
THE TRUE WATER OF LIFE**Sermon for Pentecost 2020****John 7:37-39**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel John 7:37-39: ³⁷ **On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried aloud, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink! ³⁸ As the Scripture has said, ‘Streams of living water will flow from inside the person who believes in Me.’” ³⁹ By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were going to receive. For the Spirit had not yet come, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Jesus was attending the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles was a week-long yearly celebration that Jewish men were required to attend at Jerusalem, remembering and celebrating 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. Tabernacles, or booths and tents, thousands of them, would line the outside walls of the city.

As the children of Israel wandered through the desert, they and their livestock had suffered from thirst, so God commanded Moses to strike a rock in the middle of the desert, and water miraculously gushed out.¹ In Jewish tradition, the wisdom from God continuously supplied water to the Israelites through a single rock, which apparently rolled along on the journey of the Israelites until at the time of the death of Moses it disappeared in the Sea of Gennesaret.

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. Therefore, God commanded them to gather once a year in Jerusalem to commemorate His abundant provision for their thirst. So each morning during the days of the feast, at the time of the sacrifice, a priest would walk to the pool of Siloam with a golden pitcher, fill it with water, and, accompanied by a solemn procession, bring it to the altar of burnt sacrifice, where he would pour the water, together with the contents of a pitcher of wine from the drink offering, into two perforated flat bowls. The trumpets would sound, and the people would sing the words of Isaiah 12:3, “*You will joyfully draw water from the wells of salvation.*”

A rock *did indeed* accompany Israel throughout their desert wandering, a rock out of which they kept drinking all of the time. But this was not the rolling rock of a legend - this was a Rock that was far greater and far higher and entirely spiritual in its nature. In 1 Corinthians 10:4, Paul says that “*that Rock was Christ.*” This Rock that never allowed Israel to perish of thirst in the desert was ***Christ, the Son of God***, who would later become incarnate for our salvation.

God used this feast as an opportunity to remind the people that He would satisfy their spiritual thirst in the sending of the Messiah. For a thousand years, faithful Jews had made the trip to Jerusalem not only for the celebration but with the hopeful expectation that the Messiah would finally reveal Himself at the event.

For two and a half years, Jesus had been preaching to the crowds, calling people to repent because God’s kingdom was at hand. He had performed miracles as signs for people to see that He was, indeed, the promised Saviour. He openly stated that He was the fulfilment of Scripture’s prophecy, being sent by the Father to redeem the world from sin. Yet most, especially the religious leaders, continued to reject Him. John noted earlier in this same chapter of His Gospel that even Jesus’ own brothers rejected Him at this time.² I can only imagine how much it must have hurt Jesus to be rejected by His own family. Nevertheless, from the compassionate heart of Jesus flowed living water as ³⁷ **On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried aloud, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink! ³⁸ As the Scripture has said, ‘Streams of living water will flow from inside the person who believes in Me.’”**

¹ Exodus 17:1-7

² John 7:5

Once again, Jesus demonstrated the love and compassion of God. God wants *all people to be saved and to come to know the truth* (1 Timothy 2:4); therefore, Jesus will not give up. He calls out to all who are spiritually thirsty to come to Him, boldly claiming that He is the source of salvation.

This water which Jesus has in mind is eternal life, and His Word is the means for bestowing it. To come and to drink are merely two sides of one action, namely, believing in Jesus. This call to come and to drink is full of efficacious drawing power. Whoever does come and drink is brought by the Word and the gift held out to him. In nature, we get hungry and thirsty and are compelled to eat and to drink daily, but in the words of Jesus **“come to Me and drink,”** the meaning from the Greek is to come and to drink once only - never to thirst again.³

A little earlier Jesus had grown weary and was sitting at Jacob’s well when a Samaritan woman came out to draw water. In His conversation with her, Jesus said, *“Whoever drinks the water that I shall give him will never become thirsty”* (John 4:14a). This water is spiritual, heavenly, permanent, in which one drink quenches all thirst forever. This water becomes *“a fountain of water springing up to eternal life”* (John 4:14b). Drinking the water parallels believing in Jesus. Whoever believes in Jesus has eternal life. The water is life, the drinking is faith.

After Jesus spoke these words, John went on to add that **“By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were going to receive.”** The day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2 was a fulfilment of Jesus’ word, because, as of this Feast of Tabernacles, **“the Spirit had not yet come, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.”**

The Spirit was certainly present throughout Old Testament times, in the work of John the Baptist, and in the work of Jesus, and yet, the believers **“were going to receive”** the Holy Spirit *after* His death. **“The Spirit had not yet come,”** because **“Jesus had not yet been glorified”** that is, He had not yet died on the cross.⁴

The redemptive work of Jesus would first need to be completed. It was necessary that He must first return to the One who had sent Him⁵, rise from the tomb, and ascend to heaven. Then, after all this work of Jesus was completed, He could at Pentecost send the Spirit upon His believers, the Spirit who would make rivers of living water flow from them throughout the New Testament era. At His ascension, He said to the disciples, *“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the farthest parts of the world”* (Acts 1:8). No believer was ready or able to function as Jesus wanted him to function as long as he did not understand the sacrificial death of Jesus and His glorification. Prior to that completion of Jesus’ work all faith was like that of the Old Testament saints, a trust in the promise. Jesus’ glorification would fulfil that promise. Then, too, He would send down the Spirit; things were not ready so that He could send Him before that time. From that great day onward, even as the Acts report at length, salvation would flow out in great streams to the ends of the earth.

