

¹⁴ Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught. ¹⁵ And the Jews marveled, saying, "How does this Man know letters, having never studied?" ¹⁶ Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. ¹⁷ If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. ¹⁸ He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him. ¹⁹ Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?" ²⁰ The people answered and said, "You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?" ²¹ Jesus answered and said to them, "I did one work, and you all marvel. ²² Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. ²³ If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? ²⁴ Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

John 7:14-24 A 8/6/17 Jeremiah 23:21-32 1 John 4:1-6 Psalm 1 Resp. Ps.: 119:124ff.
Hymns: 775, 381, 235 (1-2, 5-6), 231

WE CAN ONLY TRULY UNDERSTAND JESUS BY FAITH

O Holy Spirit, enter in And in our hearts Thy work begin,
Thy temple deign to make us;
Sun of the soul, Thou Light Divine, Around and in us brightly shine,
To joy and gladness wake us.
That we, In Thee Truly living, To Thee giving Prayer unceasing,
May in love be still increasing.

Give to Thy Word impressive power That in our hearts, from this good hour,
As fire it may be glowing;
That we confess the Father, Son, And Thee, the Spirit, Three in One,
Thy glory ever showing.
Stay Thou, Guide now Our souls ever That they never May forsake Thee,
But by faith their Refuge make Thee. (TLH #235:1-2)

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

Jesus had healed a man by the pool of Bethesda, enabling him to walk (Jn. 5:1ff.). Most of the people who knew about it were astonished. The Jewish religious leaders, however, were furious. It happened on a Sabbath. In the minds of the Jewish religious leaders Jesus had done work on a Sabbath, breaking the Old Testament law. "For this reason," the Bible informs us, "the Jews" (that is, the Jewish religious leaders) "persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him" (Jn. 5:16).

A little while later we're told, "Now about the middle of the feast" (of Tabernacles – Jn. 7:2), "Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying, 'How does this Man know letters, having never studied?'" They marveled that without having attended a rabbinical school (a Jewish 'seminary'), Jesus, a carpenter's son, had such learning. Jesus responded by saying, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me." Jesus was no self-taught teacher and preacher. He hadn't had the formal education the rabbis had. Nevertheless, His teaching was superior to the rabbis' teaching. As the Son of God, Jesus received His words directly from God the Father Himself.

Jesus had told the Jewish religious leaders, *“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life”* (Jn. 5:39-40). The Jewish religious leaders knew a great deal **about** God and His Word. But they didn’t trust in God and His Son for their salvation, so they didn’t **know** God and they didn’t understand His Word.

In our text Jesus speaks of *“anyone [who] wants to do [the Father’s] will.”* What’s the greatest thing God wants for anyone? To believe in Jesus and be saved. Jesus had said in the chapter before our text, *“This is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day”* (Jn. 6:40). Jesus says in our text, *“If anyone wants to do [the Father’s] will, he shall know”* (the original text emphasizes that he’ll know for himself) *“concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.”* **Only** by faith in Jesus can we truly understand God’s Word. As we by faith submit our reason and our lives to God’s Word and God’s will, He enables us to grow in our understanding of His Word. The Jews who rejected Jesus completely misunderstood Him and His words, which are His Father’s words, which are the Word of God. A. T. Robertson says, *“Atheists of all types have no point of contact for approach to the knowledge of Christ. ... They are out of tune with the Infinite [God]. For those who love God it is also true that obedience to God’s will brings richer knowledge of God. Agnostic and atheistic critics are disqualified by Jesus as witnesses to His claims.”* (Word Pictures In The New Testament)

Jesus says, *“He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory.”* The Pharisees’ teachings were certainly not from God, but from their own minds. They loved to be honored by the people as the great teachers of Israel. Jesus is the opposite. He says of **Himself**, *“He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.”* Jesus never sought earthly glory. As the sinless Son of God and our Savior Jesus glorified His Father by telling us the truth about Him, and by perfectly carrying out His Father’s will to save us, all the way to giving up His life on the cross.

