

WAIT FOR YOUR RIGHT MOMENT!

Today's Text: Jn 7: 1-53

Extracts:

After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for *He did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him. Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. His brothers therefore said to Him, "Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world."* For even His brothers did not believe in Him. Then *Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come"* [Jn 7: 1-6a]

The last NASA space shuttle launch was planned for Friday, April 29, 2011.¹ As the last voyage of a programme that landed men on the moon in 1969, the historic event attracted a huge number of visitors and live television viewers from all over the world. However, the launch had to be delayed because a malfunction was discovered in one of the spacecraft's critical power units. The new launch set for Friday, July 8, 2011 at 11.26 a.m. was threatened by storms. Happily, however, everything went well that day and the craft lifted off at 11.29 a.m., that is, three minutes beyond the original plan.

Can you imagine the stress level of NASA officials, tourists and viewers waiting for the right moment for that space launch? We all face similar challenges in our chosen fields of human endeavour. How do we know the right moment to launch and what to expect? To do it prematurely can lead to failure. To do it later may not be any better either. Therefore, the right moment is the best time.

In this week's Bible story, the brothers of Jesus put pressure on Him to go and show Himself to the public so that they might know what works He was doing. He told them that His time had not yet come. There is something that we can learn from the story that will help us to identify our right moment. Let us find out.

¹ Based on the following sources: "NASA space shuttle launch delay," <http://www.space.com/11524-nasa-space-shuttle-launch-delay-endeavour.html> , Fri., Apr. 29, 2011; Marcia Dunn, "Storms still casting shadow on launch," http://www.woodtv.com/dpps/news/national/south/storms-still-casting-shadow-on-last-shuttle-launch-nt11-jgr_3871694 , Thur. 07 Jul 2011; and Dave Mosher, "The Last Space Shuttle Launches Safely Into Orbit," <http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2011/07/final-space-shuttle-launch/> , Fri, Jul 8, 2011

1. Background: Jesus bids His time

John's Gospel begins this week's Bible story with "after these things" [Jn 7: 1]. To what things was he referring? In Chapter 6, Jesus had spoken profound things about Himself as the bread of life, such that many of His disciples walked away and followed Him no more. In this week's story, Jesus restricted His work to Galilee (His home region) and avoided Judea where the Jews were looking for Him to kill. The Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. According to Jewish practice in accordance with the Law of Moses [Deut. 16: 13-15], all family members, including servants and strangers, were required to keep the seven-day feast "in the place which the Lord chooses" [v. 15]. One such place was Solomon's temple, rebuilt by Herod, in Jerusalem in Judea. Therefore, Jesus was enjoined to go to Jerusalem like every other Jew.

Were His brothers pushing Him to go there merely for the religious ritual? I suspect ulterior motives! For example, we are told, "even His brothers did not believe in Him" [Jn 7: 5]. If they did not believe in Him and yet He was stealing the limelight from the rest of them, what do you think envy drives people to do? Was it not envy that drove Cain to kill his brother, Abel [Gen.4: 1-8]? Was it not envy that drove Joseph's brothers to sell him as a slave into Egypt [Gen. 37: 4, 11-28]? Therefore, the envious brothers of Jesus would like to lure Him to Jerusalem where the Jews were waiting to kill Him! They couched their arguments around trying to inflate His ego. They told Him, "Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing, for no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, *show Yourself to the world*" [vv. 3-4]. We may never know their true intentions!

However, Jesus' response to His brother's challenge for Him to go to Jerusalem is quite intriguing. He told them, "*My time has not yet come*... You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to the feast, for *My time has not yet fully come*" [Jn 7: 6, 8]. What time was Jesus referring to here? Let us consider a number of possible interpretations:

- a) *Was it the time to go up to Jerusalem for the feast?*

We are told that Jesus remained in Galilee but soon after His brothers had gone to Jerusalem for the feast, He Himself also went up "not openly, but as it were in secret" [vv. 10-11]. That suggests that the time referred to was when to show Himself openly in Jerusalem. However, in the middle of the feast, which is about the fourth day of the seven-day event, Jesus went up to the temple and taught [v. 14]. Some of the people that saw Him teaching openly said, "Is this not He whom they seek to kill? But look! *He speaks boldly, and they say nothing to Him*. Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly the Christ?" [vv. 25-26]. That suggests that He was not

afraid to die but it was not yet time. Therefore, He was not referring to time in relation to that feast.

