Our scripture reading this morning is from the Gospel According to John, where we've been reading over these past Sundays. We read in John's Gospel, and today in chapter seven... and a number of verses, which we'll read from the beginning of the chapter, which you'll find on page 892 of the Pew Bible. And again, it will be helpful for you to have the Bible open before you at that place, page 892 of the Pew Bible. We'll read first of all, verses 1 through 14, and then, verses 37 through 39.

*"After this, Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill him. Now, the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand, so his brothers said to him, 'Leave here and go to Judea that your disciples also may see the works you are doing, for no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.' For not even his brothers believed in him.*

*"Jesus said to them, 'My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. You go up to the Feast. I am not going up to this Feast, for my time has not yet fully come.'*

*"After saying this, he remained in Galilee. But after his brothers had gone up to the Feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. The Jews were looking for him at the Feast, and saying, 'Where is he?' And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, 'He is a good man.' Others said, 'No, he's leading the people astray.' Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.*

*"About the middle of the Feast, Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching."*

And then in verse 37, *"On the last day of the Feast---the great day---Jesus stood up and* ***CRIED OUT****..."* And I want here to follow the reading that you'll find in the footnote. Let me read the words using the reading that's found in the footnote. *"On the last day of the Feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and* ***CRIED OUT****, 'If anyone* ***THIRSTS****, let him come to me; and let him who believes in me drink. As the scriptures have said, out of* ***HIS HEART*** *(i.e., the* ***MESSIAH’S HEART****) will flow* ***RIVERS OF LIVING WATER****.'*

*"Now, this he said about the* ***SPIRIT****, whom those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet* ***GLORIFIED****."*

I wonder if it struck you as we've been reading through The Gospel According to John as it has struck me---I think, more forcefully than any other time in my life I've read through the Gospel of John---that we are today only one third of the way through the narrative of Jesus' life and ministry according to John. And yet already there is a very, very serious plot to ***MURDER*** Jesus.

We are only in the seventh chapter, but already we have learned that there are those who are seeking to ***MURDER*** Jesus. And indeed, he is particularly conscious as he tells us on more than one occasion in this chapter that there are those who want to kill him. Of course, the idea is ridiculous. Who would want to kill Jesus? And people said that to him. The idea is ***LUDICROUS***. People wanting to kill you. And yet, as John unfolds the wonder of the life and ministry of Jesus, obviously early on in these three years of ministry, there were those who found the pressure of Jesus' teaching so powerful on their spirits that they wanted to resist him to the bitter end. And of course, as the gospel narrative goes on, this is exactly what we discover happened. It is John's way of saying, as we have already seen in his gospel, at the end of the day, there really are only ***TWO THINGS*** that you can do with the Lord Jesus. ***1)*** You must either ***EMBRACE HIM*** by faith as your savior, master, and Lord. Or alternatively, ***2)*** you will eventually find the very mention of his name ***INTOLERABLE*** to you, and you will either switch him off your life mentally, or as these men known for their obedience to God's law for their rectitude and their righteousness eventually did--- literally and physically---took him and had him ***MURDERED***.

And so, as Jesus is encouraged to go up to the Feast of Booths by his brothers, who John tells us, themselves did not believe in him. They were simply playing with him: *"If you're really able to do these things, you should go to Jerusalem and do those things in the most* ***PUBLIC*** *way."* John tells us of how Jesus eventually does go to this Feast, the Feast of Booths. And as the seventh chapter unfolds, it tells us a story of the mounting ***OPPOSITION*** to Jesus and about the widespread ***CONFUSION*** about Jesus. And then, eventually in verses 37 to 39, the marvelous ***INVITATION*** of Jesus. And these are the ***THREE THINGS*** I want us to think about this morning. The first two very briefly, and the third, at a little greater length.

***1. A Mounting OPPOSITION to Jesus***

This is a chapter about the ***1)*** ***MOUNTING OPPOSITION*** against Jesus. It's already present in chapter five. We are told of those who wanted to plot against him. But notice how that opposition ***MOUNTS*** here, verse one, *"He would not go about Judea because the Jews were* ***SEEKING TO KILL*** *HIM."* Again, in verse 19, a similar kind of thing, *"Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you* ***SEEK TO KILL ME****?"* Again, in verses 25 and 26, *"Some of the people of Jerusalem said, "Is not this the man whom they* ***SEEK TO KILL****?"* So, it was apparently well-known what was afoot. Verse 30, *"They were seeking to* ***ARREST HIM****, but no one laid a hand upon him."* And verse 32, *"The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to* ***ARREST HIM****."*

