

*We bow our hearts in prayer:* Dear Father in heaven, create in us a thirst for Your salvation, and lead us directly to Your Son, Jesus Christ, the Fountain-source of the pure Water of Life, so that we may be enlivened and refreshed. Grant also that Your Holy Spirit come upon us to comfort us with the forgiveness of our sins. Amen.

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

The text from John's Gospel that we meditate on today is rather short, and to more fully grasp its context requires a bit of explanation.

The feast that John will refer to is the Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths.

This was a fall harvest festival, held 4 days after the Day of Atonement, that lasted for a week, 7 days of rejoicing and living in tabernacles, or tents/booths, made out of leafy branches.

These very temporary booths were to remind the people of their history, how their fathers lived in temporary shelters as they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years before God gave them rest and settled them in the Promise Land.

Part of the celebrations during this feast, was the daily procession of water.

During the morning sacrifice, one of the priests would go out from the Temple to the Pool of Siloam and fill a golden pitcher with its water.

He would then return to the Temple and pour out the water on the altar.

This was also to serve as a remembrance of their wilderness wanderings, as their fathers received and drank the water from the rock which satiated their desperate dessert thirst.

So consider this context as we hear what Jesus cried out to the Jewish pilgrims in the Temple.

*Our text for meditation today is...*

*We read as follows in Jesus' name:*

---

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "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.'"

Now this He said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. <sup>(ESV)</sup>

*These are Your Words, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen.* <sup>(John 17:17)</sup>

---

We live in a very different climate than did those living in the land of Israel, let alone the wilderness that the Israelites wandered through.

We have experienced thirst... after a game of basketball or a time of hard labor under the sun. But how often is our thirst a matter of real concern?

Usually we are thirsty for only a short time, till we can get to a faucet, drinking fountain, or the next convenience store, and feel spending \$3 for a bottle of water is worth it.

But that wasn't the case for the wandering Israelites or the pilgrims walking to Jerusalem.

Water was a constant need, especially in the hotter, more arid climate with fewer rivers, especially when walking – not an air conditioned vehicle – was the mode of transport.

Have you ever been so thirsty, that you'd consider drinking stagnant pond water?  
Or digging a cistern to catch water runoff for the hot, dry, summer months ahead?...

...  
While you are satisfied, it's hard to know or to remember true, life-threatening thirst,  
or to even consider the otherwise foolish/irrational decisions you might make to survive it.  
And perhaps just as equally, it is hard to remember to be thankful for water's abundance,  
cleanliness, and easy access as we have it today.

But like with the woman at the well in John 4, Jesus wasn't talking about physical water.  
He was talking about a spiritual thirst, the desire to receive and be satisfied by God.  
And His promises are pretty incredible;  
**"Come and drink of Me, and rivers of living water will flow out from within you."**

...  
The crowd to which Jesus was speaking was a mixed group,  
some feeling satisfied with themselves, others who could take Him or leave Him,  
and still others who sought refreshment, but were finding foul, stagnant puddles  
of false doctrine to assuage their thirst, leaving them more thirsty/desperate than before.

The first group Martin Luther described as being "drunk on [their own] vain holiness,  
... so full and so mad that they drool all over themselves... they feel no thirst." LW vol.26 p.267  
They are satisfied with their attempts at good works.  
They avoid most noticeable sins and try to do the most good.  
No doubt every now & then they feel guilt & discomfort about their spiritual well-being,  
But they soon recover by trying to make up for mishaps, righting their own wrongs.  
They find, nor seek, comfort in the Gospel. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are a nice story...  
for the weak-minded soul; good for traditions and nostalgia, but not necessary for life.

Others have felt the refreshing drought of a cleared conscience.  
Luther describes them as having "gained some benefit from the Gospel,  
and now they are no longer concerned about the welfare of their souls." LW vol.26 p.269  
They no longer seek comfort in the Gospel, nor do they have any more appetite for it."  
These God spoke of through Jeremiah: **For My people have committed two evils:  
they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters,  
and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.**

For us who have **tasted and seen that the Lord is good,** Psalms 34:8  
this is a very real temptation and danger.  
As He promised, in your times of deep distress and thirst, He poured out His forgiveness.  
So completely did God satisfy & fill you, so at peace has your conscience been,  
that your sinful flesh has found opportunity to let your spiritual concerns wane.  
So easy, it seems, to believe in Jesus, that now you're tempted to think  
there is more that you need to do.  
As if God has gotten you started by Jesus' death for your forgiveness,  
but now you need to complete your salvation by working at being righteous.

