

Sent Forth by God's Blessing

"[Jesus said:] 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.'"

Introduction

A certain EMT was once asked about his most medical call. Where, he related a 911 call he received from an usher at a Lutheran church. The usher said, "During the sermon, someone slumped over in the pew; we think he's dead."

He relates, "When we got to the church, the preacher was still preaching, so we carried the man out as quietly as we could."

"What's so unusual about that?" he was asked.

The EMT replied, "We carried out four people before we found the one that was dead." [Corcoran, *CPR*, 10:2, 8]

Spiritually speaking, that's how it seems with many. Where, again spiritually speaking, a person may be able to go many days without eating, but one cannot exist long without water.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit readily gift us such living water.

Main Thought: Having been truly satisfied with the water of life that wells up inside of us by God's lavish grace, we ourselves now become channels of that water of life for others.

"Come, Holy Spirit and kindle in us the fire of Your love, the love You have for us, and the love You would have us share. Amen."

Amen.

Well, like the people of old, making their way to the sacred feasts in Jerusalem, God's people now slowly make their way back to the sanctuary of God. For a time we have been absent from this place, separated one from another. But as we are now able to return: "This is the feast of victory for our God, Alleluia!"

Where, we continue to rejoice and grow in our love He who stands in our midst. Jesus is here – our risen and ascended Lord. Not only Jesus, but the Spirit of the living God. Where, each Sunday is a Pentecost for the people of God. Each Sunday, the Spirit of the Lord rends the heavens, opens the storehouse of God's treasure, and gives good gifts to His people. And so, it is "meet, right and salutary [beneficial]" that we "should at all times and all places give thanks unto the Lord our God."

At first, we come to "receive living water through the Gospel in Absolution, the reading of Scripture, hearing the preaching and Holy Communion." Wherein, as we are "refreshed and renewed by this living water" ... we fly, fleet-footed with God's blessing, as He sends us forth "to love [our] neighbor and speak about Jesus, the living water ..." [Fale, *CPR*, 30:2, 51]

This is what the Holy Spirit brings to us this day!

Not unlike the joy surrounding the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths in our text ... a feast of 7 days, whereupon each day, the officiating priest would take a golden vessel, fill it with water from the waters of Siloam and, with wine as a drink offering, pour it into two perforated silver bowls onto the altar. The last day, he would do it seven times, all the while with trumpets sounding and the praises of God's people being sung.

That is the context for Jesus' "*crying out*" ... perhaps at the very moment that the priest was pouring out the water on the altar!

Indeed, Jesus' declaration, *"If anyone thirsts, let Him come to me and drink,"* harkens back to God's provision in the wilderness, when water flowed from *"the rock at Horeb."* [Exodus 17:6]¹

The prophet Zechariah confirms this, where [13:1]:

"On that [last] day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness."

That fountain has come ... this fount of God's blessing. His name is Jesus, and the gracious Holy Spirit who issues forth in His and the Father's name. Wherein, this account in John 7 "is a story full of dramatic movement," says the theologian and preacher Helmut Thielicke. It is about thirsty people who do not even know they are dying of thirst ... people so caught up in their revelry, that they don't even realize how hungry and how thirsty they truly are. Here, God is in their midst, offering a solution to their most pressing problems, immanently present with them in this one from Nazareth, and they don't even know.

It would not be the first time God issued forth such a gracious invitation:

"Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food." [Isaiah 55:1-2]

¹ This seems to be Jesus' most logical reference point, especially given the unknown text He quotes in v. 38. "Because many of John's Old Testament types come from the Exodus narrative (e.g. John 1:29 [the paschal lamb]; 3:14 [the bronze serpent]; 6:31 [manna], it is most probable that the Scripture points to water coming forth from the rock (see Exodus 17:1-7; 1 Corinthians 10:4)." [Lessing, *CJ*, 37:2, 145f]

Child of God, are you thirsty? From such a long time away from the sanctuary of the Lord? From an aridness of the spirit, from periodic wanderings in the wilderness, from too many strolls through the valley of the shadow of death?

Are you thirsty? For the water of life, the oil of gladness, the wine of God's salvation? Are you thirsty? For that renewed sense of who and whose you are, for a true and lasting identity, and purpose not tied to the things of this world?

"You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink."

