

## **THE TRUE WATER OF LIFE**

### **The Day of Pentecost + May 31, 2020**

#### **John 7:37–39**

One of the most agonizing experiences we can have is to see someone suffer, especially if it's a close loved one.

It's absolutely heart-wrenching.

We wish we could do something to help.

More devastating, perhaps, is if someone we love is suffering because of his or her lifestyle or behaviors and won't admit it.

While there's not much we can do,  
still our heart aches because we love the person.

How much more agonizing it was for Jesus as he attended the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Booths, which is the context of our Scripture text.

The Feast of Tabernacles was an eight-day commemoration and celebration of God's merciful provision as the people of Israel were brought out of captivity in Egypt and entered the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land.

As the children of Israel and their livestock suffered from thirst, God commanded Moses to strike a rock in the middle of the desert, and water miraculously gushed out.

God wanted to teach the Israelites through this object lesson that he would always provide for his people and that they should not doubt him.

God then commanded them to gather once a year in Jerusalem to commemorate his abundant provision for their thirst.

As you can imagine, God used this feast as an opportunity to remind them that he would satisfy their spiritual thirst in the sending of the Messiah.

For a thousand years, faithful Jews made the trip to Jerusalem not only for the celebration, but with the hopeful expectation that Messiah might finally reveal himself at the event.

Imagine the agony on Jesus' heart at this moment.

For two and a half years, he has been preaching, calling people to repent because God's kingdom was at hand.

He performed miracles

as signs for people to see that he is, indeed, the promised Savior.  
He openly stated that he is the fulfillment of Scripture's prophecy,  
that he was sent by the Father to redeem the world from sin.

Yet most, especially the religious leaders, rejected him.

John notes in this same chapter of his Gospel  
that even Jesus' own brothers rejected him at this time.

I can only imagine how much it hurt Jesus to be rejected by his own family.  
Nevertheless, from the compassionate heart of Jesus flowed living water.

Now, as Jesus is in the midst of temple celebrations  
with water pouring out around the altar,  
trumpets sounding, people singly loudly,  
Jesus stands up and cries out even louder,

**"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.**

**Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said,  
'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water?'"** (vv 37–38).

Once again, Jesus demonstrates the love and compassion of God.  
God wants all of his creation to be saved;  
therefore, Jesus will not give up.

He calls out to all who are spiritually thirsty to come to him.

He boldly claims that he is the source of salvation.

He is the true water of life.

John adds that Jesus said these things **"about the Spirit,  
whom those who believe in him were to receive"** (v 39a).

The day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2 was a fulfillment of Jesus' word,  
because, as of this Feast of Booths,

**"the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified"** (v 39b).

The Feast of Tabernacles in our text  
is just six to seven months before the next feast, the Feast of Passover.  
It was the last feast that Jesus would attend.

By the end of Passover, Jesus was the sacrificial Lamb of God,  
to take away the sin of the world.

Here, Jesus would be glorified by the Father as he was crucified,  
bearing the sin, death, and spiritual thirst of all creation  
as our substitute under God's righteous wrath and condemnation,  
so we could have spiritual life and our thirst quenched.

Meditate on this:

The One who is the source of living water suffered such thirst,

was so dehydrated during the whole ordeal on our behalf that his tongue stuck to his jaw (Ps 22:15).

As the Fountain of Life died on the cross  
and a soldier pierced his side,  
blood and water flowed out of his lifeless body  
to cover sin and to give life to all who would believe  
that he is the Savior of the world.

Jesus' atonement for sin was for all.

Jesus gives his Holy Spirit to all who drink from him,  
to all who believe his Gospel,  
and to all who receive him through the promises of his Word and Sacraments.

One could say that each Sunday is a Feast of Tabernacles.

Each Sunday is a Feast of Pentecost.

You receive the Holy Spirit as you hear,  
in a language you can understand,  
the Good News of Jesus as the living water,  
who satisfies your spiritual thirst.

People throughout the world today  
are hearing the Gospel proclaimed in their own heart language,  
just as they did on the day of Pentecost.

It is only through the Holy Spirit's saving work  
that anyone is able to recognize their spiritual thirst,  
come to Jesus,  
and receive his merciful forgiveness in the waters of Baptism,  
in the Words of Absolution,  
and in the very body and blood of Jesus  
that was shed for them on Calvary's cross.

The Holy Spirit is the one who keeps you in this faith in Jesus.

The Law of God, and life itself, remind you of your spiritual thirst.

The problem is that your sinful nature  
will always want to turn away from Jesus  
and deny your thirst

or it will search for spiritual fulfillment from other places.

As your pastor, I cry out to you as Jesus did in our text.

Don't deny your brokenness and spiritual thirst.

Don't pretend that everything is okay  
as you secretly try to hide your guilt and shame and pain.

Please don't try to fill emptiness in your soul

with unhealthy relationships,  
consume your life and time working for things  
that eventually are destroyed,  
or mask your pain through drugs and alcohol.

Rather, come!

Hear the invitation of Jesus.

Come to Jesus, the living water, and receive his mercy.

Drink deeply.

Drink often.

He will fill you, not with just a trickle or little stream of water,  
but with an overflowing river of his Holy Spirit.

Refreshed and renewed from Jesus' heart of living water,  
out of your redeemed heart flows the Holy Spirit  
like a raging river of mercy to go with God's benediction  
and be a blessing to your family, to your neighbors,  
to wherever you work and share the mercy that you have received freely.

Help your family.

Help your neighbor.

Help those with whom you work.

Support efforts of mission and mercy.

That's what the first Christians did.

And when you're asked, *"You seem different.*

*What's gotten into you?"*

You can speak to them about Jesus.

You can invite them to drink of Jesus.

You can invite them to join you, here,  
where JESUS QUENCHES OUR SPIRITUAL THIRST  
AND ENABLES US TO BE RIVERS OF LIVING WATER.

Jesus will fill them with rivers of living water too  
and announce these wonderful words  
that all the world needs to hear:

You are forgiven all of your sins

in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.