

You Are His – See Where You Are!

NUMBERS 29:12-40

(Reading: John 7:25-44)

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ...

Here's something for you to think about.

Consider this question: How come you are where you are?

In other words: What has brought you to this time and place in your life?

Now you might try to be clever and reply, "Well, it's because we got in a car and came here."

And for some of you that's quite a drive.

But that's not the answer, is it?

Because you know the answer isn't really about what **you** have done at all.

In fact, to be in church now for the right reason means knowing that God has done it all!

What you acknowledge at this time is how He's been working all the time to put you right where you are.

He is the One who either brought you up in a Christian family or converted you.

He is the One who has kept working on you through His Word and Spirit so that you're part of His people.

In fact, thinking about how you got to this point in your life makes you see how blessed you've been by the Lord.

To think that He chose you – of all people!

And it should've been completely different!

What amazing grace!

So being in church, worshipping together with God's people, the Body of Jesus Christ, brings it all back.

You are reminded through what you do now that you belong to the Church of all ages and places.

For what we do now is what they did when they came to worship the triune God.

This is what Old Testament Israel did every time they celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles.

The name 'tabernacles,' or 'booths' as this festival is also called, was because the Israelites were living in small tents for the seven days of this feast.

Seven days which began five days after the Day of Atonement.

In this way they symbolically experienced the pilgrimage of the wilderness.

These days in Israel you will find this continues as *Sukkot*, which means booths.

All over that country you will find people putting up these *sukkot*.

They will line parking lots, balconies, rooftops, lawns, and public spaces.

Every army base has one.

This feast also tied in with the end of the harvests.

So while the wheat harvest was celebrated at the Feast of Weeks, which is Pentecost, now they celebrated the Ingathering of the rest of the harvests.

These were the fruits of the orchard and vineyard.

Congregation, this festival was all about the joy of their salvation.

For who had looked after them through the forty years and with the harvests just gathered?

It was none other than the God of the covenant!

This was the feast more than the other feasts which celebrated the Lord being with them.

For He was still with them.

And He hadn't yet finished with them!

This morning we will draw that out through two aspects in this text.

Two points which leave the true people of God then, and His saints today, looking even more to Him every day and in every way!

The first of these is that this was **THE LAST BUT NOT THE LEAST OF THE FEASTS**.

So what their church year ended with was actually quite a high point.

How can we know that?

Well, look how many verses the text consists of!

Twenty-eight verses!

And that's simply because this feast involves much more than any of the other feasts.

There were eight days straight of numerous offerings.

Those priests would have been run off their feet!

And is it any surprise?

For this is where it all comes together.

With this celebration they would finish the year on a high!

They had lots of offerings because they had so many blessings!

Is it any wonder that it was during **this** time of the church year that Solomon dedicated the temple?

1st King chapter 8 describes that incredible scene.

And verse 5 says it all there.

For they were "sacrificing so many sheep and cattle that they could not be recorded or counted."

I mean, didn't reading through the verses 12 till 39 of the text seem like that?

For the seven days of the festival there were 70 young bulls sacrifices, 14 rams, 98 male lambs, and 7 male goats.

A total of 199 animals altogether over the seven days.

And that doesn't count the daily morning and evening burnt offerings, and the Sabbath day burnt offerings.

Nor does it count the eighth day when there was another bull, one ram, seven male lambs, and the one male goat.

This feast offered up double what was offered in rams and lambs at the Passover and Pentecost.

And as for the number of bulls – the most valuable animal of them all – this was five times the amount offered up at those other two feasts!

Congregation, it was the religious crescendo to the church year.

Solomon **couldn't** have chosen any other time to dedicate the temple to the Lord!

As Deuteronomy 16 the verses 14 and 15 declare, “Be joyful at your Feast – you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites, the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns.

“For seven days celebrate the Feast to the LORD your God at the place the LORD will choose.

“For the LORD your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.”

Notice how the most disadvantaged were to be among the most blessed.

They may have ordinarily been the last amongst humanity but they were by no means the least in the Lord's eyes.

For this was the very time when they would be lifted above their time!

Congregation, after this festival it would be six months until the next religious feast.

That would be the beginning of the church year, with the Passover.

The Passover, which commemorated their deliverance.

But from now until then they were left with the memory of how He kept them through the wilderness.

For being saved is only the first day.

There are many more days and weeks and months and years after that.

And on each of those days the Lord saves them in different ways over and over again!

His Spirit is ever busy working to keep His promise to them because He has saved them.

Dear believer, isn't that the testimony of your life?

You have certainly been kept by the Lord.

And He keeps on keeping you!

There's no way He's letting you go.

This is the truth of the 'P' in T.U.L.I.P..