The Feast of Tabernacles in our text occurred just six to seven months before the next feast, the Feast of the Passover. It was the last feast that Jesus would attend. By the end of the Passover, Jesus was the sacrificial Lamb of God, who would 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 clung to His palate* (Psalm 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 give life to all who would believe that He is the Saviour of the world. Jesus’ atonement for sin was for all.

Jesus gives His Holy Spirit to all who drink from Him, believe His Gospel, and 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. We receive the Holy Spirit as we hear, in a language we can understand, the Good News of Jesus as the living water, who satisfies our spiritual thirst. People throughout the world today are hearing the Gospel proclaimed in their own 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 recognise 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

³ The two present imperatives ἐρχέσθω (erxestho – to come) and πινέτω (pineto – to drink) are aoristic presents not durative or linear actions.

⁴ John 12:23-27

⁵ John 7:33

cross.

The Holy Spirit is the one who keeps us in this faith in Jesus. The Law of God and life itself remind us of our spiritual thirst. The problem is that our sinful nature will always want to turn away from Jesus and deny our thirst or search for spiritual fulfilment from other places.

Therefore, 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 the 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 neighbours, to wherever you work and share the mercy that you have received freely. Help your family. Help your neighbour. Help those with whom you work. Support efforts of mission and mercy. That's what the first Christians did, and when anyone asks, "*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 come to God's house, where Jesus quenches our spiritual thirst and enables us to be rivers of living water. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR PENTECOST

Loving heavenly Father, we thank and praise You for pouring out Your Holy Spirit on Your Church as its source of life and strength for ever, and for bringing us to faith in Jesus Christ through Him. By His daily presence and power in our lives, continue to keep us in the true faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ, to equip us for the Master's service, and to make us ready for every good work. To this end, help us to love and use the Holy Scriptures, so that the Spirit can make us increasingly wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Help us to love our Saviour with our whole being, and to live in cheerful obedience to His commandments. Enable us to reject the ruler of this world, and to follow with pure hearts the things that produce righteousness, faith, love, and peace.

Let the wisdom and renewing power of the Comforter fill Your Church, so that it may be strong in faith, and active in proclaiming in every language the great deeds that You have done for us. As the Spirit touched the apostles with tongues as of fire, fill all Your people with the fire of faith and conviction, love and worship, witness and service.

Make Your Spirit's influence felt in all our homes. Grant that He may lead all children to live in love and obedience, and give to all parents the spirit of understanding, truth, and love, so that all families may live in godliness and peace.

Rule over the nations of the earth, and help them to acknowledge Your sovereign power and final authority, so that all people may turn from their evil ways and live. Strengthen all who are our leaders to be firm in what is right, unyielding in what is good and just, and eager in what is eternally true and valuable, so that Your name may be hallowed in every sphere of life.

Give the peace of Christ to all who face troubles and trials. May Your Spirit help them in their weakness, show them how to pray as they ought, and give them all the resources of Your love and strength.

As restrictions continue to be lifted in our country, we pray that the day is drawing nearer when we shall together be able to resume our worship of You. We thank You for taking care of us during this time and pray that You will continue to guide and bless us.

All these things we pray in the name of Jesus our Saviour, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

PENTECOST

Numbers 11:24-30

²⁴ Moses went out and told the people what the LORD had said. He also gathered seventy men from the elders of the people and made them stand around the tent. ²⁵ Then the LORD came down in a cloud and spoke to him and took some of the Spirit who was on Moses and put Him on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied but did not continue to do it. ²⁶ Two men, the one named Eldad and the other named Medad, had remained in the camp. The Spirit also rested on them. They had been among those who had been listed but had not gone out to the tent. However, they prophesied in the camp.

²⁷ Then a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp!"

²⁸ Joshua, the son of Nun, who had been Moses' assistant since he had been a young man, spoke up and said, "My master, Moses, stop them!"

²⁹ Moses asked him: "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the people of the LORD were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit on them!"

³⁰ Then Moses and the elders of Israel went back to the camp.

Acts 2:1-21

¹ When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like a violent blast of wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw tongues that separated, like flames, and one rested on each of them. ⁴ They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak.

⁵ Jews who feared God from every nation under heaven were staying in Jerusalem. ⁶ When that sound occurred, a crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard the disciples speaking in his own native language. ⁷ They were astonished and amazed and asked: "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ Then how is it that everyone of us hears in his own native language, ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites, people living in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and the province of Asia, ¹⁰ people living in Phrygia and Pamphilia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome, Jews as well as proselytes, ¹¹ and people from Crete and Arabia? We hear them declaring in our own languages the wonderful works of God."

¹² They were all amazed and puzzled. They asked one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³ Others sneered:

"They are full of new wine."

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: "Men who are Jews and all of you who are living in Jerusalem, understand this and listen closely to what I say! ¹⁵ These men are not drunk, as you suppose. For it is only nine in the morning. ¹⁶ Rather, this is what has been spoken through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ 'In the last days, God says, "I shall pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸ Indeed, even on My male slaves and female slaves I shall pour out My Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹ I shall show wonders in the heaven above and miraculous signs on the earth below: blood, fire and a cloud of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will turn dark, and the moon turn to blood before the coming of the great and splendid day of the Lord, ²¹ and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"

John 7:37-39

³⁷ On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried aloud, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink! ³⁸ As the Scripture has said, 'Streams of living water will flow from inside the person who believes in Me.'" ³⁹ By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were going to receive. For the Spirit had not yet come, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.