

INTRO:¹

Quick show of hands here: How many of you know the term “catfishing”? And I don’t mean on a lake?...Ok/Yeah, some years ago there was both a documentary and a derivative TV show that really brought the term to light, where, ya know, scammers fabricate an online identity to trick people into relationships, from which they can then profit. And there’s some really heartbreaking stories from those who’ve GOTTEN catfished, cuz ESSENTIALLY what happens is: the person ends up living in good faith...to someone who doesn’t exist. Living in good faith to someone who doesn’t exist...Part of the reason we’re in this *“That You Believe”* series through John is because JOHN gives one of the clearest pictures of what God, in Christ, is REALLY like, SO THAT you don’t end up living in good faith to a GOD who DOESN’T exist, but rather living in faith the the God who DOES exist... Today, I wanna show you 3 Types Of People - who all in good faith - nevertheless MISS Jesus and therefore MISS/with great consequence, what God’s really like. **(PAUSE RECORD)**...Off the bat here, ya notice in *vv.1,2*, that while Jesus is in Galilee there’s a festival going on in Judea called the *“Feast of Booths.”* And the Feast of Booths, according to the ancient Jewish historian Josephus was THE most popular of all the Jewish festivals BECAUSE it symbolized Israel’s OT wanderings in the wilderness. And so what people would do is come from all over and set up *“booths”* or makeshift tents and LIVE in em, for a week/The original Burning Man or Coachella. And the reason I mention this festival is BECAUSE it acts like a kind of time stamp in John SIGNIFYING that to this point/7 chapters in, Jesus has been ministering, in and around Galilee, for about a year. Which of course is enough time to’ve built up a following, LOST much of that following as we saw last week, made some enemies, and no longer be a hidden gem.

Which is WHY, you see in *v.3*, His brothers - and yes, Jesus had brothers. I know certain traditions try to explain away passages like this by saying that the word *“brothers”* there is metaphorical IN ORDER to preserve doctrines like the *“perpetual virginity of Mary”* - but rule of thumb: Orthodox doctrine is built from drawing OUT what the Bible says NOT importing into it - So *“yes”* Jesus had brothers - two of which ended up writing NT letters - James and Jude - BUT brothers, who at THIS point aren’t on the same page as Jesus. As *v.5* says *“they didn’t believe in Him.”* And so they tell Him to go to Judea and *“show himself to the world.”* *“Jesus, if your aim is religious prominence, then visibility has to be your goal, ESPECIALLY given the recent defection of disciples.”* In other words, they’re thinkin’, as every sorta worldly/secular person does, *“Jesus, you gotta have a little more grit/hustle. You gotta step up the branding/the outreach, cuz everything’s always gotta be bigger, better, faster!”* And in their minds no better time FOR that...than at the Feast of Booths when, of course, Beyonce and Bieber’ll be there!

But look at what Jesus says. Tells em *vv.6-8*, *“Nope! Not going. It’s not my time.”* Cuz as He says, *“while you guys can go anytime, since the world”* - meaning those who don’t believe in Him - *“accept you”* - presumably because they’re a PART of the world in LIKEWISE, not yet

¹ Works consulted:

- *“Why God Can’t Stay Quiet (1/2)”* - Episode 63 - 9/21/22 - <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/arkcast/id1339351918?i=1000580169348>
 - *“Christ and the World - Gospel of John, Part 1* - May 12, 1991 - John 7:1-9 + *The Search for Jesus Christ - Gospel of John, Part 1*—May 26, 1991 - John 7:10–20; 40–46 - Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).
 - D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991).
 - *“The Shortsighted”/John 6:14–65/Can’t Believe #3 + “The Passive”/John 18:1–40/Can’t Believe #5 + “The Religiously Immunized”/John 2:23-3:16/Can’t Believe* - J.D. Greear

