

John 40 – My Teaching is Not My Own

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Scripture 1: (Jn. 7:1-24 ESV)

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 is 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. The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?"

So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood. Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?"

The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?"

Jesus answered them, "I did one work, and you all marvel at it. Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well? Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

Sermon:

The Feast of Booths (Leviticus 23:34-43) was a religious festival that commemorated Israel's time of nomadic wanderings in the wilderness; a time when they were utterly and entirely dependent upon the LORD's bountiful providence for their whole provision. It served as a vivid reminder that neither this world nor the promised land of Canaan was meant to be their ultimate home; these homes are merely placeholders for something far greater.

The Feast of Booths was also an agricultural festival which celebrated the conclusion of the harvest and was a prescribed time for offering thanksgiving to God. {This was the biblical inspiration and justification for the Plymouth pilgrim's (since these settlers were notably a group of reformed, Calvinistic Puritans, they strictly followed the Regulative Principles of Worship [RPW]) thanksgiving celebration in 1621.} Alongside Passover with the Feast of Unleavened Bread {a festival at the time of planting}, and the Feast of Weeks {Pentecost} which was also known as the "Feast of Ingathering" (Exodus 23:16) celebrating the first fruits of the harvest, the Feast of Booths was the third of three annual, mandatory appearances before the LORD for every Jewish male (Exodus 23:17) and as such, Jesus' had to attend the festival and appear in Jerusalem.

The Feast of Booths lasted seven days and, in addition to the regular "Saturday Sabbath", mandated that both the first day of the festival and the eighth day be "*holy convocations*" and days of Sabbath rest (Leviticus 23:35-36). {This 'eighth day Sabbath' is used partly to explain why the Christian Sabbath is celebrated on the "*first day of the week*" (John 20:1) and is interpreted as representative of an 'eighth day of Creation': of symbolizing the eschatological re-Creation and restoration; and as the rest which the faithful are promised to enter into by the author of Hebrews (Hebrews 3:7-4:11).}. This then ordinarily placed three Sabbaths {because sometimes the first or the eighth days would fall upon the regular Sabbath (Saturday)} during the festival; three days of dedicated worship and three days during which no work could be performed. Additionally, the proper prescribed means of celebrating this Feast were also specifically outlined, defined, and explained by the LORD in Torah. So, not only was Jesus required to appear in Jerusalem, He was also required to worship God during this time by offering certain prescribed sacrifices and performing specific worshipful activities. Thus we can see that right worship has always been regulative.

Even as much as Jesus may not have wanted to appear as a "public person" in Jerusalem during this Feast, the probability for Him to remain incognito throughout the whole time was slim to none. Surely someone would recognize Him. So then, even though He had traveled up privately and had separated Himself from His family and His disciples, "*About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching.*". He embraced Who He is and what His present role was, yet also while still not fully revealing Himself in His glory because {His time had not yet fully come}.

Meanwhile, "*The Jews...*", the religious leaders who had been nervously (and with bad intent) been "*...looking for him at the feast...*", now found Him in the Temple teaching, therefore they "*...marveled, saying, 'How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?'*". But:

- They did not marvel at what He was teaching.
- They did not marvel at the way or how He was teaching.
- They did not marvel at who He was teaching.

Instead, what they marveled and wondered at was where Jesus had received the knowledge and understanding that informed and enabled His teaching. They wondered because He had no known educational credentials. They were less concerned with what He knew, than how He knew it.

They were more concerned about the source of His credentials, something which is not altogether unreasonable since neither they, nor we, would want someone teaching us whatever they wanted about the Christian faith: teaching their own personal thoughts and ideas; thoughts and ideas which are dependent entirely (and only) upon their own authority; without having first been assured of their possession of proper knowledge, right understanding, and orthodox beliefs.

Even now, within the modern church, this is why Presbyteries examine both ordination candidates and pastors transferring between churches, Presbyteries, and denominations. They want to ensure that a person is properly qualified: knowing and believing what is right (Christian orthodoxy), while also possessing enough wisdom and understanding to lead a congregation in both worship and life (orthopraxy); for the benefit, help, and protection of congregations.

