



DEVOTIONS FOR LIFE

Aldersgate Church ~ St. Louis Park, MN

Week of February 20, 2022 (John 7:37-53)

Prayers for Groups & Personal Devotion:

Loving God, may you love us: not because of what we have done but because for who we are and may we give thanks not because of what we are known for but because of the gift we are.

May we pray for the world and love the world not because of what it has done, but because of what it is. May we give thanks for the world and all her people's gifts not because of what they are known as but because of the gift each is to each other.

May we make a difference in our relationships with each other across countries and continents, streets and neighbourhoods, not through status or fame or what we are known as but simply because of the gift we are and whose we are.

So be it. Amen.

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Devotions for Life A LifeGroup & Personal Resource

The Story: John 7:37-53

Context: Alright, buckle up, there's a lot going on here. First, today's story is part of a big scene that begins in 7:1. Jesus is convinced by his brothers to go back to Jerusalem for another big festival, one not well known by Christians today, called the Festival of Booths or Tabernacles or "Tents" (7:2). There is only one other verse in John where any form of this verb shows up and it's a biggie: John 1:14, which says "...and the Word became fleshed and lived [tabernacled] among us..."

This holiday comes at the end of the harvest and serves two functions: One, it celebrates God nourishing crops, particularly through rainwater, and the reason it is about "booths" or "tents" is that farmers would often make tents in the fields to sleep in during the harvest. But it also commemorates God's provision, particularly through water coming from a rock, in the wilderness when Israel was nomadic and lived in tents.

Furthermore, this text is best understood when we remember the target audience of the Gospel of John: Those who have been kicked out of the synagogue (in the wilderness that would have been kicked out of the tent) for their devotion to Jesus. At this time there is an intra-Jewish debate among all kinds of expressions of Judaism about the nature of God, what is truth, where God lives, and who belongs in the gathering of the people (what "synagogue" literally means). To be kicked out, or excommunicated, means to be cut off from provision and protection. Imagine being

Acts of Compassion & Justice:

February is almost over! This month we are raising funds for Small Sums (www.smallsums.org), whose sole purpose is to help homeless individuals, who have found jobs, with the specific things they need to start back to work. They provide clients with such things as required work clothes and shoes, trade tools, professional licenses or union dues, and bus passes. Consider donating to them via the donate link at www.aldersgatemn.com.



Ash Wednesday is March 2nd at 7:00pm! Join us for a special Ash Wednesday service where we will center our evening in lifting up Aldersgate Church in prayer. These are important days in the life of our community, so we thought this would be a great time to be together and entrust our future to the care of the Spirit. Join us in-person or online!



excommunicated from the community while in the wilderness, or in times where we need each other just to survive. These are the stakes.

So, that is the backdrop of this story today: The celebration of God's provision, particularly water, in and among an intra-faith debate about who belongs.

Reading the Story: It may be helpful to back up to John 7:1 (it also may not!). The key to this story, is that this is really just a conversation/debate. There's no miracle or sign of Jesus' attached to it. It is mostly a key debate that functions toward moving John's narrative along. So try to follow the argument, paying attention to claims Jesus makes.

Questions for Discussion & Reflection:

- What words, phrases or portions from this story stood out to you in your hearing of it? What captured your imagination? If you could ask a Biblical scholar one question about this story, what would it be?
- Have you ever been kicked out of a community of some kind? Fired? Maybe didn't make the team? What was that like?
- Considering water is central to this Jewish festival, what are the implications of Jesus' words in verses 37-38?
- What do you think about verse 39, a parenthetical note by the author saying "for as yet, there was no spirit"?
- Many doubted Jesus because he's from Galilee. Why? And is Jesus even from Galilee? Where was he born? Where is from?
- A familiar character returns in verse 50. What do you make of this? Is he coming around?
- The Pharisees believe the "crowd" (i.e.: common folk) have been deceived. When does being educated and informed cross over to academic/religious elitism?