On ***FIVE*** separate occasions in this chapter, John records the way in which ***OPPOSITION*** was mounting against the Lord Jesus Christ. And there was, as you notice, much ***MUTTERING*** about him behind the scenes. It's a little indication to us, actually, that it's what ***happens BEHIND THE SCENES*** that really tells us what people really think about the Lord Jesus Christ. It's what happens ***BEHIND*** the eyes, what happens ***BEHIND*** the demeanor, what happens ***BEHIND*** the words: the muttering and the grumbling of the heart that was mounting against the Lord Jesus Christ. My friends, we always ought to be conscious---would to God this would dawn upon us---that it is always ***DANGEROUS*** to side with Jesus. But when anyone sides with Jesus, there is going to be ***MUTTERING*** and ***GRUMBLING*** about them. That if you are going to side with Jesus, people are going to speak about you and defame you with Jesus behind your back, because they cannot speak well of ***YOU*** without speaking well of ***JESUS***. And they cannot speak well of ***JESUS*** without speaking well of ***THOSE*** who love, and trust, and follow the Lord Jesus. And so, this is a very searching narrative about ***MOUNTING OPPOSITION*** against Jesus.

***2. A Widespread CONFUSION About Jesus***

But ***2)*** it's also a narrative that tells us about a rather ***WIDESOREAD CONFUSION*** there was about Jesus. The question apparently on many people's lips was the question, *"Who is Jesus?"* And if my mathematics is correct---which is not always the case---if you look down through verses 11 to the end of this chapter, you will notice that there are no less than ***NINETEEN*** question marks.

That might just be the most concentrated number of ***QUESTION MARKS*** anywhere to be found in the gospel. And those question marks are all actually about Jesus. Either ***PEOPLE*** questioning about Jesus, or ***JESUS*** questioning people about himself. ***QUESTIONS***, ***QUESTIONS***, ***QUESTIONS***! But you see, the wonderful thing about that is that when Jesus comes in ***POWER***---as he was coming in power among the people in those days and demonstrating his ***DEITY*** and his gracious ***HUMANITY***, his saving and keeping power---there are always going to be ***QUESTIONS***. It's a little indication about the difference between the church ***WITH*** the power of the Holy Spirit, and the church ***WITHOUT*** the power of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus ***IS PRESENT*** among his people in the ***POWER*** of the Holy Spirit, then people ***ASK QUESTIONS***. When Jesus is ***NOT PRESENT*** in the ***POWER*** of His Holy Spirit among his people, ***NOBODY*** outside ***ASKS*** any ***QUESTION***.

And so, we ought to understand that in situations where people are ***TALKING*** about Jesus---even if they are ***CONFUSED*** about Jesus... in a sense even if they are wrong about Jesus---it can be the ***EVIDENCE*** of the power of the ***PRESENCE*** of Jesus Christ. How different are our churches ***TODAY***, are they not? Where we have to employ every conceivable technique to try to find a way to get people to listen to what we have to say about Jesus? But when Jesus is ***PRESENT*** in the power of His Holy Spirit, WE are not the ones who are asking the questions. The ***WORLD*** is coming to us and ***ASKING*** the ***QUESTIONS*** about Jesus. *"Who is he? Is he who he really said he was? Did he do what he really said he did? Is he the Savior the Bible promises him to be?"*

And so, there's this amazing ***CONTRAST***. In a way, we should find it almost ***FRIGHTENING***---but at the same time ***INSPIRING***---that ***TWO THINGS*** are happening ***SIMULTANEOUSLY*** for one and the same reason. ***1)*** There is enormous ***HOSTILITY*** to Jesus. My friends, I say again, wherever Jesus is truly present---the ***REAL*** Jesus---he always evokes enormous ***HOSTILITY*** eventually. ***2)*** And yet at the same time, the ***QUESTIONS*** are being asked. And there are those who are ***SEEKING*** and there are those who are ***COMING***.