While a Pastor Search Committee or a congregation will look at a resume and consider the quantity of and details surrounding a prospective pastor's credentials: namely the where's, when's, what's, and who's; the Presbytery considers both the quality and sufficiency of their credentials: what they know and believe; as well as how they apply what they know to their faith and practice.

But here in this story, the Jews considered Jesus's credentials (or namely His lack of recognized credentials) to disqualify Him from teaching, despite all that He said and did; whereas for the believing faithful, they recognized that what Jesus taught and the wonders which He performed was precisely what proved Him qualified.

Therefore, to justify both the true quality of and source for His credentials: what He knows and what His authority to teach is; Jesus answered the religious leadership by first affirming to them, "*My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.*".

- Jesus said that He was not teaching anything new.
- Jesus said that He was not teaching anything innovative.
- Jesus said that He was not teaching anything that departed from the plain teachings of Scripture: the Law and the Prophets and the Writings.
- Jesus said that He was teaching only what the Father had already declared.

Then He explained how they should know and understand why He is qualified, saying "*If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.*". But then He also actually calls them out as hypocrites because they claimed to be the "experts" concerning Scripture and its interpretation. They are the ones who, by virtue of what they claim, should best know and understand "*God's will*" because they have taken it upon themselves to instruct the people.

Therefore, if they actually did know God's will, as revealed in the Scriptures; if they actually understood God's will, as He has revealed in the Scriptures; then they should have known that what Jesus was teaching is correct and from God. They should have known that He was not teaching His own unique thoughts, ideas, and interpretations. Again, the Jews were so focused on the wrong things, this time the source of His knowledge, that they could get so close to the Truth, but still remain so far away from it.

Now as then, if someones knows (or wants to know) and understand God's will, then they should/must study the Scriptures (both the Old and New Testaments) because they are God's revealed will for us. Then, after studying them and knowing them, then they must obey, follow, and keep what the Scriptures say and teach.

- One must first learn God's will, in order to know it.
- Then knowing it, one must do it.

So, if someone knows their Old Testament well, then, upon hearing the teachings of Jesus (and also, by extension, the teachings and interpretations of His Apostles and the disciples who followed Him; namely the Gospels and all of the New Testament), one will recognize that Jesus spoke with the authority of the only LORD God, and not with the authority of a mere man, because everything He taught is confirmed elsewhere in Scripture.

Then the second way that Jesus explained to them (and to us) how we can tell whether a person speaks under their own authority or under the authority of another, is that “*The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.*”. He tells us to observe the speaker and ask:

- Who gets the glory?
- Who is the one that most, benefits?

Did Jesus's teaching bring Him any obvious benefit?

- Did He become wealthy?
- Did He get a bigger house?
- Did He have many servants?
- Did He gain social status and political influence?

No. Instead it got Him scorn and rejection, physical injury, and finally an unjust execution. But, through everything, Jesus's Father in heaven received all of the glory as Jesus obeyed His commandments and fulfilled His eternal decree perfectly.

On the other hand, did the teachings of the Pharisees and Priests bring them any obvious or related benefit? Scripture {and Josephus} tells us that:

- Society considered them more righteous than most everyone else (Matthew 5:20) {while the Essenes and Qumranites considered themselves to be even moreso}.
- Society considered their religious opinions and practices to carry the weight of authority (Matthew 9:11-14, 15:1-14).
- Society individually gave them honor, status, respect, and worldly glory (Matthew 23:1-7).
- Therefore, on account of society's response to them; Jesus said of them and those like them, “*And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.*” (Matt. 6:5 ESV)

According to that standard, which of the two: Jesus or <quote/unquote> “the Jews”; seemed more to speak upon their own authority or upon than the authority of someone greater than themselves?

But, why can we be confident that Jesus's assertion holds generally true?

- We are confident because we know that someone who is sent to speak with the authority of a sender (whether king, employer, or simple head of household) will be held accountable for their words spoken and deeds performed on behalf of the sender. Therefore, they must speak and act truly, because everything they say and do reflects upon the one they have been sent to represent, whether they do so poorly or goodly.
- Whereas someone who speaks on their own behalf and under their own authority, is accountable to no one except themselves. They only really might be held to account by others for speaking falsehoods, if they are proven demonstrably false, or if they cause obvious harm or injury to another person.

