

## **Easter: Thirst No More**

*John 19:28; Genesis 1:1-2;  
John 1:1-3, 3:5-6, 4:13, 7:37-39*

Jesus' thirst is our proof.

- *John 19:28*

Jesus' thirst understands our pain.

- *Hebrews 4:14-16; Romans 1:1-4; John 1:14*

Jesus thirsted for more than water.

- *Luke 24:5-7; John 7:37-39; Isaiah 44:3;  
Jeremiah 2:13*

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**West Valley Church**  
**4/9/23**  
**Michael O' Neill**

## **Easter<sup>1</sup>**

### **Thirst No More**

It is a twelve-mile round trip hike that descends 3100 feet from the south rim of the Grand Canyon along the Bright Angel Trail to the plateau point. The plateau point is the sheer drop off rim to the Colorado River below, a drop of a half a mile, straight down.

My two oldest boys and I hiked the Bright Angel Trail when they were preteens one summer. We started out at the trailhead in the early morning, with the temperature at around 60 degrees. By the time we got to Plateau Point, the temperature was 110 degrees. Then we had to turn around and return up the trail – again, a 3100-foot climb at a 10% grade in 100+ degree heat. The entire hike down and back took us nearly ten hours.

We carried light backpacks with food and snacks, and we also each had two water bottles. There are four stations for water along the way, so we always made sure to finish a bottle before refilling it at the next watering spot. Even at that, the boys were showing signs of dehydration. At the four-and-a-half-mile mark is a small oasis of trees called the Havasupai Gardens. There is a nice cold stream that runs through it before going underground and coming out below, into the Colorado River. They took off their shoes and put their bare feet in the cool spring-water, bringing their temperature back down.

Those life-saving water stations were always a welcome sight; a chance to rest, refill, and refresh. Even so, we saw many people suffering from dehydration, with one man being lifted from the canyon in a helicopter gurney. Without those water stations, the hike would be a certain death journey.

Jesus was on a grueling, certain death journey and he needed water when he hung on that cross on Good Friday. We're told in John 19:28-29 that as he hung on the cross, he cried out, "I am thirsty."

Jesus had not had anything to drink for probably around 18 hours. With the loss of sweat and blood from His agony in the garden of prayer, the sweat from the intensity of His pain, and the loss of blood from His scourging mutilation, He was already in dehydration. Probably the last liquid He drank was the cup of wine He shared with His disciples at the last supper – again, as much as 18 hours earlier. He must have been wracked with pain in every muscle of his body and in every fiber of his being while he hung there on the cross. By this time the sun was high, and it was the hottest part of the day. The anguish of his fevered body was unbearable. It was as though all the pains of death itself were absorbed in Him in that single moment; the terribly intense pain of his nerves and limbs finally was expressed in the statement, "I THIRST."

It is well known that thirst was a supreme cause of distress for those who were put to

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<sup>1</sup> Portions based on sermons by Ken Henson / *Thirst*, and Michael O'Neill *The Last Words*, part 5: John 19:28-29

death by crucifixion. The need that brought this complaint from Jesus' lips must have been bitter beyond anything we can understand.

From nine to noon, He hung on the cross by the nails in his tendons and in his wrists. His arms and legs were cramping from lack of water, His shredded back was rubbing against the rough grains of the crossbeam, and the blood from the crown of thorns was covering his face – He was unrecognizable from the beatings he had received (Isaiah 52:14). The pain in his wrists was excruciating and his arms contorted with cramps. Every breath was an ordeal, having to push up on the nail through his feet. For Him to speak meant sacrificing what little air from his lungs He had left. The loss of blood, exposure, the heat, the flies, exhaustion, and finally dehydration had taken their toll; He was ravaged with thirst.

Up to this moment Jesus had said nothing about His own needs—His thoughts had been for others. It was not until everything else had been accomplished – his murderers forgiven, his loved ones provided for, a penitent thief welcomed home to paradise, the fulfillment of prophecy – it wasn't until *then* that our Savior thought of the agony racking his own tortured body. He was burning with pain and thirst.

Jesus was suffering clinical dehydration, along with everything else. First, the fever, then the throbbing pain in the head, cramps in his abdomen, his eyeballs would dry out, lips cracked, his tongue thick and vocal cords swollen. Just minutes before his heart would stop beating, he lifted his head and said, "I am thirsty."

