smith and Greg Laurie who became a pastor. Greg Laurie is still alive and active in ministry. In an interview he related that some years ago he asked Chuck Smith if we would see another Jesus Movement. Smith replied, "Greg, I'm not sure that we are desperate enough."

I think people are getting desperate, and that may be why we seeing spiritual movements breaking out on college campuses across our country.

Listen to the promise Jesus made in v. 38. This sounds reminiscent of something Jesus said to a desperate woman in John 4. He said to the woman at the well, "Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (4:14).

A few years ago there was a commercial featuring a man who was said to be the most interesting man in the world. His message was, "Stay thirsty my friends."

My message to you is, "Stay thirsty for Jesus." Know that He will satisfy your thirst.

In v. 39 we come to a second big interruption.

John Interrupted His Own Story with a Spiritual Explanation

We go from Jesus' dramatic invitation to John's spiritual explanation. In this 7th

chapter of John, the apostle is telling the story of what happened when Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles celebration. He tells us what various people said and what Jesus said. Suddenly, John interrupts the recitation of the story and says, “By the way, this is what Jesus means by what He said.”

Look again at v. 39. Those of us who live on this side of the Day of Pentecost have a distinct advantage over those who lived on the other side of Pentecost. That day which is recorded for us in Acts 2 has been called the birthday of the Church. It is on that day that the Holy Spirit came to live within the lives and hearts of everyone who had trusted Jesus as Lord and Savior. Now, every time a person repents and gives his or her life to Christ, at that moment the Holy Spirit comes to live within that person.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. If you are a believer, you have Jesus living within you. He is there to **teach** you, **convict** you, **encourage** you, **grow** you, **empower** you, and **do** for you whatever you need to become more like Jesus.

The only thing you have to do to qualify for the receipt of the Spirit of Jesus is to believe in Jesus. To believe is to trust. It is to place your full weight upon the one you say you trust.

The late D. James Kennedy used to say that some people believe in Jesus the way they believe in George Washington. They believe He existed, but they aren't trusting Him for anything. Trust kind of faith doesn't exist solely in the head. It also involves the heart. To trust Jesus is to love Jesus and to depend upon Him.

Like John, I think we need to interrupt ourselves and make sure we understand what Jesus has said.

We travel down the highway of life at great speed. At times, we need to pump the brakes. We need to slow down, pull off to the side of the road, and come to a complete stop. We need to get out, lean against the hood and think about what we just saw, contemplate what we just heard, digest what we just read. We need to interrupt ourselves for a few minutes to make sure that we understand the meaning and significance of what is taking place around us and within us.

We need to learn to reflect. The discipline of reflection takes time and quietness. We must be still before the Lord and let Him speak. In addition to hearing Him, we must make sure we really understood what we heard.

Choosing to interrupt yourself is an indispensable part of living life well.

There is one more interruption that takes place in our text.

The Temple Guards Were Interrupted by a Surprising Realization

The temple guards had been tasked with arresting Jesus. These were Jews, not Romans. As Jews, they had a certain familiarity with the Scriptures and their faith. We were told in v. 32 that these men had been sent by the chief priests and the Pharisees. The chief priests were mostly Sadducees. To say that the Sadducees and Pharisees did not see eye-to-eye would be an understatement. They had great differences theologically and doctrinally; yet, they were united in their opposition to Jesus. Together, they sent out men to arrest the one they saw as a threat.

When the men, the officers, the guards, the temple police returned, they did so without Jesus. They had failed to arrest Him. The Pharisees were not happy campers. Look at v. 45. Use your imagination. Can't you see them? They look at the officers and say, "Where is He? Why didn't you bring Him in as you were told to do? You had one job!"

The temple police have a ready reply. Look at v. 46. In the Greek text, v. 46 ends with the Greek word for man. That little detail may be significant. Let me explain. These men heard Jesus teach. They had never heard a man teach like Jesus taught. Their reaction may have been similar to those who heard Jesus give the Sermon on the Mount. At the end of Matthew 7 we find these words: "And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at His teaching, for He was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes."

In the ears of those Jewish, temple officers, when Jesus spoke, His words not only had the ring of truth, they had the ring of deity. Maybe when they said, "We never heard speak such a man," they were really saying, "This man is more than just a man."

They went to arrest Jesus, but in the end, they were arrested by Him. They were arrested by the power and the wisdom with which He spoke. They were captivated by what they saw and what they heard. Maybe in their minds they were trying to keep the religious leaders from making a terrible mistake.

Have you ever been surprised by Jesus? It has happened quite often than someone decides to investigate what the Christian faith is all about, and when they began they have certain prejudices, and they believe they know where their examination of Christianity will take them. In the end, however, they come to very different conclusions that they thought they would.

I think about Josh McDowell. As a young man, he embarked upon a mission of proving that the claims upon which the Christian faith is based are untrue. McDowell was a pre-law major. He knew somethings about evidence. He set about looking for evidence that the Bible in unreliable and that Jesus wasn't who He claimed to be. To his surprise, he discovered that the mountain of evidence he looked at pointed to the truth of the Bible and the deity of Jesus. In the end, he gave his life to Christ as has so many others who have honestly examined this Book and what it teaches.

I am wondering, do you need to be interrupted? Do you need God to interrupt the direction of your life? Do you need to hit the pause button and take a second and third look at where you are headed, and what is really important, and what isn't.

When Josh McDowell came to faith in Christ, he said he prayed for four things. Let me share those with you. Josh McDowell said:

First, I said, "Lord Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross for me."

Second, I said, "I confess those things in my life that aren't pleasing to you and ask you to forgive and cleanse me." God tells us, "No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can remove it. I can make you as clean as freshly fallen snow" (Isaiah 1:18, paraphrased).

Third, I said: "Right now, in the best way I know how, I open the door of my

heart and life and trust you as my Savior and Lord. Take control of my life. Change me from the inside out. Make me the type of person you created me to be.”

The last thing I prayed was, “Thank you for coming into my life by faith.” It was faith based not on ignorance but on evidence, the facts of history, and God’s Word.

The change was not immediate, but it was real. Over eighteen months, my life was changed.

Do you need to pray what Josh McDowell prayed. I invite you to do so. Right where you are seated, in your heart, pray these things to Jesus . . .