b) *Was it the time to expand His earthly ministry?*

His brothers had earlier referred to the works that Jesus was already doing (in Galilee) [v. 3], suggesting that He had already begun His earthly ministry before the events under discussion took place. We know that at about the age of thirty, Jesus began His ministry, following His baptism by John [Lk 3: 21-23]. He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where He was tempted by the devil for forty days [Lk 4: 1-13]. Soon after, He came into the synagogue in His hometown, Nazareth, on the Sabbath day and launched His public ministry. After reading from the book of Isaiah, He closed it and said to His listeners, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” [vv. 14-21]. Within a short time, His fame had gone far and wide as He taught and performed miracles in various cities in Galilee. As they tried to keep Him from leaving them, He said, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent” [vv. 31-44].

That suggests that His work had already been known beyond Galilee. Therefore, the time that Jesus referred to had nothing to do with expanding His already blossoming earthly ministry. It had to mean something bigger!

c) *Was it the time to die as the Messiah?*

As Jesus spoke with boldness in the temple, some of the people there who had wondered why nobody could touch Him whom they were looking for, added, “However, we know where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from.” Jesus replied them, “You both know Me [and] where I come from... but He who sent Me is true ... for I am from Him, and He sent Me” We are told that they sought to take Him but they could not lay hands on Him “because ***His hour had not yet come.***” As more believed in Him, the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him. Apparently perceiving their intentions, Jesus said, “***I shall be with you a little while longer, and then I go to Him who sent Me***” [Jn 7: 27-34].

Again, we can conclude that the time that Jesus was talking about was still in the future but quite near. Therefore, it did not apply to His visit to the temple in Jerusalem nor to His earthly ministry, preaching the kingdom of God, which was already in full swing. He was referring to ***the main purpose of His coming in human form, namely, to save us from sin and eternal damnation.*** This is confirmed in the words of Jesus as He foretold His crucifixion when Philip and Andrew brought certain Greeks who came up to worship at the feast, “***The hour has come that the Son of Man***

should be glorified... Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour?' But *for this purpose I came to this hour*" [Jn 12: 20-27].

Certainly, this was the time that Jesus referred to in His response to His brothers. As the time drew near to His crucifixion, Jesus rode triumphantly into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday [Lk 19: 28-40], drove away the money changers from the temple and openly preached there daily [vv. 43-48] to the chagrin of both the Jewish and Roman rulers [Lk 20: 20]. However, as the Passover drew near and the moment was close, fear gripped Him. In agony on the Mount of Olives, He committed Himself to the will of His Father who sent angels to strengthen Him [Lk 22: 39-43]. At His arrest, His disciples abandoned Him and He was splendidly alone [Mk 14: 50]. His trial was a mockery of justice, and, even though He was innocent, He was condemned to die like every common criminal under Roman justice- by hanging on a cross. As He was about to die on the cross, He said, "It is finished!" [Jn 19: 30]. The earth quaked and other strange things happened around Calvary, and the Roman officer, a centurion who led the killing squad, glorified God, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!" [Matt. 27: 54].

Ordinarily, Christ's death looks like a sad moment. However, for the Messiah, it was a right moment! That was the day He saved all of mankind from the bondage of sin- *forever*. By the time He rose from the dead on the third day, even Satan knew that it was over because on that cross, Jesus had disarmed principalities and powers, making "a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it" [Col. 2: 15]. What a right moment!

2. Preparing for your own right moment

Your right moment may be the day you are vindicated in a case where you are innocent or the day you accept God's call to a ministry or the day you complete your professional certification exams or the day the woman of your dream accepts your marriage proposal. Right now, you may be wondering how to go about it so that at the time it happens, everything will work as planned. The following principles from Christ's example can be most helpful to you:

a) *Know your calling*

Jesus knew that He came to die for the sin of the world and the manner of His death would be by crucifixion [Ps. 22: 16-18; Is. 53: 1-12]. Even as early as the time of His baptism, John the Baptist who was in Spirit had said of Jesus, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" [Jn 1: 29]. Therefore, a good starting point is for you to know *exactly* what you are called to do.

