

## What benefit does Jesus bring us?

### John 7:25-36

This week our scripture teachers taught the last SRE class at WPS for the year.  
It really is a privilege to enter into our local school  
and teach the students from the Bible,  
although not everyone agrees that such lessons are a beneficial use of time.

This week I also saw a news article with the headline

***High school principals call for religious education to be scrapped***

*“NSW high school principals want religious education to be scrapped, saying it is taking up valuable time that should be spent on learning”, the article began. “The Secondary Principals' Council has called for a raft of reforms in their submission to the NSW Curriculum Review ... the review will look at de-cluttering the curriculum, so the council said Special Religious Education should be one of the first things cut from the high school timetable. ‘With the issue around the crowded curriculum, it's one of those things that's in there chewing up time,’ said council president Chris Presland.”*

So our high school principals are not being shy  
in telling us what they really think about time spent learning from the Bible:  
It's not real learning and it's chewing up time.  
In other words, it's time spent with no real benefit.

The usefulness of our Christian commitments  
is something that you might have wrestled with yourself from time to time:  
*What's the benefit of getting to church this morning?*  
*What's the benefit of committing myself to this*  
*latest ministry they're advertising at church?*

For some people the question is even more basic than a commitment to church,  
it's a question of a commitment to Jesus himself.  
What's the benefit of becoming a Christian?  
What's the benefit of committing myself to Jesus and his teaching?  
Because there is a cost:  
being a follower of Jesus does take up time,  
and it does mean making some changes which may feel difficult.

Today we continue in our series in John's Gospel called *Jesus among the sceptics*,  
a series observing Jesus as he engages with those doubting his claims.  
In today's passage Jesus makes two points that help us understand  
why trusting him is not a waste of time;  
why having him as the God we follow is of immense *personal benefit*.  
Perhaps you yourself have been sceptical as to his benefits;  
if so then his words for us today are worth weighing and testing.

We pick things up in John ch 7, and verse 25

At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill?" <sup>26</sup> Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Messiah? <sup>27</sup> But we know where this man is from; when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from."

In these opening verses we hear how people in Jesus' day  
were waiting for a figure to emerge who was known as *The Messiah*.  
*The Messiah* simply means "the anointed one".

In the ancient world

Kings were anointed with oil to mark them out as leaders,  
to identify them as the ones who would rescue and protect the people.  
And so the expectation was that a special person would emerge  
who would be this kind of leader for the Jewish people;  
people were waiting for a figure  
who would be of great benefit for the whole Jewish nation.

And so when Jesus arrived on the scene

- performing all his miracles, drawing amazing crowds,  
speaking in ways that were new and refreshing -  
people started to use the *M* word.

*Is he the Messiah? No he's not! Maybe he is!*

There were all sorts of ideas floating around as to how The Messiah would arrive.

One idea was that he'd suddenly burst onto the scene from nowhere,  
and this is the idea that's being referred to in verse 27.

when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from.

All of a sudden The Messiah would be king - that's what some people thought.

Jesus had emerged from Galilee doing miracles and teaching  
so his career didn't quite fit what some people were expecting.

But regardless of how the Messiah would arrive,  
there was this hope that God would do something good for his people  
by sending The Messiah.

Jesus becomes aware of the discussion,

and he seems to be a little bit distressed  
that people aren't quite able to recognize him properly

Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, "Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own authority, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, <sup>29</sup> but I know him because I am from him and he sent me.

The conversation about where the Messiah is from

prompts Jesus to speak once more about his true origin.

Yes, as a human he grew up in Galilee,  
but his divine nature has existed for all eternity,  
well before it was joined to a human nature in Mary's womb.

And why did this divine nature leave Heaven in the first place?

Well, twice in these verses Jesus says he was *sent*.

I wonder whether you have ever worked in a job

where you have been sent to do a task by someone in authority?

The truth is, if you've got a boss

then you've probably been sent by him or her to do a job at some point.

In my first career I was an archaeologist working here in Australia.

Everytime a new development or infrastructure project gets approved those in charge need to ensure they're not destroying any cultural heritage, and so that's where archaeologists find their work.

I was working for other archaeologists,

so I would be *sent* to monitor various works.

A gas pipeline in regional NSW, a development of units here in the city.

Sometimes I would be *sent* to the Mitchell Library

or to the Land Titles Office to do historical research.

In our Tuesday night Growth Group, we have an apprentice carpenter whose job consists of being sent by his boss to do certain jobs around the city

*Put this frame here, work on the interiors of that building there.*

It used to be the case that new apprentices were sent to do impossible jobs as a form of initiation – *go and pickup a can of checkered paint*. I asked Jospheh whether this still happens and he said “no it doesn't!”

And so Jesus is telling us that God the Father sent God the Son to do a job.

This is mission language, Jesus was sent on a mission, sent to do a job.

And after the mission was completed, the Son was expected to return to the father

Skip ahead to verse 33

Jesus said, “I am with you for only a short time, and then I am going to the one who sent me.

When you're sent out on a job the expectation is that you'll return.

In my own work I had to return with a report

or with material that was the product of my research.

I still remember the aim

of returning with something that would please my bosses,

I still remember the sense of pride when I was able to come back and say

“I've solved the problem”, or “the project is finished”.

What report was Jesus going to bring the Father upon *his* return?