*The creator of water was dying of thirst. (repeat)*

Water is a thematic element in the Gospel of John. Jesus was baptized in it, turned it to wine, used it as a metaphor of life, used it to heal, walked on it, and washed His disciples' feet with water. Yet on the cross as he was dying, He needed water, and He got none.

Let me take us on a quick tour of this theme from the Bible, especially as we see it in Jesus' life.

In the very first book of the Bible, Genesis – the book of beginnings, we are told that:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." (Genesis 1:1-2, niv)

The first order of creation – even before God proclaimed, "let there be light," there was water. Now watch this: in the very first verses in the Gospel of John – the story of Jesus – we are intentionally taken back to the beginning of creation, and we are told:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." (John 1:1-3, niv)

Jesus was already there at the beginning. He was the Source from which water was created.

Later in that first chapter from John we read about Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist. This passage is well-known to be the inauguration of Jesus' ministry. His ministry began as he was immersed under the water, and then after coming out of the water, the Spirit of God

descended like a dove. This is just like in Genesis in the beginning, as the Spirit hovered over the face of the deep waters of chaos. Now we had a *new* beginning with the Spirit hovering over Christ as he came up out of the water.

In the very next chapter of John we see Jesus' first miracle, the transformation of water to wine. Water: a symbol of physical life, and wine, a symbol of spiritual, Spirit-filled life. Jesus changed water – the basis of physical life – into wine – the basis of spiritual life (John 2).

In the third chapter of John we see the encounter of a religious leader – a man named Nicodemus – with Jesus. They were discussing the nature of spiritual life. Jesus told him:

“I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.” (John 3:5-6, nlt)

So, water, the first order of creation is the basis of physical life. It was also a picture of the endless, fresh flowing spiritual life Jesus would offer.

In the next chapter (4) Jesus meets a woman at a well and strikes up a conversation with her while she is drawing water from the well. It is a marvelous encounter filled with rich conversation, and love, and truth. I preached about that a few weeks ago, so you can go back and watch it.

But to the woman at the well Jesus proclaimed:

“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:13, niv)

Let me repeat: “Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

In John 5 we watch a scene at a pool in Jerusalem with a man who had been lame for forty years. He complained that he couldn't get into the water – apparently there was a tradition that as soon as the waters were stirred up by an underground spring, the first to get to the waters would be healed. They thought the water was a source of healing – a lot like many today who go to water-spring-spas for their health. But Jesus was the *true* source of healing, *not* the water – Jesus was the only one the man needed. Jesus healed him.

Next, in the very next chapter (6), Jesus had a journey to make across the lake to get back to His disciples. To do so, He walked *on* the water. When he approached the boat that the disciples were in, one of them – Peter – asked if he could join Jesus on the water. Jesus agreed, and Peter, too, walked on water, but only for a short time. Turned out as long as Peter kept his eyes on Jesus he could stay on top of the water, but as soon as he started to notice the wind and waves, he began to sink. It's in this story that we have the shortest prayer in the Bible: as Peter sank, he cried out, “Jesus, Help!” and Jesus did (John 6). On another occasion when the wind and waves were overwhelming, and the disciples thought they would die, Jesus commanded the winds and waves “Be quiet. Be still,” and they were (Mark 4). Jesus has authority to command those things He created.

In John chapter seven, the very next chapter, we see Jesus stand up in the middle of the crowds in Jerusalem on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus cried out:

“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. (John 7:37-39, niv)

Let me repeat that: “Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”

Then we jump to John 9 where Jesus and His Disciples met a man born blind. Jesus spat on the ground and made mud, put the mud on the man’s eyes and told him to wash in a pool. I preached on this a few weeks ago, too, and pointed out that the man did not have eyes, so Jesus took us back to Genesis when he made humans out of the water and dirt. Jesus then created eyes where there were none. Jesus used water and dirt as His means of creating and healing (John 9).

Fast forward to the Thursday night – what would have been just last Thursday night – when Jesus gathered in the upper room with his disciples for a last supper before he was arrested, tortured, and crucified.

On that fateful night when Jesus was terribly betrayed, he took water – the source and symbol of physical life – and used it to wash the Disciples feet in a demonstration of spiritual life – the standard for all his followers. (John 13)

Then John tells us that on the cross Jesus made seven last statements, and all of those reflected Scripture and his compassion for others – even for the very ones who crucified him. Out of those seven, there was only in which Jesus made a statement about His *own* needs: so he declared:

“I am thirsty.” (John 19:28)

...knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, *the creator of water and life cried out that He was thirsty.*

From that profound truth there are some things we realize, and the first thing is that...

## **Jesus’ thirst is our *proof*.**

There is something far more than physical thirst going on here. When Jesus said, “I thirst,” on the cross, he was fulfilling Old Testament prophecy. Look at John 19:28 again:

*“Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” (John 19:28, niv)*

A jar of bitter wine vinegar was there, so the Roman soldiers soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips.

The prophecy being fulfilled came from the Old Testament book of Psalms...Psalm 69:21 says:

“They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.” (Psalm 69:21)

The proof is in the prophecy fulfilled.

In Jesus' lifetime, Jesus fulfilled some 330 Old Testament prophecies. Things written about Jesus centuries earlier, actually all came true in the life of Jesus.

Peter W. Stoner (mathematician & scientist) calculated one man fulfilling just 8 Old Testament prophecies: 1 in 10 to the 17th power! 1 followed by 17 zeros!! That's 100 quadrillion.

To help us understand the odds of the number 100 quadrillion, Stoner came up with this comparison: If you covered the state of Texas with 100 quadrillion silver dollars, the entire state would be covered with silver dollars two FEET deep! Then, take just one silver dollar and mark it with a big "X." Drop it in and stir up the silver dollars all over the state. Now take a *blindfolded* man and tell him he can travel the whole state of Texas, but he has to find that one, marked silver dollar *on his first try*. What chance would he have in finding it? 1 in 10 to the 17th power. 1 in 100 quadrillion! And that's just to fulfill *eight* prophecies; Jesus fulfilled *over forty-one times that* – to the last detail! Are you seeing the point yet?

The simple fact that Jesus was thirsty is proof that He was the Son of God.

Second...

### **Jesus' thirst understands our *pain*.**

As Jesus says, "I thirst," don't we have to ask the question: WHY? Why does Jesus endure his thirst? This is the Creator of the universe. With his words the oceans came into being. Jesus turned water into wine. This was the God who parted the Red Sea. He had turned rocks into water fountains. He walked on top of water. Water held no power over Jesus, rather He was the Living Water. Why wouldn't Jesus do something about his own thirst?

But if we read through the New Testament, we can ask *other* questions too; questions like: "Why was Jesus hungry, and weary, and sad, and sleepy, and angry? Why did the Messiah – God Himself – endure torture and die?" Why? Because Jesus entered our world to experience, know, and feel life on our level; to completely understand and relate to us. He entered our suffering and pain at every level.

That's what Jesus' thirst tells us He was doing.

You know what's interesting to me? The world outside the church has no problem believing Jesus is a man. They just don't believe He is God. Well, those inside the church have no problem believing Jesus is God, but we have a hard time believing He is completely man. But the Bible says:

Jesus the Son of God is our great High Priest who has gone to heaven itself to help us; therefore let us never stop trusting him. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses since he had the same temptations we do, though he never once gave way to them and sinned. So let us come boldly to the very throne of God and stay there to receive his mercy and to find grace to help us in our times of need.  
(Hebrews 4:14-16, tlb)

You see, Jesus is 100% God but at the same time He is 100% human. I know it's hard to understand; the Bible says this is a "mystery." Not a divine man or a humanized God but the

Bible says a “God-man, Jesus Christ.” (I Timothy 2:5)

Listen to Paul writing to the church at Rome:

“(I am) Paul, Jesus Christ’s slave, chosen to be a missionary, and sent out to preach God’s Good News. This Good News was promised long ago by God’s prophets in the Old Testament. It is the Good News about his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who came as a human baby, born into King David’s royal family line; and by being raised from the dead he was proved to be the mighty Son of God, with the holy nature of God himself.” (Romans 1:1-4, tlb)

John writing in the first part of his gospel says:

Christ became a human being and lived here on earth among us and was full of loving forgiveness and truth. And some of us have seen his glory—the glory of the only Son of the heavenly Father! (John 1:14, tlb)

If Christ was not one of us, He wouldn’t be able to represent us or understand what we go through.

Author and Pastor Max Lucado says about Jesus: “Because He understands, we can come to him. He knew you would be weary, disturbed, and angry. He knew you’d be sleepy, grief-stricken, and hungry. He knew you’d face pain. If not the pain of body, the pain of the soul... pain too sharp for any drug. He knew you’d face thirst. If not a thirst for water, at least a thirst for truth, and the truth we glean from the image of a thirsty Christ is --- he understands.”