Some people tend to equate their personal ambitions with God's purpose. That may not always be true. For example, King David had the means and

the desire to build the temple of God in Jerusalem. But God sent prophet Nathan to tell him that his son, Solomon, was the one called by God to build it [2 Sam. 7: 1-16, 1 Chron. 22: 6-10]. Some people may think that their calling may be around their natural talents or training. Again, that may not be true because Peter was a fisherman when Jesus called him to become an apostle [Mk 1: 16-17]. Amos was a successful sheep breeder and a tender of sycamore fruit when God called him to become a prophet [Amos 7: 14-15]. For some other people, they imitate other people and model their calling after them. For example, the sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest at Ephesus, tried to imitate Paul by casting out demons in the name of Jesus. The demon turned around and viciously attacked them, saying, "Jesus I know and Paul I know; but who are you?" [Acts 19: 11-16].

With specific reference to the work of God, let God Himself show you how you will glorify Him. For example, let Him be the one to call you an apostle or prophet or evangelist or pastor or teacher [Eph 4: 11]. Do not get carried away by the politically determined titles or ranks assigned you in your church because that is vanity. *Without a God-sanctioned calling on your purpose, your foundation is on quick sand and your right moment can soon turn into a mirage.*

b) *Prepare for it*

That you have been called does not automatically mean that you are ready. You still need to prepare for it. For example, even though Jesus was the Son of God, He did not begin His ministry until He was about thirty years old. Even so, He did not go to a rabbinical school (akin to today's Bible College) to study. That was why the Jews marvelled; saying, "How does this Man know letters, having never studied?" [Jn 7: 15]. When Peter and John were charged before the Sanhedrin after their Pentecost experience, the Jewish leaders also marvelled, perceiving that they were untrained and uneducated men, but realized that they had been with Jesus [Acts 4: 15].

So, while formal education may be helpful in the effective administration of your calling, only the Holy Spirit can prepare you for it. Jesus prayed overnight alone before choosing His twelve apostles [Lk 6: 12-16], none of whom would have made the human resource specialist's short list! By the time He was ready to go to the cross, He had built a resilient organization around them that would take the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth.

You may need a *maturation process* in that you must grow your wings before you can fly. Jeremiah was called a prophet before he was formed in his mother's womb [Jer. 1: 4-5] but had to grow up before he started to prophesy. David was a teenager when he was *anointed* king of Israel but

he was not ***crowned*** until he was thirty years old [2 Sam. 5:4]. Joseph was called as an administrator at the age of seventeen but he did not become governor of Egypt until he was thirty years old [Gen. 41:46]. In all those cases, the people had to pass through ***trying moments and rigorous apprenticeship*** to prepare them for their great work ahead. That is what is popularly called a wilderness experience.

c) *Launch!*

The Jews and Romans who felt threatened by Jesus united to get rid of their common enemy. What they did not know was that it suited quite perfectly Christ's launching time and means! From that point on, Jesus took over control of events until His triumphant resurrection three days later. His time had fully come. The rest is history!

Your right moment may not make sense to logic or common sense, especially if you are following God's word for, even though a man's heart may plan his way, it is the Lord that directs His steps [Prov. 16: 9].

From the forgoing, we can conclude that only God knows your right moment. When you obey Him and follow His plan for you, your right moment will come with tremendous success, according to His purpose. But it may not come in the form that you expect or respect! That is the central message of this week's study.

3. Conclusion: Now is your right moment to prepare for salvation!

By His sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus has paid the price for our salvation. Therefore, let not your heart be troubled any longer. Jesus has gone to prepare a mansion for you in His Father's house [Jn 14: 1-3]. When you ***genuinely*** give up your "clever" human schemes of self-deceit and hypocrisy, and surrender ***completely*** to God's will by Christ Jesus, you are ready for your right moment.

Go for it today, ***right now!***