



*After this Jesus travelled round Galilee; he could not travel round Judaea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him.*

*As the Jewish feast of Shelters drew near, his brothers said to him, 'Leave this place and go to Judaea, so that your disciples, too, can see the works you are doing; no one who wants to be publicly known acts in secret; if this is what you are doing, you should reveal yourself to the world.' Not even his brothers had faith in him. Jesus answered, 'For me the right time has not come yet, but for you any time is the right time. The world cannot hate you, but it does hate me, because I give evidence that its ways are evil. Go up to the festival yourselves: I am not going to this festival, because for me the time is not ripe yet.' Having said that, he stayed behind in Galilee.*

*However, after his brothers had left for the festival, he went up as well, not publicly but secretly. At the festival the Jews were on the look-out for him: 'Where is he?' they said. There was a great deal of talk about him in the crowds. Some said, 'He is a good man'; others, 'No, he is leading the people astray'. Yet no one spoke about him openly, for fear of the Jews.*

## John 7: 1-13

*There was a great deal of talk about him in the crowds*

## Thursday 2nd week in Lent

John writes his narrative of Jesus' ministry in a circle of festivals, each festival marking a new phase. It is a framework that would have created a familiar resonance for John's community that probably had long roots in the synagogue culture. The meaning of each festival would have added depths of significance to what John was narrating in its context. That depth of meaning is lost to us. Even if we put energy into researching and understanding the Feast of Shelters as it relates to this new section of the gospel, we do not resonate at an emotional level. The connection imparts no real energy.

This highlights a crucial issue for contemporary Christians. The biblical text has lost most of the energy that it once had within the church and the wider world. Even in circles where the Bible is exalted, sometimes to the status of idolatry, it is rarely taken seriously in the way it was in the past except as a source of proof texts to support favoured dogmas and moral choices.

Yet, in so many ways, John's gospel strikes powerful chords in our contemporary experience. The confusion and bewilderment he records, probably reflecting his own time, shines a light into our church life.