***3. A Shouted INVITATION to Come to Jesus***

And it's this that brings us to the ***THIRD*** and the ***MAIN*** point of this passage. Yes, there is mounting opposition against Jesus. Yes, there is widespread questioning of Jesus. But here in verses 37 through 39 is the ***CENTERPIECE*** of this chapter: this marvelous ***INVITATION TO COME TO JESUS.***

And you should notice a very ***ARRESTING*** and ***UNUSUAL*** thing. Twice in this chapter---using the same verb, although it's translated differently---in verse 28 and in verse 37... twice in this chapter we read a most ***UNUSUAL STATEMENT*** about the Lord Jesus: "***HE SHOUTED OUT***." Now why is that unusual? Because one of the Bible texts by which Jesus lived, as Matthew 12 tells us, is that beautiful text in the prophecy of ***ISAIAH*** that says that, *"He* ***WOULD NOT*** *lift up his voice in the streets."* He wouldn't draw attention to himself in an unseemly way. And so, the voice of Jesus is characteristically a tender voice---a voice of ***GRACE***, a voice of ***GENTLENESS***. But here in this event, there are two moments when Jesus ***DEMANDS*** to be heard. When he is saying something which is obviously of such enormous importance to him, that he stands and ***RAISES HIS VOICE*** and directs all hearers' attention to ***HIMSELF***.

In order to understand what Jesus is saying, we need to understand that He says these words in verses 37 through 39, *"On the last day, the* ***GREAT DAY*** *of the Feast of Booths."* Now, the Feast of Booths was that annual festival where the people would gather in Jerusalem, but they would live in artificial tents to celebrate the days when they passed through the wilderness and God provided them with water to drink, with manna to eat, and with the cloud of light that led them through the wilderness eventually into the Promised Land, how for 40 years God ***PROVIDED*** for them. Despite all their sinfulness, he provided them with everything that they needed. And the Jews celebrated this Feast in a ***SPECTACULAR*** way. Each day of the seven days of the Feast, they would gather, and they would be led by the priests down to the ***POOL OF SILOAM***. And there, they would gather ***WATER***, and they would celebrate by speaking, and chanting, and singing some of the Old Testament texts about the ***WATER*** that God provides for his people: *"With joy will we draw* ***WATER*** *from the wells of Jerusalem,"* from Isaiah chapter 12, and other texts in scripture?

And then when the priests had gathered the ***WATER***, they would march up to the temple. And there, they would go round the altar, and the priests ceremonially would pour out this ***WATER*** from Siloam into the base of the sacrificial altar. It was a sign of longing for God to give the ***WATER*** that would finally satisfy them... that they believed the ***MESSIAH*** would give. And then on the last day, ***THE GREAT DAY***, they would go round the altar, and round the altar, and round the altar until they've gone round the altar ***SEVEN TIMES***. And then, with great drama on that last day of the Feast, the ***WATER*** would be poured down into the base of the altar. And there would be this kind of stunned silence--- as there sometimes is, isn't there at the end of some great occasion when it's over. And the Feast was over for another year, and the water was gone, and they were still ***THIRSTY***. The ***MESSIAH*** had not come, they were still in desperate need. How could their sins ultimately be forgiven?

And on the ***LAST DAY OF THE FEAST***, when the drama had been finally enacted, Jesus said with a ***LOUD VOICE***, *"Is there anyone here who is still* ***THIRSTY****? Is there anyone here who understands what the Old Testament texts mean when they say, 'Are you spiritually* ***THIRSTY****?' Is there anyone here who is* ***THIRSTY****??? Then,"* says Jesus, *"let him come to* ***ME****, and let him who believes in* ***ME****, drink from* ***ME****!!! As the scriptures have said, 'Out of* ***HIS HEART****,'... Meaning I think, out of* ***JESUS' HEART****,... 'will flow rivers of* ***LIVING WATER****.' "* And John adds, *"He spoke here about the* ***HOLY SPIRIT****, who had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been* ***GLORIFIED****."* And you see what he's saying. He's saying, *"All the* ***DRAMA****, all the* ***RELIGION****, all the* ***LITURGY****, all the* ***RITES*** *of the* ***OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES****... don't you see that they are all making you* ***THIRSTY*** *for the* ***REAL THING****? And I am the* ***REAL THING****. It's from* ***ME*** *that rivers of* ***LIVING WATER*** *will flow to you to satisfy your deep* ***SPIRITUAL THIRST****.”* And of course, it's not coincidental that it's in John's Gospel exclusively that we are told, when the soldier pierced Jesus' side right into ***WITHIN HIM***, *"And there flowed from within him, not only blood,"* says John, *"but water."* You see how John must have put these ***TWO THINGS*** together. It's from his ***WOUNDED SIDE*** that the satisfaction of our ***DEEPEST*** needs comes. It's when Jesus is ***CRUCIFIED*** and ***EXALTED*** as our savior that he ***SENDS*** his Holy Spirit into our hearts to bring ***HIS OWN PRESENCE*** there in order to satisfy our deepest needs. Of course, you know what the people remembered, don't you? They remembered how the people in the wilderness had ***CRIED OUT*** to Moses and said, "We are ***THIRSTY***. We are ***THIRSTY*** and we are dying in the desert." And God came down and as it were, stood upon a ***ROCK***, and smote the ***ROCK*** in the wilderness. And out of the center of the ***ROCK***, there flowed the ***WATERS*** that would meet the physical needs of the people.