As if Jesus is the milk of the Gospel, but your good works are the meat.

But these are foul and putrid waters, that make one even more thirsty and sicker to death.

...

And still yet, there is the 3<sup>rd</sup> group, those who thirst, who crave righteousness, not the vain holiness of our own sin-corrupted works, but Christ's true righteousness.

Who are frightened of what they have deserved by their sins.

Whose consciences are "insecure and uncertain with regard to their relationship to God."

These thirst because the Law has slaked away any hope of refreshment

as it points the sinner to the flames of hell so that they yearn for even a drop of water from the tip of a finger.

These are the mothers who dread Mother's Day because accolades are generously bestowed upon them, though they feel wholly undeserving.

The wives who recognize their failures to love their husbands and lead a pure life.

The women who struggle with trusting God to provide, not only their daily needs, but also for their future wants and desires.

These are the fathers & employers who have tyrannically headed their households & workplaces.

The husbands who have injured their wives physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

The men who've lived to serve themselves w/their God-given gifts, neglecting their neighbors.

These are the children and employees who see that they do not always respect their elders or superiors, but provoke them to anger by their dishonesty and laziness.

These are those who see how lightly you have considered Jesus' salvation as of late, who have thought more of your own goodness, than Christ's completed salvation.

It's to these that Jesus cries out, "**If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.**"

That is a bold statement for Jesus to make because He is publicly announcing that He has taken your thirst upon Himself and will quench your parched soul.

But it is a statement that He is legitimately able to make, because He has taken your thirst, as Scriptures testifies of Him in Psalm 22,<sup>[14-15]</sup>

**I am poured out like water, ... My strength is dried up like a potsherd,**

**And My tongue sticks to My jaws; You lay Me in the dust of death.**

While He suffered the torments of hell on the cross for you, He sought no relief.

It was not until everything was completed that He finally said, "**I thirst.**"

The thirsting mother and father, husband and wife, man, woman and child, and employer and employee,

let your thirst drive you to drink from the spiritual Rock, which is Christ.<sup>1Corinthians10:4</sup>

He now drinks with you anew in His Father's kingdom,<sup>Matthew26:29</sup>

as Your risen Savior gives to you *the cup of the New Testament in His blood, which was shed for you... for the remission of your sins.*<sup>(Words of Institution)</sup>

Far from you who thirst being weak and failing, Jesus says in the Beatitudes<sup>Matthew5:6:</sup>

**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.**

And not only satisfied, but even more, **Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said,**

**‘Out of his heart [more literally, ‘Out of his belly’] will flow rivers of living water.’”**

This is not the stagnant, putrid water of self-reliance or self-righteousness,  
the kind that never satisfies but continually demands more of you,  
leading to despair and death.

This is the cool, refreshing, living (running) water that revitalizes and strengthens  
not only you, but even overflows to those around you.

Again Luther: “When the Lord says that He will give people to drink, He does not intend to do this with a spoon; He will not siphon it through a pipe or tap it from a spigot. No, streams of comfort shall be theirs, and all the thirsty shall be satisfied with a boundless supply. Thus a pious pastor is able to comfort all sinners and remit their sins. Regardless of their size and number, he can remove all sins with one verse. When death and war come, a pastor can fortify a whole army to defy death.” LW vol. 26, p. 274

Your Baptism into Christ has dowsed the flames of hell.

He provides an oasis in the arid wilderness of this life with rivers of living water  
flowing from the mouths of those who forgive your sins.

And He quenches your thirst for righteousness, as you drink His blood for your forgiveness,  
and are refreshed and enlivened in Jesus’ holiness.

**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again  
to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.** (1 Peter 1:3)

Peace be with you. Your sins are forgiven. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria*