

Quenching Your Thirst For Life – John 7:37-39

John 7:37-39. We're working our way through the book of John, and having covered v25-52 of chapter 7 last week, I want to go back and take a closer look at v37-39. Where John says – [37] *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. [38] Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' "* [39] *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.* (ESV)

Intro

Jesus is in Jerusalem, and plays on a very common experience in our life, to convey some uncommon truths. He uses thirst for water, to address our thirst for life; our desire for life.

And no wonder. Thirst is a powerful sensation. You can ignore it for a time, but eventually it's going to take over. And if you don't satisfy it, you'll not only be miserable, you'll die. Dehydration will kill you.

And the same is true of *spiritual* thirst; your desire for *life*. You can suppress it and ignore it all you want, but it too will catch up with you. Leading to *spiritual* death. Forever separated from God and his goodness, and forever thirsty in the throes of hell; literally *and* figuratively. And along the way, you'll be lifeless and miserable.

So Jesus uses the physical, as he so *often* does, to address the spiritual. Implying that water is to physical thirst, as *he* is to spiritual thirst. Just like water quenches our thirst for refreshment, Jesus quenches our thirst for life.

That much is clear. That much you know. Both from reading it and experiencing it; believing in Jesus.

What you may not know, is the background. Which makes his statement come alive, and connects it to God's work and God's word throughout the history of redemption. Past *and* present. Present *and* future.

Background

It starts with *the feast* in v37. The Feast of Tabernacles; or Booths; first mentioned in v2. One of *seven* Old Testament feasts (Leviticus 23:33-43), and the *last* one in the Jewish calendar. Observed in the fall after a long summer, to remember and thank God for his provision and protection in the past, and seek the same in the future.

So for 8 days, Jerusalem's population swelled from 25k to 150k, all living in makeshift booths or tabernacles. Just like their ancestors did. When they wandered the desert for 40 years on their way to the Promised Land. It was a massive commemoration.

And the *focus* of the feast was an elaborate water ceremony that happened each day, when the priests would go down to the **Pool of Siloam** and draw water. This is a *model* of Jerusalem in that day, and the Pool of Siloam was located in the southeast corner of the city. Which by the way, dates back to the 8th century BC, but was lost to history until it was found during the repair of a large water pipe in 2004. More on that in chapter 9.

For now, the priests would draw the water from the pool with a pitcher (video), and then lead a processional from there to the temple, about a third of a mile up the hill, to the southern steps. Then they would enter through these double doors, climb some internal stairs, emerge into the outer courts of the temple, and proceed to the altar in the inner court.

And despite their thirst from the processional and heat of the day, and despite the low water reserves at the end of the summer, they would pour the water out on the altar, as a drink offering. A symbolic sacrifice where they gave up what precious little they had, seeking and trusting God for more. Just like we give our tithes and offerings every week, seeking and trusting God for more.

So the background of all this, was the daily water ceremony in the temple, to thank God and seek God for his provision.

But that's not it. They weren't just seeking the blessing of God's provision . . .

• They were seeking the blessing of God's **presence**

And the reason they used water, was because they *associated* his presence with water. Just like the Old Testament prophets *said*, and just like Jesus summarized. They used water to describe the life-giving blessing that would one day flow from the *presence* of God.

Like for instance, the living water Zechariah described, flowing from Jerusalem; Zechariah 14:8. Or the fountain Joel described, that would flow out of the Lord's house and water the valley; Joel 3:18. Or the water Ezekiel described, flowing from the temple in an ever-expanding river; Ezekiel 47 (1-12).