believing in Him - *“that same world,”* He says, *“hates me because I testify that it’s works are evil.”* ... Which, can I just say, shows you that Jesus was NOT this weak/feathered hair/J Crew tunic kinda guy. While being unbelievably kind and compassionate, He was FULL of courageous truth and without spin. ***So what’s He saying?*** Especially since you see in **v.10**, He DOES end up going to the feast after all. ***So did Jesus change his mind? Was He undecided all along? Is He just being fickle?*** No! What He’s saying is, He not going to the feast IN THE WAY His brothers want Him to, which is in this kind of right-handed, take-control, always onward and upward kind of way. Cuz as we’ve seen in John: Since day 1, Jesus has had 1 mission: to die...not to straighten up the world, but to die for the FORGIVENESS of the world and in that way straighten it up forever. THAT’S what completely regulates His life...IN CONTRAST, you see, to his brothers, who are regulated MORE by a normal, worldly view of things. He’s in total contrast to em!

AND, if you keep going, in total contrast to BOTH the Jewish Leaders AND the general masses as well. Cuz you see in **vv.11-13** there that when Jesus gets to the festival people are already talking about Him. *“The Jews”* it says - meaning the Jewish Leaders - are asking where He’s at, cuz they’re hoping this feast draws Him out of Galilee and into their jurisdiction, as it were, since we know they’ve grown increasingly hostile to Him, in light of message of grace and forgiveness with God through faith alone, as opposed to religious performance or tradition. And so you see down in **vv.14-24** that the leaders NOT ONLY start criticizing Jesus for His lack of formal, rabbinic training - ya know He didn’t go to Harvard or MIT - so in their minds, He’s not qualified to speak - BUT they start condemning His teaching on the basis of a Sabbath technicality, WHICH you see, leads Jesus to show em that though they THINK they’re super religious for how they supposedly uphold the law; the reality is: everyone one of em is breaking it, while Jesus is actually FULFILLING it. That’s what that talk about circumcision on the Sabbath is. Cuz in the OT, the law required that the circumcision of a baby boy occur on the 8th day after his birth. HOWEVER, if the 8th day fell on the Sabbath then you had a conflict of laws. ***Which do you uphold?*** Do you uphold the circumcision law and do the procedure, but then break the sabbath by doing work. OR do you NOT do the procedure in order to uphold the Sabbath, but then break the circumcision law...HUGE popsicle headache, to which Jesus essentially says, *“you guys’ve screwed that up countless times, but because you’re so fixated on meticulous works righteousness, not only are you blind to your error, but your condemning me for”*, as He says in **v.23**, *“healing a paralytic on the Sabbath.”* ...***So you tracking here?*** Ya got the Brothers missing Jesus; the Leaders clearly not seeing Him correctly...and FINALLY, you got the masses, who it says, *“are muttering about him,”* with some saying He’s *“a good guy,”* but others saying, *“no He’s a danger and leading people astray.”* And yet, NONE of em, you see, take any kind real stand about Jesus. ***Why?*** Because as **v.13** says, *“they feared the Jews.”* They’re not willing to commit to Jesus because they feared the loss of some security, comfort, pleasure or opportunity at the hands of the Jewish leaders. It’s Hebrew FOMO/better-yet FOBO, which apparently is Gen Z’s FOMO, where you don’t just fear missing out; you fear committing to something and regretting it later - FOBO: “fear of better options.”² That’s this crowd!

² FOBO term coined in <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/fobo-genz-fomo/>

So I told you: **There's 3 groups of People here who, ALL in good faith, nevertheless MISS Jesus.** You've got the brothers, who THINK they've got Jesus' agenda in mind, but don't; The Jewish Leaders, who think they're preserving God's will and ways while actually undermining it; And the Crowd, who falsely thinks it's enough just to consider Jesus rather than COMMIT to Him. EACH of these groups, I think, represents a certain TYPE of person, who sadly ends up missing Christ and therefore in a sense...get's "spiritually catfished!" For example: **The Brothers** represent what we might call **The Worldly Type**: Jesus says they're "*of the world.*" And today, this group includes, for example, a lot of Republicans, who believe that if societies were just free and the government got out of the way then everybody would thrive. BUT it also includes a lot of Democrats, who believe that if the rich paid their share and helped the poor then there'd be enough prosperity to go around. It includes a lot of well-intentioned social activists; educational reformers; public school teachers, college professors; those who work to end hunger, and BASICALLY just a lot of good people/many of em "seemingly close to Jesus"/like Jesus' brothers - BUT who can't be said to "believe in Jesus," because they aren't about Jesus' mission. Rather, they're only concerned about the here and now. Their M.O. is: Since the now is what matters, you gotta know market trends, know how to play the game/the office politics, know how to unlock your potential, and become a person of influence/power, a public figure, in the right city/right season/with the right image/meeting the right people! Hustle!... **And let me be clear:** It's not wrong to enjoy the comforts and blessings God gives us IN the now. If you DON'T, you end up becoming a kind of cold, ungrateful, monastic, who doesn't care about the world or about alleviating suffering IN the world. HOWEVER, it is wrong/"worldly" to care about those things, as ends in themselves. That's Jesus' brothers!