And John, I think, is saying to us, *"That's just a picture of* ***THE LORD JESUS CHRIST*** *and how, upon the cross of Calvary, God would* ***SMITE*** *the* ***ROCK*** *again. And from his* ***WOUNDED SIDE*** *would flow the* ***BLOOD*** *that would cover our* ***SIN****, and the* ***WATER*** *that would symbolize the* ***HOLY SPIRIT****, who would satisfy our deepest spiritual needs by* ***1)*** *bringing us to* ***FAITH IN CHRIST****, and then, as Jesus puts it here,* ***2)*** *by bringing us to* ***DRINK OF JESUS CHRIST****.”*

And so, you see, John says there are ***THREE THINGS*** that always go together. They are never separated from one another. ***1)*** ***NUMBER ONE***, the ***QUENCHING*** of my spiritual needs by ***THE WATER OF LIFE*** that the Lord Jesus gives to me. **2)** ***NUMBER TWO***, the gift of the Holy Spirit to bring the ***BLESSINGS OF JESUS*** into my heart. **3)** ***NUMBER THREE***, the ***GLORIFYING OF THE LORD JESUS*** in my life.

Of course, when John said, *"He was speaking about the* ***SPIRIT*** *who was* ***NOT YET GIVEN****,"* literally he says, *"Who was not yet until Jesus was* ***GLORIFIED****."* He's thinking about how the ***GLORIFIED*** Lord Jesus would pour out his Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and satisfy the needs of those ***THIRSTY ONES*** on the day of Pentecost who were ***CRYING OUT*** for their need of forgiveness to be satisfied.

***This Has Application to Us***

But you see what took place there in ***HISTORY*** takes place here in my ***PERSONAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY***. And these ***THREE THINGS*** always go together. ***1)*** The satisfying of my ***SPIRITUAL NEEDS*** in Jesus Christ, ***2)*** the gift of the Holy Spirit ***GIVEN TO ME*** by Jesus Christ, and ***3)*** the ***HONORING***, and ***GLORIFYING***, and ***EXALTING*** of the Lord Jesus Christ in my heart.

And we can ask the ***QUESTION*** in any one of ***THREE WAYS***. ***1)*** Is Jesus ***GLORIFIED*** in your heart? ***2)*** Have you ***RECEIVED*** the Holy Spirit? ***3)*** Is your ***SPIRITUAL THIRST*** being met by Jesus Christ? And if the answer to ***ONE*** of these is, "***YES***," then the answer to ***ALL*** of these is, "***YES***." It's of this very thing that Horatius Bonar so beautifully wrote, "I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'Behold, I freely give the ***LIVING WATER***. Thirsty one; stoop down, and ***DRINK*** , and ***LIVE***.' I came to Jesus, and I ***DRANK*** of that life-giving stream; my ***THIRST*** was ***QUENCHED***, my ***SOUL REVIVED***, and now ***I LIVE*** in Him."

Today, Jesus says, *"Is there anybody here who is* ***THIRSTY****?"* Then, come to ***HIM*** and ***DRINK***. And from ***WITHIN JESUS***, flowing into ***YOUR HEART***, will come the ***HOLY SPIRIT*** like rivers of ***LIVING WATER*** by which you will be satisfied in ***THIS LIFE*** and in ***THE LIFE TO COME***. And all your need for forgiveness, and pardon, and satisfaction, and new life will surely be met. Oh, come to ***HIM***, and ***DRINK***, and be satisfied. "Our heavenly Father, we thank you again for the riches of our Lord Jesus Christ---that he is able to satisfy all of our needs... to bring us the forgiveness of our sins, to bless our lives with the rich blessings of his grace. Save us, Lord Jesus, from looking anywhere else but to ***YOU*** for pardon, to anywhere else but the gift of your ***HOLY SPIRIT*** for satisfaction, to anyone else but your dear ***HEAVENLY FATHER*** for acceptance and blessing. And draw us near to yourself, we pray, as we sing to you and as we gather around your table together. Bless us, we ask, for your great name's sake. Amen."