For in those five hallmarks of biblical Christianity, the 'P' in "perseverance of the saints" tells us of how the Lord is always faithful to His own.

That's in spite of whatever His own will do!

So how true our first aspect is.

This is THE LAST BUT NOT THE LEAST OF THE FEASTS.

And so we move on to see further, THE COMPLIMENTARY ASPECT OF THIS FEAST.

Congregation, we have seen the character of this feast.

It's vitally important because it celebrates the great fact of the Lord's keeping them.

But it is also special because of the way it balances the other festivals, especially the one just before it.

Do you remember that festival held the week before this?

That was the 'Day of Atonement' – *Yom Kippur*.

Then the emphasis was on sin and atonement.

That was the day that said what they were doing through the whole sacrificial system could never make themselves perfectly right with God.

Only if He Himself provided the sacrifice could there be the right satisfaction.

So it quite clearly spoke prophetically about the coming of Christ for making us right with God.

That was about the **accomplishment** of redemption.

And now we have the feast that celebrates how it's God in us and with us that brings us to heaven.

This is about the **application** of redemption.

This is why we read from the seventh chapter of John's gospel.

There it tells us of what our Lord taught during the celebration of this Feast.

It was on the last and greatest day of the Feast that Jesus stood and spoke in a loud voice.

As we read in the verses 37 and 38, He said, "If a man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.

"Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

Now, that statement might seem a bit strange.

What's water got to with this feast?

And how is all this connected to where water comes from?

Well, it seems that on this day in Jesus' time, a priest would take a pitcher of water from the pool of Siloam.

He would then pour that water on the ground, saying, using the words of Isaiah 12 verse 3, "With you will draw water from the wells of salvation."

Jesus was talking about the Spirit.

For it was the Holy Spirit who applies redemption into the lives of believers from their conversion until they come to heaven.

So, at the same time that it was the height of the church year and so wrapped up the year it also prepared them for rest of the year.

And this is further confirmed with looking even further at THE COMPLIMENTARY ASPECT OF THIS FEAST.

Congregation, there is a special clue which tells us that.

Because you have a look through the sacrifices being offered up from the first day of this feast until the last day.

It is a lot every day, isn't it?

But there's something different about each of those days.

What is it?

Ah, did you notice?

The number of bulls being sacrificed as burnt offerings decreases by one on each subsequent day of the festival.

They start off with sacrificing thirteen bulls on the first day and end up sacrificing seven on the seventh day.

Now, thirteen is a very superstitious number for many in our society.

When you have a Friday which is also the 13th, it's called 'Black Friday' and they believe it's an unlucky day.

But that's only because they make it like that.

If you expect bad things to happen they will!

There was a special number, though, that we heard about especially at the beginning of Numbers 28.

A number which for the Hebrews means something quite blessed.

And that number...?

Ah, 'seven,' isn't it?

And that's the number we end with as the number of bulls being sacrificed on the last day of this feast.

So what they end up with is the holy number seven for the most valuable offering as they conclude their offerings.

Which while it appears to make the sacrifices less actually ends up making it very much the Lord's!

But it does mean that each day they are getting back to their more normal days.

And they will have to go back into their everyday work.

After having this last month set aside especially for worshipping the Lord, while the land itself also rested, now they would get into the ploughing needed for the next year.

This Feast assured them that the Lord would be with them.

And we find that confirmed in verse 39.

For verse 39 may seem to be simply affirming what was to be done.

But notice how it speaks of all these burnt and sin and fellowship offerings which they do together as God's people.

Because those offerings are not the most important thing.

The thing that matters most is what they themselves personally vow and offer to the Lord.

These offerings are only additional to that.

So when the Israelites faithfully followed the church year they confirmed their blessedness.

For the Word and the Spirit always go together.

Congregation, God gives you a break.

Every Sunday you've got a day to rest and recreate in Him.

Then we rejoice in the Lord, as
Philippians 4 verse 4 says.

But it's also every day we must give thanks to God for His good gifts.

Don't let a day pass without expressing your gratitude for all He's done.

In the words of 1st Thessalonians 5 verses 16 till 18, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

With such a spirit you truly have the Holy Spirit.

And with Him in you, you will make it through.

Because Christ is leading you.

Amen.

PRAYER:

Let's pray...

O Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

How much haven't You been working out all things for the redemption of those who are Your own?

Lord, again we have seen the marvellous way You provided for Your people of old.

You gave them what they needed to look to the Messiah and to be kept until He came.

And so we too have all we need until You call us to Yourself.

Help us, then, to live as true pilgrims.

For we are only passing through.

And so bless us to look to you in all we
do.

Through Christ our Lord, we pray, Amen.