

The Divine Teacher.

Text: John 7:14-24

Suggested Hymns:

519, 109, 193T225, 291, 263

1) How Does This Man Know Letters?

2) Christ's Doctrine Stands The Test

3) The Divine Teacher Reveals His Father

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 7:14–24, *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 wills 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.” (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

At the time of our text Jesus was in Jerusalem attending the Feast of Tabernacles. This was one of the three major annual feasts of Israel. It was observed in memory of the dwelling of the Children of Israel in tents in the

wilderness. The time of its observance was from the fifteenth to the twenty-first day of the seventh month, Tishri, which corresponds to our month of October.

Since it was the last annual feast of thanksgiving for the harvest, the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated with universal joy.

Great groups of people made their way to Jerusalem from all parts of the Holy Land in connection with this feast. The brothers of Jesus, therefore, urged Him publicly to reveal Himself in the capital city as the King of Israel.¹

Just who these “brothers” were we do not know; indications point to the possibility of cousins — Joseph and Simon. Their interests were carnal; they had a certain admiration for their miracle-working relative and felt that this was an opportunity for Him to advance His Messianic claims. Very definitely Jesus rejected their carnal proposal.

When His brothers had gone up to the feast, our Lord also began the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, *“but, as it were, in secret.”*² It was not the time for any kind of demonstration.

Our Lord’s presence, however, had been expected by many, for hardly had His brothers arrived when there were inquiries from all sides: *“Where is He?”*³

Moreover, Jesus was the subject of much discussion and debate. Some said He was a good man; others, that He was a deceiver.⁴ But neither those who were for Him, nor those who were against Him, declared themselves openly for fear of the authorities.⁵

Suddenly, in the midst of the feast, Jesus appeared in the Temple and taught. And here again He shows His supremacy as a Teacher. Yes, He proved conclusively that He is *The Divine Teacher*. This is our theme for today. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. “How Does This Man Know Letters?”

Our text begins, 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?”*

The people were astounded at the wisdom of Christ. They found it difficult to explain how a person who had no academic scholarship to boast of could

possess such eminent learning. Jesus had no university background like the Apostle St. Paul.

Jesus had not studied at a school of medicine like St. Luke. He had spent no long, weary hours at the feet of a learned rabbi of His time. Our Lord was not the product of the educational centres of His day. He was no scholar and teacher after the rabbinical order. He was and is the divine Teacher.

He told the people who were surprised at His great learning: ***“My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.”*** The Saviour understood the questioning attitude of His hearers in the Temple toward Him and told them that His learning came from the heavenly Father.

To Acquire Knowledge Jesus had to Study

To be sure, our Lord had to study to acquire knowledge and learning. St. Luke tells us that Jesus ***“increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”***⁶

So great was our Lord’s condescension that when He came into this world, He not only assumed our flesh and blood, but also our limitations. It was necessary for Him to pass through all the various stages of growth, both as to the body as well as to the mind.

The Saviour unquestionably possessed great natural gifts. And with these gifts He combined a noble attitude, a reverence for truth, a diligent application to the task of learning, and a perfect living of the truth that He had learned in His daily life.

But with all this He could say that His doctrine came from the heavenly Father. What He taught He had received from His Father. What He proclaimed was the will of the Father. Always and everywhere Jesus revealed the gracious mind and the loving heart of His Father in heaven.

Other Messengers of God

“My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.” Let us look at these words a little more closely. There have been many people who were sent by God to teach God’s doctrine. In the Old Testament the Prophets were called by God and were charged with the duty of proclaiming His doctrine, His message.

Moses received a particular call. So did Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other Prophets.

And in the New Testament the Apostles were called in a specific sense to be the messengers of God. St. Paul was singled out as a special herald of the Gospel to the Gentiles. Not only that, every true minister of the Gospel has a commission from God to be His ambassador. By virtue of his call he has a right to declare: *“I am sent by God.”* Every teacher of the sacred truths can find much encouragement in the assurance: *“My God has sent me to do this work.”*

The Teacher from Heaven

But when the Lord Jesus in our text says to the people who marvelled at His teaching: *“My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me,”* the meaning goes far deeper. At once we think of the Father’s words at the time of our Lord’s transfiguration: *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”*⁷

We think also of the words of St. John, spoken with reference to the Saviour the night before He went the way of the Cross: *“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God.”*⁸

Jesus is a Teacher who came from God in the sense that He really came from heaven, from God, and returned to God. The writer to the Hebrews clearly mentions that God sent His Son into the world to be His final and ultimate message to the world.

We read in Hebrews 1:1–3, *¹ God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ² has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; ³ who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*

St. John declares, *¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of*

grace and truth. ... ¹⁸ No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.⁹

Speaking to Philip, who had requested, *“Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.” ⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.¹⁰*

2. Christ’s Doctrine Stands The Test

That Jesus is the divine Teacher, sent from God, is evident also from the fact that His doctrine stands the test. He says in our text, *¹⁷ If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.*

What a challenge the Saviour makes here to those who doubted the divine origin of His teaching! *“Try it out in your life, and you will discover whether it is of God or not.”* A daring challenge, indeed, but one which has never failed when honestly tried out and tested.