And perhaps closest to this event, is the water God spoke of through the prophet Isaiah. (**Isaiah 44:3**) Saying, "*I will pour water on the thirsty land [pour], and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.* The very meaning of Jesus' words in v39 – *this he said about the Spirit.*

No wonder they used water. No wonder they were thirsty for the life-giving presence of God. And Jesus emphasized it when he stood up *on the last day of the feast*, the last day of the last feast of the year; *the great day*, after seven long days and long processions before; and cried out. (Pitcher) He stood up and cried out. Most likely right after the final drink offering (pour out last third) was *poured* out. "*If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.*"

Are you kidding me? They *all* thirsted! A bunch of hot people on hot stone, packed together to see a priest pour some precious water out. And even more importantly, they all thirsted for the blessing of God's presence. It's why they were there. To quench their thirst for life.

The question is, do you?

Do you thirst?

Do you? Do you long for the blessing of God's presence in your life? And if you already have it, do you thirst for more? *More* of his goodness? *More* of his greatness? Do you long for revival in your heart? Revival in our land?

The Israelites of Jesus' day had no idea how Isaiah's prophecy was going to play out. "I will pour water on the land, my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants?" What's that? How's that going to transpire? Nobody knew.

But we do. With the benefit of hindsight, we know it means life in the place of death. Healing instead of brokenness. Refreshment for exhaustion. Mercy for sin. We *know*, what they only longed for. At least those who are thirsty do.

Do you thirst? Do you yearn for refreshment in your life? Hope? Healing? Forgiveness? Life? Or are you plenty satisfied with the salt water of sin? Things that leave you empty and guilty; parched and desperate; always wanting more, but never satisfied.

I hope not. I hope you're thirsty for *life*. True life. Full life. Eternal life. Because *thirst* for life is prerequisite to *getting* life. "*If anyone thirsts,*" Jesus said (37). "*If anyone desires. If any longs for it.*

- **No thirst, no life**

And I mean none. No eternal life, no blessed life, no glorious life, no meaningful life, no nothing. You have to want it.

Unfortunately, many people don't. They have absolutely *no* thirst for God and the life he offers. Often because they're perfectly content with their own. Thinking that the dripping faucet *they've* manufactured is perfectly fine. "Everything's great. Life is good."

Others are so deep in the mud-water of sin, they don't know any better. "What more could you want? What else is there?"

One of my grandsons illustrated this perfectly the other day. Much to the chagrin of his mom. (Video)

Cute. But make sure that's not you. If you're perfectly satisfied with mud-water, or salt water, or dripping water – look up. Lift your head from the puddle, long enough to see the river; long enough to see Jesus. Because if you have no thirst, you'll have no life.

And by the same token . . .

- **Puny thirst, puny life**

Some people *want* the life Jesus offers, but only enough to feel good about themselves. Only enough to make them healthy, wealthy, and wise. Only enough to punch their ticket to heaven. Certainly not enough to make any changes in their life; or sacrifices.

"I mean, come on. I want Jesus and all, but not at the expense of Saturday night; or late nights on my computer. I want the eternal part of life and all, but not the devoted stuff. Not enough to take a stand."

Is *that* you? Do you thirst for Jesus on Sunday, but forget about him on Monday? Do you want just enough to get by, but not enough to really live? Just enough to *feel* good, but not enough to *be* good?

If so, you've either damned up and *diverted* the river of life within you, or you don't really have it. You're either quenching the Holy Spirit, or he's not really there.

Instead of being filled with him, every single day, you're just sipping now and then. And it shows. Puny thirst, puny life. Puny joy. Puny peace. Puny assurance.

How much better to drink up? How much better to *satisfy* your thirst? How much better to **Come to Jesus and believe (v37-38a)**

Really believe. Come to him *all* the way. Come to him fully. That's the point of these verses. *If anyone thirsts*, Jesus said; if anyone yearns for life to the full and life forever; if anyone longs for something more than the meaningless monotony of mere existence; *let him come to me and drink*. Come to me and be satisfied. Come to me and be quenched.

It's just like he told the Samaritan woman in **chapter 4**, standing next to a well. "*Everyone who drinks of this water [the physical water] will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.*" (John 4:13-14a) Why, why? Because the water Jesus gives, satisfies fully and forever.