But there’s more to his dying of thirst...

## **Jesus thirsted for *more* than water.**

Did you know the importance of water to the human body? When our bodies fail to retain the right amount of water, dehydration sets in. It is the water in our body that determines the vitality, strength, and energy we need for daily living. Think about these facts:

- The human body is 2/3 water.
- The body absorbs cold water faster than warm water.
- By the time you are 70 years old, you will have required 1.5 million gallons of water.
- Studies show that increasing water consumption can decrease fat deposits.
- Water is a natural appetite suppressant.
- If you lose 2% of your body’s water supply, your energy will decrease by 20%. A 10% decrease in water, you will be unable to walk, and a 20% decrease: you are dead.
- You can survive 40 days without food but only 72 hours without water. You can see how critical water is to us, and...
- You can see how critical water is to us, and...

I think we’ve made the point that Jesus was dying thirsty. But there was something else Jesus died being thirsty for.

The Bible says that Jesus *longs* for everyone to be saved from sin and to understand this

truth from 1 Timothy 5:6-7:

“That God is on one side and all the people on the other side, and Christ Jesus, himself man, is between them to bring them together, by giving his life for all mankind.” (1 Timothy 5:6-7)

Jesus’ cross is the bridge between us and our loving God.

Jesus, on the cross, is thirsting for *us*. How does that make you feel?

Now, all of this might be meaningful – even inspiring – but it wouldn’t change a thing if Jesus had remained in the grave.

And *that* is why Easter Sunday means everything to us.

Jesus Christ, the creator of water, died dehydrated and thirsty – thirsting for you to know God.

Right now, Jesus is seeking *you*. To this very day he thirsts to save you.

And you *can* be saved; you can be given this endless supply of always fresh spiritual life, because Jesus rose from the dead. The Bible tells us that the disciples who arrived at the tomb on that Easter Sunday morning were confronted by angels who said:

“Why are you looking in a tomb for someone who is alive? He isn’t here! He has come back to life again! Don’t you remember what he told you back in Galilee—that the Messiah must be betrayed into the power of evil men and be crucified and that he would rise again the third day?” (Luke 24:5-7, tlb)

Because life sprung forth from the grave, the promises of the Scriptures including Jesus’ promised declarations have come true. Let me remind you again of just one of those promises:

On the final and climactic day of the Feast, Jesus took his stand. He cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Rivers of living water will brim and spill out of the depths of anyone who believes in me this way, just as the Scripture says.” (He said this in regard to the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were about to receive. The Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet [risen from the dead].) (John 7:37-39, tmt)

God’s prophetic promise hundreds of years earlier through the prophet Isaiah said this would happen after Jesus rose from the dead:

“For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.” (Isaiah 44:3, niv)

Jesus thirsts for your salvation; and if you trust him, you will be able to draw from the wells of salvation and Jesus said you will never thirst again.

This is a thirsty world. We humans will try anything to satisfy that thirst. We run after the mirages of money, alcohol, drugs, sex, power, relationships, and a thousand other cheap imitations. There is a hole in our heart that everything we pour into runs through like water through a sieve. The hole is cross-shaped. It was Pascal who said, “There is a God-



shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made know through Jesus Christ." Nothing and no one else can or will quench the deepest longings of your heart.

Jeremiah records God's feelings about our desire to drink the cheap stuff:

"They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and dug their own cisterns (or wells), broken cisterns that can not hold water." (Jeremiah 2:13, niv)

All your effort will never bring you the water you need.

The Ganges River is one of the world's largest freshwater outlets, after the Amazon and the Congo. The headwaters emerge from a glacier high in the western Himalayas, and then drops down steep mountain canyons to India's fertile northern plain. Just after it merges with the Brahmaputra, the Ganges empties into the Bay of Bengal. It supports more than a quarter of India's 1.4 billion people, all of Nepal, and part of Bangladesh.

But sadly, the Ganges has also long been one of the world's most polluted rivers. The river is befouled by poisonous bi-products from hundreds of factories and towns. Arsenic, chromium, and mercury combine with the hundreds of millions of gallons of raw sewage that flow into the river on a daily basis.

But despite countless studies and evidence proving the river's polluted state, environmentalists have gained little traction in cleaning up the river. Why?