John Moser is reported to have been one of the most learned and upright jurists and judges of Germany. In his youth he was influenced by the writings of Voltaire, the Frenchman who is considered by many to have been the worst scoffer that the world has ever seen.

But, being a fair-minded man, Moser decided to hear the other side. He steeped himself in the study of the Bible. He came across this passage, *¹⁷ If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.*

Moser said, *“What! Jesus made the proof so simple? It would be a shame for a heart thirsting after knowledge not to make a trial of it. I’ll try it.”* He did. He read and studied the teachings of Christ and put them to a test in his daily life. He became convinced that the doctrine was of God, and turned out to be a devout Christian.

The Test Of The Heart And Life

There is a way of having absolute certainly in religion. But, let us remember that it does not come by merely studying religious problems. A person might know the entire New Testament from memory; he might be able readily to quote scores of passages that emanated from the lips of Jesus, and yet not know the mind and will of the heavenly Father.

The test which Jesus proposes is not an intellectual one. It is a test of the heart and life. *¹⁷ If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.* Certainty in religion, is secured when we do, that is, in all sincerity and honesty believe the teaching of our Lord.

3. The Divine Teacher Reveals His Father

A further proof that Jesus is the Teacher divine is cited by Christ in our text, namely: *I do not seek My own glory, but the glory of Him who sent Me.*

We read, *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 circumcision¹¹ (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers),¹² 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."

I Do Not Seek My Own Glory

All religious teachers may be divided into two classes: those who seek their own glory and those who seek the glory of Him whose ambassadors they are.

Our Lord, in proclaiming the doctrine which He had received from His Father, advanced the glory of Him who sent Him. That being true, He tells His

enemies that they had no right to appear as the champions of the Law against Him.

Our Lord said in effect: *You oppose Me and My Gospel; you appeal to Moses and the Law; yet none of you keep the Law. If you sincerely endeavoured to keep the Law, you would not go about trying to kill Me.*

Now they became furious. This reference to their murderous plotting was more than they could stand. Their reply revealed their fury, saying: ***“You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?”***

In spite of this bitter blasphemy which they hurled at Him, our Lord remained calm and continued to instruct them. He had not gone too far in accusing them of murderous intent. He knew perfectly well that the opposition to Him had reached that very point.

Judge Righteous Judgement

A year and a half before, the Saviour had healed a man on the Sabbath day. He refers to that miracle when He says: ***“I did one work, and you all marvel.”*** They still marvelled at the great miracle performed on the sick man at the Pool of Bethesda,¹³ but at the same time they were horrified because it had been performed on the Sabbath day.

But why take that attitude? the Saviour reasons. Every time a child is circumcised on the Sabbath day, the Sabbath law, according to the letter, is transgressed.

This you do that the law of Moses concerning circumcision might not be broken. Now, if without scruple you give up one ordinance in favour of another; if, for example, the restrictions of the Sabbath could be set aside in favour of the law of circumcision, then certainly these restrictions could also be set aside in favour of the supreme law of love and mercy.

Then the Saviour adds the warning, ²⁴ ***Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”***

Not only did our Lord in this instance show His superiority as a Teacher by His masterful interpretation of the Law; but He clearly showed that He was the divine Teacher, because He did not seek His own glory, but the glory of Him who sent Him.

Christ's Purpose in Life Was to Glorify God

The one great purpose that Jesus kept before His eyes when He came into this world, throughout His entire life, up to the very end, was that He might glorify His Father in heaven.

The glorification of His Father was the chief subject of all His thoughts. It was the only thing in which He found pleasure. It was for Him life itself. He lived upon it as other men live upon daily bread. And at the end of the road He could face His Father in heaven and say in John 17:4, ***“I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.”***

What a comfort, what a blessing, it is for us that in Jesus we have the divine Teacher, come from God! He is the Truth. We can trust Him implicitly. All His doctrines, all His promises, all His assurances, be they ever so startling and staggering, in Him are yes and Amen.¹⁴

Let us only accept the teachings of Jesus as divine, believe them with all our heart, order our conduct according to them, and thus carry with us through life the assurance: ***“I know whom I have believed!”***¹⁵ May the divine Teacher Himself give us that assurance in His grace and mercy! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ John 7:3-4

² John 7:10

³ John 7:11

⁴ John 7:12

⁵ John 7:13

⁶ Luke 2:52

⁷ Matthew 17:5

⁸ John 13:3

⁹ John 1:14,18.

¹⁰ John 14:8-10

¹¹ Lev. 12:3

¹² Gen. 17:12

¹³ John 5:9

¹⁴ 2 Cor. 1:20

¹⁵ 2 Timothy 1:12