Your old watering holes may whet your appetite for a time, but in the end they'll leave you thirstier than when you started; with a bitter after taste of guilt that leads to death. Come to Jesus and drink from him. It's better. *He's* better. *Way* better.

Then, in the very next words out of his mouth, v38, he ties it all to belief. *Whoever believes in me* will be satisfied. Indicating that coming to Jesus and drinking what he offers, is a description of belief.

If you're going to quench your thirst for life, you have to come and believe. You can't get the life Jesus offers from a distance. Just like it's impossible to drink from this pitcher from afar, it's impossible to drink the water of life from afar. *Come* to me, Jesus says.

That means if he's standing at the door of your heart, you have to answer it. You have to go to him. Personally. You can't just yell, "Come on in," from the couch. There's nothing casual or nonchalant about it.

It's a concept so important that the Apostle John included it in some of the last words he ever wrote; the last words of the Bible. **Revelation 22:17** – *Let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price*. He offers it freely, having already *paid* the price for it, but you have to come and get it. Come and drink. Come and believe.

And why wouldn't you? He gives you life. Come and believe . . .

- **For the life he offers (v38b)**

And not just any life, but abundant life. Spiritually speaking. *Whoever believes in me* [v38], *as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart [spiritually] will flow rivers [plural; implying abundance] of living water.'*" Rivers, of life. Rivers, that give life and sustain life. Which means, you *have* life. Because it can't flow from where it doesn't exist.

Once again, just like **John 4** – "*The water that I will give him* [Jesus said; the one who believes in me] *will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*" (14b) *In him. It will become in him a spring of water*. Because it can't flow from where it doesn't exist.

Put all that together, and the water Jesus offers is not only the blessing of *abundant* life, but eternal life. Not just for now, but forever. Rivers that never stop.

It's like the **7000+ rivers** and streams that flow into the mighty Mississippi. 7000! Now imagine all those rivers reversed; so that they're fed and flow from the Mississippi itself. *One* source to the many.

That's how it is in your heart when you believe. When you drink and keep drinking. *Rivers* will flow. Life, in abundance. Life, to the full. Life, forever.

And the source, is the Holy Spirit. Come to Jesus and believe . . .

• **For the Spirit he gives (v39)**

The Spirit, through whom he *gives* life. Inextricably connected. No Spirit, no life.

After recording Jesus' statement that rivers will flow, John says in v39 – *Now this he said about the Spirit*. So the rivers of living water represent the Holy Spirit of God. *He's* the source. Dwelling in our heart, quickening our spirit, and giving us life. No wonder it's *rivers*. No wonder it's abundance. The living *God* indwells us.

But in Jesus' day, they hadn't yet received him. *This he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him* [believed in Jesus] *were to receive*. So when Jesus spoke of rivers and life, and people believed, they didn't experience it all right away. Not fully. The flood gates hadn't been opened.

For as yet [39b] the Spirit had not been given. [God the Father had not yet *released* him to indwell us. Why?] *Because Jesus was not yet glorified*. He wasn't yet *exalted* as the God-man he is. He hadn't yet *died*, high and lifted up. He hadn't yet *risen* from the grave. He hadn't yet received a glorified *body*. And he hadn't yet ascended back to heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father, glorified all the more.

In God's *plan*, as long as all *that* was withheld, the *Spirit* was withheld.

But now, praise God, he isn't. At all. Jesus is glorified, and the Spirit is given the moment we believe. To take up residence in our soul and never leave. Flood us with rivers, and never stop. The moment we believe, and every moment thereafter.

Summary

Are you thirsty? Do you yearn for something more, something better? Are you stuck in the mud? Fed up with salt water?

If so, come to Jesus. Come to the water. Quench your thirst for life, and never stop. After all, the pitcher's full, and the rivers wide.

Prayer – God, you've blessed us exceedingly and abundantly; over and above what we could ever ask or imagine. Thank you. Thank you for the life you offer and the Spirit you give. Fill us and fuel us as only you can. Bless us and keep us as only you do.

You Are Loved