



2021.10.24 Sermon “Temporary Housing”
[John 7:1–13 Jesus Goes to the Festival of Tabernacles]

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I. Introduction

According to a recent article in the Guardian newspaper, 62% of New Zealanders hoping to purchase a home won't be able to in the current market. Their data suggested that 20% were trying to save for a deposit but “couldn't catch up” with the increased minimums required. The other 42% said they were “locked out completely” given the current financial demands. It shouldn't be a surprise to us in Auckland since those who are able to purchase a home here are facing average prices of around \$1.2m. It's no wonder why the Herald reported this year that “the dream of homeownership is fading for many New Zealanders and a new report has revealed eight in 10 feel it is now impossible to buy a home.”

And we know that purchasing a home is only the first challenge. If you are fortunate to be able to purchase a home, if you have found financial support through your family, friends or new spouse the mortgage of owning this home will dictate every facet of your life. What job will help you maintain payments? How many extra hours will you have to work to remain in good standing in your job? How much free time can you afford for family or church ministries? How much time can you spend with your children and their extra-curricular activities? With the pressure of handling a million-dollar-mortgage, how can't these concerns affect you?

Well, this is a complex issue, and I don't mean to provide an easy solution. The issue is raised only to draw out attention to our desire to own and develop a home. There is this dream to own a home that we hope to live in for a long time. We hope to have many fond memories in our homes that we and our children will cherish as they grow older. We are so driven to have our own home, that we are willing to shape our lives around the pursuit of owning a home.

But as a follower of Jesus, we must remember how he viewed home. It's not enough just to be like everyone else in their pursuits for a home and think that it won't affect our ability to follow our Lord. Today's account of Jesus, taken from John 7:1–13 will show us that Jesus never considered this world his home. He never settled. He served humanity and hoped for an inheritance, a home, that was to come. I know that Jesus wasn't married and didn't have children and so didn't need a home, but as we follow him, as we focus on the same home as he did, we should gain a better perspective on the lives we live until we go to be with him.

II. Context

Before we look at today's account, let's remember that the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths was drawing near. This festival is connected to Israel's deliverance from Egypt by God through

Moses. This is clearly stated in Leviticus 23:42–43 which states, “You shall live in booths for seven days; all that are citizens in Israel shall live in booths, so that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” So whatever these booths looked like, we can guess that they were temporary and not permanent structures.

The Israelites would have had to set up and take down their temporary shelters with haste as they followed the Lord through the Wilderness. Remember in Numbers 9:22 how it describes Israel following the pillar of fire and cloud. It states, “Whether the cloud stayed over the tabernacle for two days or a month or a year, the Israelites would remain in camp and not set out; but when it lifted, they would set out.” So their temporary shelters or their booths weren’t complex structures, but only basic and rude structures. But do we remember why?

It was because God was leading them by this pillar of fire by night or cloud by day to their inheritance, their Promised Land. In this inheritance they would set up permanent structures and pass these on to their children for generation after generation. But the booths were only providing temporary shelter before they received this promised inheritance. With this in mind, what is Jesus, in our account today, going to say about himself in relationship to the coming Festival of Tabernacles or Booths?

III. Unpack

1.) God’s Son Has No Home

In John 7:1–5, we see that Jesus did not feel at home within the nation nor within his own family. The Jewish leaders based in Jerusalem not only rejected his teachings, but they were looking for a way to kill him! So, Jesus stayed in the region of Galilee and most likely in his hometown of Nazareth. We can guess this because our account describes a dialogue between Jesus and his biological brothers.

Jesus is not welcomed in Israel by the religious leaders in Jerusalem and Jesus is not welcomed in his own home by his brothers. In our account it describes how the Feast of Tabernacles was drawing near and how Jesus’ brothers taunt him to attend the feast to become a more prominent public figure. They say this not because they believe in him, but maybe they are taunting him.

In this way Jesus is very much like another saviour, Joseph. Remember it was Joseph who received a vision from God that his brothers and even his father would bow down to him. His brothers were so enraged that Joseph would have such an exalted place over them that they, like the Jewish leaders, wanted to kill him but instead chose to sell him into slavery. Remember Joseph later saved the peoples in Egypt and Canaan from a severe famine. Now, in our account, a new and better Joseph has come who will provide a way of salvation and eternal life. Remember that Joseph never made it back to the Promised Land. He never made it to his inheritance. And we see in Jesus as well a great saviour without a home, but who will make it to his inheritance.

2.) God's Son Is Waiting for His Permanent Home

In John 7:6–9, we see Jesus' reply to his brothers. He states that it is not yet his time to make himself a public figure in Israel or it is not yet his time to become the ruling leader. For Jesus, his desire is to walk in the timing set by his Heavenly Father. For Jesus, now is not the time to walk into his inheritance, his home. Now is a time to declare, like Moses did in Egypt, the day of salvation. Also like Moses, Jesus calls a people out from the world to praise and worship the true God. Jesus calls a people out of the world and to start a trek through a land not their own, to start a trek which will end in their promised land; a permanent home.

For his brothers and for the Jewish leaders anytime will do to become a public figure. They were living in their inheritance and not living for a better one that God was offering through his Son. They did not have faith in God as described by the writer of the book of Hebrews. Those who had faith and followed God's Spirit were "looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God...(they)...admitted that they were foreigners and strangers on earth" (Hebrews 11:10, 13). For the Jewish leaders and Jesus' brothers, anytime was a good time to seek political power. But it wasn't what Jesus was seeking.

Why? Jesus says it's because his message won't be accepted by anyone! There are no political parties that will accept Jesus' message! Jesus' message was what Paul described in his letter to the church in Rome, "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." There is never a good time for Jesus to seek public office! Now is a time to show people their sin so they can repent and turn to God. Now is a time of patience before final judgement.

