

Text: John 7:1-9

Title: My Time Has Not Yet Come / translated by Eunji Choi

1.

Last August 7th was the season of Ipchu (the beginning of autumn). Of course, since we live in America, the Korean seasons don't hold much significance for us. However, after Ipchu, the temperature has noticeably dropped, signaling the arrival of autumn. Our ancestors divided the year into 24 solar terms and formed lifestyles and agricultural cultures appropriate to each season. We can learn from our ancestors the importance of discerning the right time and acting accordingly. The Jews also celebrated three major festivals in accordance with their agricultural culture: Passover during the barley harvest in March-April, the Feast of Weeks during the wheat harvest in June-July, and the Feast of Tabernacles during the olive and grape harvest in September-October. The story in today's text is set against the backdrop of the Feast of Tabernacles, which occurs around September-October in the solar calendar. In Palestine, where the Jews lived, autumn began around this time, marking the conclusion of a year's agricultural work with the harvest of olives and grapes. The Feast of Tabernacles is a significant celebration that commemorates the Israelites' tent-dwelling during their time in the wilderness after the Exodus. Jesus was in Galilee when this feast was approaching. Although many Jews would travel to Jerusalem, located to the south; to celebrate, it seems Jesus chose to remain in northern Galilee.

The reason for this, as stated in verse 1, was that the Jews were seeking to kill Him. Why were the Jews trying to kill Jesus? The reason isn't given in chapter 6 but is mentioned in chapter 5. In John 5:18, it says, "For this reason the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God." Was calling God "Father" such an inflammatory statement to the Jews? Yes, it was. No one had ever called God "Father" before. The most intimate title the Jews used for God was "Our Father in Heaven," which in Hebrew is "Avinu Sheba Shamaim." This is a conventional address for God in Jewish prayers. However, Jesus was the first to refer to God as "My Father." Why was this problematic? By calling God "My Father," Jesus revealed his close relationship with God. This was something that God initiated at Jesus' baptism when He said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17), expressing that there was no distance between them. Jesus did not stop at merely calling God "Father"; He also claimed to be one with God. Why did this excite the Jews? If Jesus is the Son of God, then the Jewish community that does not believe in Him would find itself completely estranged from God. Recognizing Jesus as the Son of God would require a total shift in their beliefs. Thus, the claim that Jesus is the Son of God was a tremendous provocation to the Jewish society. Jesus initiated this provocation.

2.

However, what we must understand is that when Jesus called Himself the Son of God, He did not do so with a sense of privilege. When Jesus calls God "Father," it comes from a place of absolute humility and self-denial. He is not using the background of having a powerful father to boast. It's not, "Do you know who my father is? He's the pastor of the biggest church!" That doesn't hold water. It's more like, "My father is the Attorney General, so I can do this." But Jesus spoke of God as His Father only in the context

of absolute obedience and self-denial. Through Jesus' humility and self-denial, an immense power was given to Him. You know the Law of Universal Gravity? It's the scientific law that Isaac Newton proved regarding the attraction between two objects with mass. The principle states that the product of the masses of the two objects is inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them ($F=M_1*m_2/r^2$). Let's suppose that both Jesus and God have physical mass. While we cannot measure their mass, if we multiplied their masses, it would be immense. However, the distance between them is zero. They are so close that they are one. Since there is no distance, the denominator becomes zero. When the denominator is zero, the gravitational force becomes infinite. If we explain Jesus' ability to perform miracles through the law of gravity, it would be due to His closeness to God. Because there is no distance between Him and God, His power is infinite. Jesus submits to God to become one with Him. By emptying Himself and humbling Himself, He obeys God. The point I want to make is that Jesus calls God "My Father" in the context of self-denial and submission to His Father. Jesus did not call God "Father" from a sense of privilege. It was in the context of His infinite self-emptying and absolute obedience to God, even to the point of carrying the cross.

Why do we pray? It's to foster intimacy with God. We pray to narrow the distance between God and ourselves. The closer our relationship with God becomes, the more of His immense power and ability we receive. This is the principle of prayer explained through science. However, God does not draw near to those who come to Him for the sake of obtaining power or ability. Instead, He reveals His power to those who come near with a heart of self-denial and a desire to fully obey His will.

3.

During the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus' brothers came to Him. What was the essence of what they said? "Why do you hide yourself when you want to be known? Isn't it time to reveal yourself to the world?" In their eyes, Jesus was someone "who wants to be known but is hiding." Their request was simple: "Show your power to the Jews." They wanted Jesus to prove who He was through miracles and signs. When people gathered in Jerusalem for the feast, they thought it was the perfect time for Jesus to reveal Himself. But Jesus discerned their lack of faith. The disbelief of His brothers was the same as that of the Jews. Jesus' brothers did not believe Him to be the Son of God; they regarded Him only as someone extraordinary capable of performing miracles. Jesus responded by saying His time had not yet come, thus rejecting their request. Jesus would be sacrificed as the Passover lamb on the cross. The Feast of Tabernacles was not His time. Furthermore, Jesus would not gather people through miraculous displays of power. He would not prove Himself through extraordinary abilities; instead, He would reveal Himself by denying Himself and sacrificing Himself on the cross. Jesus' time would come when He accepted the humiliating cross. Rather than compelling people to surrender through signs and wonders, He would manifest Himself through obedience even to the point of death on the cross.