And here's how you know if you're in this group: like the brothers/at BEST, you're kinda bored with Jesus. You don't hate Him, but you're also not filled with the kind of love, passion, and belief IN Him that leads you to surrender and submit your agendas TO His. Cuz you're always thinking, "*there's gotta be something better, something more, some new trick or technique that REALLY unlocks life*" rather than simply trusting and obeying Jesus...And at WORST, you're impatient and full of anxiety BECAUSE you're always trying to get ahead and make things happen, BUT, in a lot of ways, never able to, because Jesus won't play that game/won't "*go up to Judea,*" as it were. I love the way author Michael Horton says it: "*When you make yourself God - cuz you're more concerned about the here-and-now than anything - then you begin to fear anything that could be a threat TO your here-and-now. The extent to which you've lost your fear/your love/your passion for God; that's the extent to which your fear of everyone and everything will increase.*" This is the **Worldly Type** who misses Jesus! **Is that you?**

Second, there's the **Crowd**. And they represent what we might call **The Passive Type**. And by passive, I don't mean lazy per-se, cuz you see em debating and thinking about Jesus and such. I just mean they don't direct active energy to something they should. THAT'S passivity! I'll give you an example: If you got a registered letter in the mail tomorrow that said that the IRS was summoning you for a hearing cuz you owe \$100,000 in back taxes, **what would your reaction be?** Like on the one hand, you might get that and think, "*this is obviously a scam,*" cuz you know you don't owe anything. But on the OTHER hand, if you don't at least check into it to

make sure it's NOT legit; that would not only be negligent; it'd be passivity at it's finest. THAT'S these Crowds...with Jesus. They're confronted with the magnitude of who He is as the Messiah, given all that's been reported about Him, and they just passively dismiss it. *"Ah He's a good guy."* *"Nah, He's leading people astray."* They're not willing to direct active energy to something they should. Cuz look, no thoughtful/conscious person who desires to have a well-thought-out view of life can afford NOT to look deeply/and KEEP looking deeply into who Jesus really is. And yet, so many - maybe YOU - are kinda going through life without ever REALLY evaluating what you're doing with Jesus/what you're doing with the ONE person in history, who claimed to be the Messiah; then credibly and historically backed it up with a miraculous life, a sacrificial death, and an astoundingly well-attested-to resurrection! And look, I KNOW, it's easier to postpone a decision like, or being intentional like that, especially given what feels like the tyranny of the urgent. But here's the thing: a postponed decision basically has the same effect as NO decision. Like not saving for retirement. For most people, it's not that they ever made a decision to NOT save money. It's just that they never got around TO saving money. It's the same with Jesus except WAY more important, given that with Jesus it's not just a few years of retirement that's at stake, but eternity. As I heard one person say, *"Jesus is like an exit ramp off a highway. If you don't choose to take Him you're gonna end up at whatever place that highway is headed,"*³ which is to say, headed somewhere; just not headed somewhere on purpose! ***Are you like the crowds and simply too passive with Jesus when even just a LITTLE investment - like having a daily devotional time reading your Bible, or making a commitment to a Missional Family or to FIRST be here each week rather than here ONLY if there's no vacation or kids' activities - Little investments like that which will - like compounding interest - reap exponential rewards?*** Cuz after all, Jesus isn't just some historical person, and the Bible as being ABOUT Jesus isn't just some book. It's God's word and AS God's word, it promises *"never to return void."* ***Are you too passive with Jesus?***