3.) God's Son Serves Quietly Among the Lost

Jesus has no home in Israel and he waits patiently for it. In John 7:10–13, we see that Jesus doesn't just wait in a room by himself waiting for his future inheritance. By no means! He is not engaged in political power struggles, but in serving the lost. And he serves quietly and secretly. After his brothers leave to go to the festival in Judea, Jesus waits and it appears from verse 14 that he goes to the festival when it is halfway through. He goes in the middle of the festival to do his work as quietly and as secretively as he can. And we can see why he has chosen to do so in the account.

The Jewish leaders are expecting him and looking for him. We know their intent is to find a way to kill him. Everyone else at the festival are expecting him as well and have mixed feelings about Jesus. Some think he is simply a "good man" while others think Jesus is deceiving people. But everyone won't say anything about Jesus publicly because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. In the midst of this fear and murderous anger is Jesus, showing mercy and directing those that would listen to a better home, the Kingdom of his Heavenly Father.

What is so special about Jesus' quiet and secretive service of others? Even though no one was for him, even though no one would really receive him, he still served others. Paul says in his

letter to the church in Rome that, “while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son” (Romans 5:10). Jesus doesn’t serve only those that like him, he serves his enemies all while trying to avoid direct confronting their sin. He could have come into Judea on a war horse, a righteous and powerful political leader, but instead he comes to Judea humbly and serves those that would later crucify him. While Jesus waits for his eternal home, he serves his enemies faithfully and quietly. And he hopes that they find peace with his Father through his service to and for them.

IV. Application

What is our application for today?

1.) Don’t Make This World Your Home

As difficult as it is to say this, it’s still true. Although we think this world has so much to offer, it pales beside the inheritance that awaits us in Christ. Instead of living for that future home we live for things that are difficult to hold onto, that break down and decay. This brings to memory a visit I had with a relative in the States. They had inherited a large track of land through marriage and had also come to own several properties. At one time, they were the wealthiest person in our extended family. As a young boy, my family used to visit this wealthy relative, and we enjoyed the spacious yard and beautiful views of the bay.

As I grew older, it seemed this relative had spent so much time and effort in protecting, developing and thinking about his properties. So careful was he to care for these properties that he isolated himself from others, even family. So consumed with maintaining his home above all else, his marriage suffered and his relationship with his children. Of course, he can justify this preoccupation with his home telling himself that in the end he will leave it all for his children, but is that what his children really want; his property?

What makes this world precious to us is our constant considerations about it! Seldom if ever do we talk about obtaining a home that is yet to come, a home that was obtained for us in heaven through Jesus. Instead, we are tempted to obtain our inheritance here and disregard one promised by God but difficult to wait for. We have a home in Jesus, but that home is yet to come. We hope that Jesus would return so we could be with him and inherit all that he purchased for us. But will we direct our hearts to that home or set our hopes for home here?

2.) Wait For the Land God Has Promised to Give You

Now is not the time to prioritize have more political influence. Why? Because who will want to follow you as you walk with Jesus? Who do you think wants to relinquish this world as their prize and inheritance? Who wants to live for an inheritance that has been promised in the Scriptures? Of course, I’m not saying that we shouldn’t be responsible citizens, but is our entire focus on this world or the next? Do we find ourselves hating one part of the population who differ from us politically and only loving the others who agree with us? When we wait for our eternal inheritance, we can be open to love everyone. We can be open, just as Jesus was, to serve everyone faithfully.

As many of you know, there are severe political divides in the States where I'm from. It feels like you have to hate a Democrat if you're a Republican and hate a Republican if you're a Democrat. The division has gotten so bad that politicians are finally addressing the problem they helped to create! I have a friend in Hawaii who isn't an anti-vaxxer, but who has refused to take the vaccine because he believes it is dangerous for his family. He takes this stance even though a friend of ours got Covid early on and was very sick and nearly died.

I think my friend should be vaccinated for his family and others around him, but as I've spoken with him, I've found the biggest reason why he doesn't want to get vaccinated. He distrusts people who would label him and others he loves as stupid or anti-scientific. He distrusts people who, in short, hate him. If we follow the Spirit's call to be patient and wait for our permanent inheritance, we will look at everyone differently. We won't place so much value on our earthly possessions and political influence that we respond with hate or contempt to those who seem to threaten what we have temporarily in this life.

3.) Serve Faithfully and Quietly

One of the frustrations that I've heard the theologian N. T. Wright discuss about Christians who are waiting for heaven, is that they do nothing! They just sit in their houses letting the world suffer. They sit in their houses and simply wait for a time when they can float in the clouds and play their harps. Certainly, we can feel the sting of that critique! There are times, even long stretches when we can feel like we're just waiting to be with Jesus.

But Jesus shows us in today's account, that really being his disciple, really following him means going out into a lost world and serving. It means even going into places filled with anger and confusion and serving anyway. You and I both know there have been times where the Spirit has called us to serve and disregard what may happen to us. And when we did, we felt closer to Jesus.

The Milford community is just as lost as the crowds described in Judea in our account today. I can either join the crowds or I can walk with Jesus and serve by being guided by his Spirit to teach them all that he has taught us. I have met a number of community leaders in Milford, but I have yet to share my faith with them. Today's account teaches me that Jesus is calling me to tell others what he has taught me, to tell others that a better eternal home awaits them through the acceptance of Jesus' death and resurrection. May I, may we follow him and serve quietly and peaceably with him in the communities we live in but especially here in Milford where God has planted us to serve.

V. Conclusion

1.) Don't Make This World Your Home

2.) Wait For the Land God Has Promised to Give You

3.) Serve Faithfully and Quietly