

Rivers of Living Water

Sunday School Lesson

John 7:37-46

May 18, 2025

Let's talk for a moment about reality. Reality are the things in life that are commonly observed and verified to exist, things that are consistent and not just random or imaginary. Reality is something that is perceived as real and is physically experienced by the senses. But reality can be manipulated by propaganda, beliefs, biases, fantasies, illusions, simulations, assumptions, language, and also be influenced by conformity or mass hysteria, so reality is relative, and reality is not the exact same experience for everyone.

In our lesson for today, the reality of Jesus as the son of God, sent by God, in human flesh is being contrasted with the reality of the crowd and the reality of the authorities. Jesus is giving them an opportunity to redefine their understanding of God and thus, to rethink their understanding of the Messiah prophecy. This is not just a challenge for the first century; it is still a challenge today. Due to religious teachings, the authorities and the people expected a Messiah to come that was a better version of King David. This Messiah would reunite the Kingdom of Israel and throw out all foreign oppressors. The Israelites would celebrate because the promise was that this king would reign forever.

This had been the primary teaching for four hundred years. It had been passed down from generation to generation so getting the people to be open enough to even challenge their own narrative would be difficult. First, people needed to be curious enough to even challenge their own misperceptions. Second, they would need to be strong enough to be willing to suspend what they believe to be true in order to take in new information. Finally, they would need to weight the authenticity of the new information in order to establish a new reality. Finally, if they do embrace a new reality, they will be pressured to return to the old reality and maybe even ostracized if they refuse to give up their new ideas.

Let us pray

O Holy God, transform our lives as we follow you. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear and most of all, hearts that do not judge. Amen.

Our Purpose Statement: **To celebrate Jesus' gift of living water that bring eternal life.**

Indoctrination is real and we know that from what we can observe around us in Christianity today. Many of us grew up believing that the Bible was a rule book. It is obvious that many Christian still believe that today given the insistence of politicians to prominently place the Ten Commandments in public spaces such as schools and public building. I like the Ten Commandments and I have studied them but friends, people ignore the Ten Commandments. They do not keep the Sabbath holy. They put other gods - politicians, sports team, finances, hobbies, etc. – before the one true God. They bear false witness through gossip. Well, you get the picture. I could go into the many

teachings of 'Jesus that are being violated at present but the new Pope seems to be speaking up so I do not need to say more.

I honestly do not know how some people sleep at night given the amount of cruelty we are watching every day. The Romans engaged in that level of cruelty back in the first century. I would also contend that the religious authorities also engaged in cruelty. Both authorities used cruelty to maintain control. This impact on people meant that they were enough obedient followers or they were curious in believing there had to be a better plan.

That plan was Jesus. Now look at the words of those who questioned whether Jesus was the hope they were desiring.

- He is a prophet.
- He is the Christ (Messiah).
- The Christ cannot come from Galilee.
- He is supposed to be from David's house (Bethlehem).

Jesus was not fitting the mold as they saw it. But it is interesting that while the people were weighing his authenticity, the Roman guards were actually listening without the need to qualify him. They heard something unique. They heard hope. They heard life.

What was Jesus saying? He was offering a new reality that was far apart from the rules, the piety, the cruelty, and the constant nagging feeling of not measuring up. He was offering living water, just as he did in chapter four to the woman at the well. This living water is the Holy Spirit and while people felt the presence of the Spirit when they were around Jesus, it would be nothing like the Spirit they would experience when Jesus finally ascended to heaven,

Jesus is the source of the Holy Spirit. Our lesson points out the Jesus spoke of the Spirit as water but the disciples later experience it as fire. The Old Testament refers to the Spirit as breath or air. So you have the elements of water, fire, and air – all necessary for life.

Jesus is also the threat. We know water, fire and wind can be destructive in nature. Jesus is destructive to "the way things always have been." As one older gentlemen in one of my church once said, "You better not get too close to Jesus. He will change something." Yes, he will and that is good news. Friends, this is the Jesus we have to offer our community and the world.

Let us pray:

Holy Jesus, our living water, meet us where we are and offer us your life-giving presence and Spirit. May your grace overflow to all we meet this week. Bring your healing and wholeness to our community today. Amen.