The Ganges River is a sacred waterway worshipped by a billion Hindus as Mother Ganga, a goddess with power to purify the soul, and to cleanse itself. A recent article in *National Geographic* explains: "There is this belief that the river can clean itself. If the river can clean itself, then why should we have to worry about it? Many people say the river cannot be polluted; it can go on forever."<sup>2</sup>

Here's the point: as long as you keep thinking you can clean yourself up, your life will continue to be befouled with the pollution and sewage of sin.

The only water that can cleanse us, the only water we can draw to forever satisfy our thirst is the Water of Life through the resurrected Jesus.

Are you thirsty? If you trust in Christ, you will thirst no more.

What does this mean to you?

The deepest longings of your soul that you thirst for...thirst no more.

The deepest life that you thirst for...thirst no more.

The deepest love that you thirst for...thirst no more.

Jesus thirsts for you to be saved so that you will thirst no more. He is waiting for you. All you have to do is accept him.

The way you do that is by talking to him in prayer. In fact, I am happy to help guide you in that prayer. Would everyone please bow your heads with me?

Let me lead us, and then I'll give you some instructions.

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<sup>2</sup> Laura Parker. "Plastic Runs Through It." *National Geographic* (3-15-22)

“Jesus, we can’t even fathom what you went through for us. You didn’t have to suffer and die; you have always existed as God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You could have remained in paradise, but you willingly gave up your throne and came to be one of us – you have been weary, disturbed, and angry. You’ve been sleepy, grief-stricken, and hungry. You faced pain and thirst far worse than anything we will every experience – now we don’t have to because you did. You died a death you did not deserve but we did, to give us spiritual life that is abundant, ever-flowing, always fresh water in our hearts through your Holy Spirit.

Now, hear our prayers to you, Jesus. Answer our prayers to you, Jesus. Make springs of water rise out of the dry desert and stones of our souls.

Right now, where you are in the quietness of your heart, acknowledge that Jesus is with you, seeking you, and he hears your prayer...

Thank him for his sacrifice for you...

Thank him for his promises for you...

Confess to him that it was your sin that he went to the cross for...

Confess that, without him, your life is polluted water from a broken well...

Ask Him to forgive you (hint: he already did when he died and rose from the dead; it’s been yours for the taking ever since!) ...

Tell him you will accept the new life that he is giving you.

Tell him you will no longer thirst for anything more than you thirst for him...

Amen!

When Jesus was dying on the cross and cried out, “I am thirsty,” he was thinking of you. For 2,000 years now he has been thirsty for you to be saved; for you to have this new life. You just satisfied the thirst of Jesus himself!!

The Bible says that if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation – the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Corinthians 5:17).

You have a source of abundant, fresh life within you through God himself – the Holy Spirit – because you’ve accepted what Jesus has done!

Let’s applaud Jesus for what he’s done in our lives!!

Now, to take a step of faith – to make a declaration with action that you have accepted the source of living water, I want to invite *everyone* here who is in Christ to come forward and take one of these as a symbol – a marker of this moment, this declaration, this spring of water from which you will thirst no more – whether you just accepted Christ or you want to re-affirm what Christ has done for you at some point in your life.

The worship team is going to lead us in a song of celebration, and as they do, I encourage you to come forward, take one (just one!) of these simple little vials of blue water; something you can keep on your desk or your counter or in your pocket as a reminder to you that Jesus Christ is your source of living water.

As we sing, please come!

*Sing*

If you have accepted Christ today, you now have new life! But it is a learning, growing journey – a journey we are all on, and we invite you to join us. You can't make it alone – you have God's presence, and God has given you the church. God helps each of us through one another. We want you to take this journey with us.

It starts with baptism – a powerful symbol of water that demonstrates your new life! If you want to be baptized, we are having a service in two weeks from today. We have a class next week at 9am to help you understand what it is and how we do it. Please join us! And if you don't mind, let us know – drop an email, call the office, fill out a connect card and hand it to any of us or click "send" online.

Finally, on the wall on your way out is our "Next Step Packet" with helpful information and resources for you so you can grow in this new life you have with Christ.

Thank you so much for joining us, and we are so excited for you and your new life!

*Please stand with me.*

*Benediction:*

*(Jesus) was the first to rise from death, to die no more. He is far greater than any king in all the earth. All praise to him who always loves us and who set us free from our sins by pouring out his lifeblood for us. He has gathered us into his Kingdom and made us priests of God his Father. Give to him everlasting glory! He rules forever! Amen!  
(Revelation 1:5-6, tlb)*