The one who knows that they will be held to account will surely speak for the good of their master, for the sake of their master's glory (their reputation), as well as for their own reputation as being reliable, dependable, and true. However, the one who is only accountable to themselves may only be trusted to always seek their own advantage and benefit; they will lie and speak falsely whenever it suits them, although they may also speak truly when it benefits them. Regardless, they cannot be trusted to say or do anything except what benefits them best. {These same fundamental principles and assumptions define the logic system known as “Game Theory”¹. Game Theory well represents and describes expected responses generated by our fallen and sinful nature.}

Then Jesus demonstrates (as He previously did, back in John 5:45-47) how the Jewish leaders were condemning themselves, because of their appeal to Moses and the Law for their authority, by asking them rhetorically, “*Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law.*”.

- They claimed to know the Law, to understand God's revealed will, but much of what they taught and many of the things that they did were not in accord with the Law.
- They claimed to know the Law, but either they could not recognize or they were unwilling to admit publicly and to themselves that what Jesus taught was correct and true.
- They claimed to know the Law and to teach under its authority therefore, they would be judged by the Law and ultimately by held accountable to it.

So, since Jesus rested His entire authority claim upon the confirming testimony of God's word, by His response, He implicitly challenged them to disprove Him with it.

Then, Jesus escalated the conversation by asking the Jewish leaders, “*Why do you seek to kill me?*”. Remember, Jesus knew that they were looking for an excuse and opportunity to kill Him the same way that He knew He could not entrust Himself to the people, “*...because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.*” (Jn. 2:24-25 ESV); He knew the evil that was in their hearts and He knew what would ultimately need to happen. To which the crowd responded, answering Him by saying, “*You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?*”.

Now remember, at this time Jesus had not **yet** been arrested or even publicly accused of anything. The Gospels record no “death threats” having been made against Him, nor were there any assassination attempts, nor even specific examples of personal persecution or discrimination prior to this point in Jesus' ministry, so there was no “admissible evidence” supporting this assertion. So, the disbelief and lack of understanding by the crowd makes sense. The crowd probably said, “*You have a demon!*”, because they thought He was being paranoid; that He had some kind of “spiritual oppression” going on. They likely believed that this might explain His concern and fear. But, what they were **not** suggesting was that He was possessed by a demon and that that was why He was

1 <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/game-theory/>

able to perform His miracles, signs, and wonders. {However, that would have been their only other “ordinary” reason to explain the extraordinary and supernatural, because miracles are, by nature, impossible and inexplicable. Remember, Satan does not and cannot innovate; he cannot do anything new or anything on his own because he remains merely a creature with no original power within himself. Satan can only copy or corrupt something that God has already done first (consider the miracles which the Egyptian magicians were able to echo from Moses; Jannes and Jambres, see 2 Timothy 3:8); he is utterly unoriginal.}

Since the crowd did not believe Jesus' suggestion that “someone” wanted to kill Him, He chose to explain why they were, “*I did **one work**, and you all marvel at it. Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because **on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well?**”.* He argued using two separate examples of things that could be considered violations of the Sabbath warranting death in order to expose their religious hypocrisy.

- First, the example of the “*one work*” He references was the healing of the invalid on the Sabbath by the pools of Bethesda (John 5:1-16) (Jesus' 3rd Sign). John earlier explained that the reason why they began looking to kill Jesus was because since the man was healed during the Sabbath, Jesus was a “law-breaker” and deserving of death (Exodus 31:14-16).
- However, then He counters their allegation with a second example, that since Moses prescribed the rite {detailing the practice} of circumcision, that “*...on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.*” (Lev. 12:3 ESV): writing a specific command without any stated exception or provision for grace whenever that eighth day might land on the Sabbath; that complete obedience to this rite was considered to be a necessary and required work of Jewish faith and righteousness {recall that Paul cites this as one of his many reasons for 'confidence in the flesh' (Philippians 3:5)}.

Jesus's argument was that because obedience to and satisfaction of this circumcision command was considered to be so necessary and important that even when it is performed on the Sabbath “*...so that the law of Moses may not be broken...*”, the Priest or Levite, by performing it, was not considered to have broken the Law of God, the Fourth Commandment (see also: Numbers 28:9, 1 Chronicles 9:32, and Matthew 12:5; where the Scriptures command priestly activity and “work” to be performed even, or especially, on the Sabbath) therefore, since He caused a man to be healed on the Sabbath: performing a “good work” of mercy, grace, and love; that He likewise should not be accounted as a having broken the Law of God, the Fourth Commandment, implying instead that actually He was satisfying the ultimate and more comprehensive “Royal Law” of God:

- “*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*” (Deut. 6:5 ESV); and,
- “*You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.*” (Lev. 19:18 ESV); because,
- “*On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.*” (Matt. 22:40 ESV)

Jesus implies here that because the LORD commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves {for who among us would choose to remain in need of healing for a moment longer than necessary, when the opportunity for being made whole is available} we must do so and so therefore, should perform such good works as are presented to us: like providing healing or other works of kindness, mercy, and charitableness; as the means by which we may truly “*love the LORD*” with our whole heart, soul, and might.

Although Jesus does not cite every example in Scripture, as He implied, those who know and understand God's revealed will well, should immediately recognize, understand, accept, and affirm this truth, recalling:

- (Exod. 33:19 ESV) God's willingness to freely offer grace and mercy to whomever He wills, whenever He wills.
 - *“And he said, ‘I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.”*
- (Hos. 6:6 ESV) That which God desires most, preferring: steadfast love or covenant faithfulness; to animal sacrifices and rituals.
 - *“For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”*
- (Mic. 6:8 ESV) That which specifically comprises the obedience which God requires of Man: doing justice, loving kindness or being merciful, and humility.
 - *“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”*

Again, we see that Jesus taught nothing new or different from the Old Testament. Instead He explained what had already been revealed with greater clarity; providing them with a better and more correct understanding of what Scripture actually teaches.

- This was the same wonder as the wonder of the Sermon on the Mount.
- This was what caused those crowds to be *“...astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.”* (Matt. 7:28-29 ESV),
 - because He was not teaching under His own or other human authority; but,
 - because He taught them with God the Father's authority, using the authority of Scripture (God's revealed will).
- That ultimately was why Jesus said, *“My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.”* because:
 - even though He is the supreme Author of Scripture {through God the Holy Spirit} and is the *Logos* who is *Theos* and *Andros*; and,
 - even though Scripture is the Word of God, and Jesus is God the Son; and,
 - even though it was well within His right to claim it as His own teaching;
 - Jesus Christ, God the Son was born, *“the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”* (John 1:12), in order to represent God the Father to us; to be the perfect *“image of the invisible God”* (Colossians 1:15) and to teach us God's will with God's authority.

Jesus relied upon the testimony and witness of others: the proclamation of the prophet John the Baptist, the words of God the Father recorded in Scripture, and the various Signs that Jesus was performing in the power of the Holy Spirit; to demonstrate and prove Who He truly Is.

Jesus relied upon the testimony and witness of others to demonstrate and prove that the origin of His knowledge, understanding, and teaching was sourced with God: in His divine nature; because Jesus is God.

Jesus relied upon the testimony and witness of others because, by claiming to be God or by claiming to possess the authority of God, then the truth may only be one of three possible options: Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or the LORD; and if He alone claimed it about Himself, then the first two options would have been the most likely. So, if Jesus is God, as all of the many different witnesses testified and testify to, then we must accept what He said as carrying the authority of God, since He was interpreting and teaching the Word of God (the Scriptures), as given to and through Moses and all of the Prophets by the Holy Spirit.

Finally, what is John trying to teach us with this narrative and how should we apply it particularly?

John is teaching us and reminding us that Jesus, though Himself God, was also sent by God with a purpose and on a mission. Thus we can say that Jesus lived and died and rose again as the greatest of Apostles {because the technical definition of an Apostle in the Church is “One who is sent by Christ/the LORD” personally and directly; God the Son who was with God the Father before the beginning in all eternity past, surely meets that definition and description}.

- Jesus was sent by the LORD God to reveal Himself, God the Father, to us: His creation and to the Elect.
- Jesus, although He possessed authority within Himself as God, served and ministered under the Father's authority; subordinating Himself and His human will, for a time (Philippians 2:5-11).
- Therefore, as Jesus represented God to us, Jesus also represents us to God: interceding on our behalf and making satisfaction for us, so that we may be justified in His sight.

Then, applying this, to ourselves and our Christian lives, we should consider the “Great Commission” where Jesus spoke to the disciples and commanded them to “*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*” (Matt. 28:19-20 ESV); where Jesus sent the disciples to go make more disciples who would, in turn, be sent to go make exponentially more disciples on into the eternal future {the Great Commission would really be the ultimate pyramid scheme, except it works}.

- Because the Father sent the Son to represent God to us: to speak with His authority to us, as His delegated representative; and
- Because God the Father sent God the Son, Jesus, who then next sent the Apostles and other disciples to send nearly two thousand years worth of disciples, to send us as representatives of Jesus Christ, who Himself represented the Father; therefore,
 - whenever we share the Gospel, or whenever we do not share the Gospel, we are representing Jesus and we are acting on behalf of Jesus; every Christian.
- Because the Father sent the Son to teach His teachings, and the Son then sent the Apostles and other disciples to teach His teachings which are really the Father's teachings;
 - Therefore, today they all send us to teach the teachings of God.
 - Therefore, we each must remember that we will be held to account for doing so.
 - Therefore, we will be held accountable to Jesus for how we represent Him before the world.

Now **that** is a thought which should scare each of us entirely straight. It should scare every faithful person away from any thought of abusing the Gospel, or for using it or the Church for their own glory and sinful gain.

Jesus' argument in this story here, is part of the reason why James wrote that **teachers** will be held to a higher standard (James 3:1), because they bear a stronger liability for what they teach, to ensure that they teach truthfully! When I stand up in the pulpit each Sunday, I do so carrying a great weight and a terrible burden to ensure that what I say here is true and right, and also during the rest of the week that I live and love as well as I ought because I know to whom I am accountable.

- So, even though I am certain that I will fail too often, I am also certain that I am trying my best, in full reliance upon the help of God and so, I remain confident that, by God's grace and in Christ's mercy, I will be forgiven for my failures, if He so wills to forgive me.

Furthermore, and not only this, we may apply the example of this story by remembering that from the first moment we profess faith in Jesus Christ and claim Him as our Savior, everything we say and do reflects upon ourselves and also on Jesus, our Lord, as well. It is not limited to just our sharing of the Gospel, or to our failures to share the Gospel, but it is in everything: our whole lives and lifestyle; that we represent and portray Christ before the world and among other believers.

- As Christ represented the Father to us, in all things, so we represent Christ before others, in **all** things.

Having that in mind, what do you think about your last post on social media? Or, the way you treated your last waiter/waitress? Or, how do you feel about the last time you cut someone off in traffic? Have you ever cheated on your taxes, or lied to your spouse or loved one in order to horde and eat the last cookie or treat?

Do any of those things reflect well upon you? Do they all reflect well upon the Person of Christ in you?

If you admit that whatever you say or do "...is not on your own account...": but is instead "done in the name of, or on behalf of, Jesus"; would you be glad to stand and be held accountable to Him for it? Would you, really?

- If not, then repent. Beg forgiveness and seek His face. Trust in Him and His gracious mercy.
- If so, then I would urge you to consider again. Be certain that you do not derive your confidence from yourself or your own efforts, knowledge, or works. Be absolutely certain that, in justifying yourself to yourself, you are not being false to yourself.

Above all, trust Jesus Christ and His holy Word: both Testaments. Believe Him and trust Him when He says, "Your sins are forgiven.", that they are because He speaks with the authority and voice of God our Father, and then trust to the hope that one day you will also hear, "*Well done, good and faithful servant.*".

AMEN