What *was* the mission that was Jesus sent to fulfill?

The writer to the Hebrews puts it like this in ch 1 v3

After he had provided purification for sins,  
he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

“Mission accomplished”, he would have said to the Father as he came back,

“You sent me to provide purification for sins, I can tell you that it's done.”

And so this is the great *benefit* that Jesus was anointed to bring,  
the opportunity for men and women to have their sins washed away,  
the bridging of the gap that exists between a perfect and holy God  
and an imperfect and often guilty humanity,  
the provision of a way for men and women to enter into eternal life;  
as Jesus says later on in John's Gospel,  
he will come to this world a second time  
and then on his second return to the Father  
he will be take us with him  
I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.  
He says in Ch 14 v 3.

Sometimes in church life  
you see people becoming involved because of all sorts of reasons.  
Some parents want their children to learn some social skills,  
some parents are hoping it will help their child gain entry to a private school,  
But here is the key benefit:  
Church is a place where you hear about the mission of Jesus,  
where you hear how God the Father sent the Son  
in order to take away the sin of the world  
by dying on the cross and then  
being raised to life three days later.

In fact, I wouldn't stop at calling this a *benefit*,  
I'd go further and say it was a *necessity*,  
because the impression Jesus gives us in these verses  
is that without his mission  
people will remain estranged from God  
and without the hope of eternal life.  
You will look for me, Jesus says in v 34 but you will not find me;  
and where I am, *you cannot come*.  
"You cannot come"  
Eternal life with God is not something individuals can simply walk into;  
access is strictly limited.

Now why is that the case?  
 Let's revisit the end of verse 28 You do not know him, Jesus says to his listeners  
<sup>29</sup> but I know him because I am from him and he sent me.  
 "You cannot come, because you don't know him".  
 How many of you would simply open your door to a stranger  
 because they knocked and insisted on coming in?  
 But when a son or a daughter brings a stranger home  
 then you do open the door and welcome them in, don't you?  
 But without that introduction then there is no welcome for the stranger

The people of Jesus day were very confident of their religious knowledge.

But for all the things that they claimed to know,  
 they failed to attain the most important knowledge of all,  
 which was not knowledge of facts but knowledge of the Father himself.  
 And if we fail to know God then we fail to gain entry into eternal life.  
 But Jesus knows him,  
 and so we look to Jesus to take us with him and make the introduction,  
 we look to Jesus to purify us so we can stand in his father's presence.  
 That's the benefit of knowing Jesus,  
 that's the benefit of the message that Christianity has for us.

What remains now if for us to think about how to respond to this message.  
 Surrounding these words of Jesus about being sent from the father  
 and returning to the father  
 we observe the reactions of those who are listening.

I see three different responses:

One response is from those just don't understand, v35 The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? <sup>36</sup> What did he mean when he said, 'You will look for me, but you will not find me,' and 'Where I am, you cannot come'?"  
 This group have no concept that Jesus is talking about returning to heaven.  
 Ironically, what they say will, in a sense, come true in the following decades;  
 Jesus will teach the Greeks through his disciples  
 as they spread his message in places like Athens and Corinth,  
 but right now they just have no concept of what Jesus is really on about.

Then we have the group who are angry.  
 They understand what Jesus is saying all right,  
 they've heard Jesus perfectly and they don't like what they hear,  
 look back at verse 32 The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him.  
 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him.  
 They know that Jesus is saying that he's come from the Father  
 and that he alone is the key to knowing the Father  
 and they want him to stop saying it  
 because it challenges their own sense of pride and importance.

And then we have the group who not only hear Jesus  
 but accept what he is saying and who place their belief and trust in him  
 verse 31 Still, many in the crowd believed in him. They said, "When the Messiah comes, will he perform more signs than this man?"

And so which response is most like yours?

Maybe you've been confused about Jesus.  
 There's no shame in that, it can take a while for the penny to drop.  
 I hope today something has been cleared up for you.  
 No matter what other benefits Jesus might bring us,

the center of his work is all about him doing what was necessary to bring us to the father. That's the central element of Christianity. Grab me if you want to talk some more.

Or maybe you're angry; life hasn't worked out for you, God has let you down. I'd just encourage you to think about what is being gained by your anger, and to think about what you stand to lose by your anger. Maybe the cost of your anger will be eternal life. You know many of these angry Jerusalemites ended up as followers of Jesus, that's what the book of Acts tells us. God will forgive your anger if you turn to Christ and submit to him.

Or maybe you know it's time to do just that, maybe you know its time to place your faith, your belief and trust, in Jesus. Perhaps you've come to believe that he is the one who was sent by God to take away the sin of the world, and that he is our only hope to stand with God in the age to come. Friends this is why John wrote his Gospel, so that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that by believing we might have life in his name.

If this third group is reflective of where you are at then please, pray with me now as together we place our faith in him I'll pray on behalf of us all now. Let's pray  
*Heavenly Father we acknowledge our need for our sins to be purified, and we recognize Jesus as the one you have sent to take away the sins of the world. We ask that his sacrifice might be for our benefit, so that when he returns he will take us with him to be with you forever. And its in his name that we pray. Amen.*

If you prayed with me and that was a new prayer for you, I'd love to hear a bit more about your story and how God has led you to this point, email me, grab me afterwards and let me know.