But isn't there a striking resemblance between the requests of Jesus' brothers and our own? Their request can be summed up as "Show your power." It's a demand to prove how great He is. Jesus rejects this. What do people in a capitalist and consumerist society think of power? They equate power with

money. In this society, wealth is viewed as ability and power. We live in a world where our identity is often tied to our social status and financial resources. The size of our homes and the type of cars we drive are seen as indicators of our ability. As immigrants in a foreign land, we often feel the need to prove our worth through our jobs and the achievements of our children. We hope our children will gain admission to prestigious universities like the Ivy League. We wish for them to have stable jobs, as if their success validates our immigration. Honestly, how much does our children's academic performance and job success have to do with us as parents? I try to resist the temptation to link my identity with that of my children. Their achievements do not stem from my abilities but from their own hard work. Breaking the emotional attachment between myself and my children is beneficial for my mental health. They live their lives, and I live mine. We must break free from the temptation to prove our worth through our children. It seems Jesus' brothers also had a temptation to showcase their greatness through their brother, Jesus.

The requests of Jesus' brothers also resemble the desires of religious people like me. Religious individuals often seek to impress others with flashy and impressive sermons, wanting to lead larger congregations to showcase their significance as spiritual leaders. Yet what Jesus demonstrated was that true power is not displayed in such ostentatious ways. God's divinity is not revealed through worldly measures. Jesus blocks the temptation to seek fame. He clearly draws the line that such a path is contrary to His own.

4.

By refusing the suggestion to go up to Jerusalem for the festival, we gain insight into Jesus' heart. He knew that He would face demands from the crowd to demonstrate His power through miracles, so He refused to go to Jerusalem. Jesus did not want to be revealed in that manner. He chose not to save people through power or fame that forces submission. During World War II, the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to subdue Japan. The Japanese emperor knelt before General MacArthur, not out of admiration for his character, but due to the overwhelming military power of the United States. Jesus rejects the method of compelling people to submit through His strength and ability. Instead, He chooses to deny Himself and obey God the Father even to the point of death on the cross. He boldly refuses the crowd's demand: "If you are the Son of God, come down from there." Jesus said, "The only sign I will show is the sign of Jonah." The sign of Jonah is the sign of being in the dark belly of a fish for three days, dying, and coming back to life. Jesus wanted to show that enduring the humiliation of the cross is true power.

How do we show the world that we are Christians? Is it by becoming famous? Can we declare that we are children of God through our jobs, our social status, or our possessions? No, we cannot. We can only show that we are Christians to the world by absolute obedience to God and enduring the humiliation of the cross. It's not about revealing our abilities through our talents and possessions. If we were to summarize how Jesus revealed Himself, we could say, "Obedience is power." We do not demonstrate that we are God's children through great achievements or worldly status. When our small daily acts of obedience come together, we can show our influence as God's children to the world. What is the great sign that will truly move the people of the world? Self-denial is the greatest sign. The obedience of

someone who denies themselves, takes up their cross daily, and follows the Lord is the sign we can show as Christians.

5.

What truly moves people to their knees is not money or power. While it may appear that people bow down to money or status, these cannot deeply touch their hearts. Like Jesus, we must have a personal charm. Our Lord Jesus is so beautiful. What makes Jesus so beautiful? Jesus had God, who possesses everything in the world, as His Father. Yet, He poured out all His privileges for the love of others. Jesus did not consider His privileges, but instead devoted His entire life to loving God and loving His neighbors. This heart of Jesus is so noble and beautiful. We all have a thirst for power. We want to prove how great we are through power. But isn't a truly great person someone who has power yet pours it all out for others? Self-denial does not mean to belittle or destroy oneself. It means to give up the fundamental attitude of seeing oneself as the center of the world. It is to acknowledge that others are as precious as ourselves and that they, too, are the center of the world. Sin is nothing other than a "heart curved in on itself." It is the heart that cannot stand not being the center of the world, the state of having no room for others. Jesus rejects this. He denied Himself, bore the cross, and obeyed to the point of death for God the Father and for the sinners He loved. Being crucified may seem like powerlessness, but Jesus believed that people would be transformed through the hidden self-sacrifice and self-emptying within that powerlessness. Go back with this engraved in your heart: obedience is power. Remember that being close to God is power. Seek a purer and more sincere heart to narrow the distance between you and Him. Make room in your heart for the neighbors God loves, and live by creating a place for them. I bless you in the name of the Lord, that all of you may know that the life of denying yourself and carrying the cross of Jesus is the true power we should have, and that you may obey this calling.