Jesus tells the people, *“‘Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?’ The people answered and said, ‘You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘I did one work”* (healing the man by the pool of Bethesda), *“and you all marvel. Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?’”* God commanded His Old Testament people not to work on the Sabbath day. God also commanded that baby boys be circumcised when they were eight days old. If a baby boy was eight days old on a Sabbath day, he was circumcised. The Jewish religious leaders had no problem with that. Yet when Jesus healed someone on a Sabbath day they accused Him of breaking the Sabbath law. Jesus pointed out that, according to their reasoning, if He was breaking the Sabbath law by healing on the Sabbath, then they were breaking the Sabbath law by performing circumcisions on the Sabbath. Neither was true. Circumcision on the Sabbath wasn’t breaking the Sabbath law, and neither was healing on a Sabbath. Both things were a great blessing from God to the one who received them.

Jesus tells the people, *“Do not judge”* (from the original: *“Do not continue to judge”*) *“according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”* As long as they kept judging

Jesus by outward appearances and their reason, they would never understand Him. The only way they could understand Him, Jesus says, was by the “*righteous judgment*” of faith.

God, Jesus, and the Bible don’t make sense to our human reason. The Bible says, “*The natural man does not receive the things of the [Holy] Spirit..., for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them*” (1 Cor. 2:14a). The Holy Spirit’s words – the Bible – are foolish to our human reason. If we try to understand God and the Bible using only our reason, we never will. In fact, the Bible says that “*the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so*” (Ro. 8:7, NIV ’84). Our human reason isn’t ‘reasonable’ when it comes to God and His Word. We just heard that our human reason “*is hostile to God.*” Our human reason fights God and what God says in the Bible. Again we just heard that our human reason “*does not submit*” and “*can [not]*” submit to what the Bible says. The Bible says, “*The mind of sinful man is death*” (Ro. 8:6a). If we keep trying to understand Jesus, God, and the Bible using only our reason, it’s like playing Russian roulette with a fully-loaded gun. We take the very real chance of facing eternal death in hell. It’s that serious.

The Bible says, “*The things of the [Holy] Spirit ... are spiritually discerned*” (1 Cor. 2:14b). If we truly want to understand the Holy Spirit’s words – the Bible – we need the Holy Spirit’s help. The Bible says, “*We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the [Holy] Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual*” (1 Cor. 2:12-13). So when Jesus tells us, “*Judge*” (from the original, “*Keep on judging*”) “*with righteous judgment,*” He’s saying that we understand Him and God the Father and the Bible by faith, letting go of our reason and being guided by the Holy Spirit. In the original text Jesus commands us to keep this as our on-going, life-long approach to Him and His Word. The Bible says, “*The mind controlled by the [Holy] Spirit is life and peace*” (Ro. 8:6b). By faith, guided by the Holy Spirit, we can understand Jesus, God, and the Bible. By faith we have eternal life in heaven, and real peace in our hearts and minds.

Understanding Jesus Christ – who Jesus really is – is **the** most important thing in life for every person on earth. Most of the Jewish religious leaders had made up their minds that Jesus was not the Messiah. So in spite of all His amazing miracles (including bringing people who had died back to life!) and the fact that the words Jesus spoke to them are the words of God Himself, they couldn’t see that Jesus is the Son of God. Then there were all those who weren’t opposed to Jesus, but didn’t believe in Him, either. Tragically, the unbelieving religious leaders and the unbelieving people have all ended up in the same place: hell. The same is true for everyone who doesn’t believe in Jesus. But everyone who believes in Jesus is going to heaven.

“Jesus, keep us in humble faith and trust in You and Your Word all our lives until You take us to be with You in heaven.”

I know my faith is founded On Jesus Christ, my God and Lord;
 And this my faith confessing Unmoved I stand upon His Word.
 Man’s reason cannot fathom The truth of God profound;
 Who trusts her subtle wisdom Relies on shifting ground.
 God’s Word is all-sufficient, It makes divinely sure,
 And trusting in its wisdom, My faith shall rest secure. Amen. (TLH #381:1)