Finally, you've got the **Jewish Leaders**, who represent what we might call **The Religiously Immunized**. And post-COVID I think we all have a sense of how immunizations work, but basically, ya get injected with A LITTLE of the disease - not enough to really hurt you, but enough so that your body recognizes and develops antibodies against it SO THAT if you're ever exposed to the real thing, you'll be resistant to it. That's EXACTLY the deal with these Jewish Leaders, who in having spent their lives injecting spiritual things like the Law and meticulously following the Law, they literally became resistant to Jesus/the FULFILLMENT of the law!

And sadly, it's also A LOT of people today, ESPECIALLY in the church. People, who maybe because of their background, or the kind of home in which they were raised, what their parents or friends think, have come to believe that "they're good" and that God's "good with them." It's the "I'm a good person" argument THAT - to use Jesus' words there in **v.24** - is unfortunately *"judging by appearances rather than judging with right judgment."* Cuz when Jesus says that, what HE'S telling these Leaders is to stop making superficial pronouncements about His work of healing on the Sabbath and instead evaluate it objectively in terms of the beauty, wholeness and

³ "The Passive"/John 18:1-40/Can't Believe #5 - J.D. Greear

restoration it brought. For you and me, what it means is you gotta stop making superficial pronouncements about how God accepts, forgives, and saves a person and instead evaluate it objectively. Cuz when you evaluate it objectively vs just saying, *“I’m a good person, so God’s good with me,”* then you realize very quickly, that CAN’T be how God operates, given what He’s done. Cuz you understand, if God could be “good with us” cuz we’re “good people,” then there’s absolutely NO reason Jesus would’ve ever needed to come. Certainly no reason He would’ve needed to die on a Cross...But it’s the Cross and the Resurrection, you understand, that PROVES God’s NOT operating like that. Or as Robert Capon said, *“The cross is a sign of the fact that religion - or things we do in an effort to make ourselves good - can’t do a thing about (our) problems.”* Rather, as the Apostle Peter said, *“Christ suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that HE might bring us to God.”*⁴ So ya HAVE to “judge with right judgment,” lest like these Jewish leaders you find yourself **immunized** against the gift of salvation RIGHT in front of you!

Cuz as David Platt says, *“What (neither you nor our neighborhood, city or world) needs is superficial religion (or superficial effort; what you) need is supernatural regeneration”* that comes from simply looking at the ONE person who took, not the worldly/conventional route of building His influence and platform - like His brothers wanted - but who INSTEAD, INTENTIONALLY/not passively, laid all that down, to the point of giving up His very life, so that those who, like these Leaders, called Him *“demon possessed”* or just those of us who could never work so well our way back to God, could NEVERTHELESS be welcomed in BY God... **Do you believe that?** Cuz that’s ALL it takes to not miss Jesus/to not get “spiritually catfished”...to be saved!

Which leads me to close by saying this: Family, THIS is why we’re so driven to share the good news of Christ, that we even have it baked into our mission statement - *“SHARING the freedom and family of Christ.”* Cuz yes, we want to be a part of alleviating suffering in our neighborhood and city. It’s why we had our Advent Missions Offering last month. It’s why we encourage Missional Families to be intentional about serving neighbors, those in your norms, and connecting to different networks like SendRelief that’s doing incredible good in the city. We WANT to alleviate suffering! But you understand, the most significant suffering is not social, political, economic, or even racial; it’s ETERNAL! The eternal suffering of a soul that’s sadly missed Jesus and therefore stands to be separated from God forever. So what I’m saying is: Don’t “judge superficially” by giving yourself to important but secondary causes. *“Judge with right judgment”* and believe on Jesus if you never have, and then KEEP believing on Jesus as you give yourself to helping others believe Him as well! Imagine if we all pulled in that direction together!...**Let’s Pray:**

⁴ 1 Peter 3:18