But there is another part ... "You can salt the oats."²

Where, Jesus is not speaking here of physical thirst, but "a thirst of the soul, a spiritual thirst, a heartfelt desire, yes, a distressed, wretched, terrified, and aroused conscience, a despondent and frightened heart which longs to know on what terms it is with God." [Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John*, AE 23:267]

So, Jesus would whet our appetite, with a call that still rings out among the rafters of His house. Where the salting of the oats comes in the application of His Word, which, in the first place, leads us to see our need of Him. To feel the sting of sin. To be cast off and out of His presence because we cannot stand before a holy God. To know the weight of the burden of all that we carry.

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

Where Jesus shows us our need of Him, our spiritual hunger and thirst ... and then ... out of His mercy, meets that need - meets us - and brings us to the Father's heart.

O God be praised!

² WALTHER: "Where there is no spiritual hunger and thirst, the Lord Jesus is not received." [*The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel*, 249]

Wherein ...

³⁸ “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart [both Jesus’ and the one who believes on Him³] 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.*

“These are comforting, friendly, and charming words,” Luther writes. [AE 23:266] Where, as Jesus would reveal the true thirst and the true hunger within each of us, the thirst for forgiveness, direction and meaning, He Himself now seeks to quench it.

For He knows the wells we have run to, to try and slake our thirst. He knows the false props with which we try to set ourselves up, as sure as He knows the emptiness we feel when they fail us. He knows how close to death we are each day. And how does He address it? He comes to refresh, console and strengthen the thirsty ... to raise us up out of the depths ... bestowing on us the full measure of His grace, mercy, and peace.

Where, “in one ironic twist for the ages, the raging river of life flowing throughout the fourth Gospel is reduced to just a drop until it completely dries up. Look. Blood and sweat are caked to [the Savior’s] cheeks. His lips are cracked and swollen. Tight nerves threaten to snap as death pangs its morbid melody.” [Lessing, *CJ*, 37:2, 146]

³ NB: “Water figures prominently in John’s Gospel (see 2:1-11; 3:5; 4:7-15; 5:1-9; 6:19; 9; 13:1-15; 15:3; 19:28) With this as the backdrop there are several others reasons: (1) [T]he Roman spear thrust, when water flowed from his side (John 19:24), (2) the Johannine description of living water flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb (Revelation22:1), and (3) according to John 7:39 the water is the Holy Spirit, and in John’s Gospel Jesus is the sender of the Spirit (John 20:22). As to the Biblical reference to which Jesus is quoting (see Exodus 17:1-7; 1 Corinthians 10:4; also Psalm 78:15-16) [Lessing, 145-146]

“I thirst,” Jesus cries, a cry met only by a “Roman spear ... and a sudden flow of blood and water. Here is *the* temple, crushed and cursed by the sin of your life and mine.” [Lessing, 146]

“Come to this Jesus, crushed and yet alive forevermore. Watch the Holy Spirit he sends, flood your baptismal font, forgiving your filth, defeating your death, and quenching your thirst. His living water has [but] one destination” ... you, child of God, you! [Lessing, 146]

So that with our spiritual hunger and thirst now met by this Savior, we ourselves now become channels of that same Spirit issuing forth in *“rivers of living water.”*⁴

Where, our gracious Savior now sets us about to blessing others with heartfelt, well-timed and tangible expressions of His mercy, all the while inviting them also to *“taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him.”* [Psalm 34:8]

As Moses [once] said to [Joshua], “Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!”
[Numbers 11:29]

We are, baptized and redeemed of Jesus, we are! As “the flowing rivers of life have surged from you to your children ... as you have brought them to be baptized and taught them to know the river, Christ Jesus. [As] they have flowed from you as you have comforted those who mourn with the love of Jesus, knowing that their believing loved ones are in perfect glory in heaven. [As] the rivers have flowed from you as you have prayed with your family and friends in Jesus’ name. ... Pentecost is yet active in you with the gift of Gospel proclamation.” [Hamer, *CPR*, 21:2, 46]

⁴ Where we here Jesus saying to us: “Him who comes to Me I shall equip, not only to be refreshed and satisfied and to quench his own thirst but also to become a sturdy, earthen vessel, endowed with the Holy Spirit and with gifts that enable him to give consolation and strength to many others people and to serve them, as he was served by Me.” [Luther, *AE* 23:273]

Conclusion

This week, in one of my online devotions I shared an acronym I was once taught – an acronym being where, each letter of a word serves as the basis for another word, truth or concept. In this case – M.I.N.I.S.T.R.Y. “May-I-now-in-simple-truth-reflect-You.” It is a Pentecost prayer borne in us by the Spirit, as He continues to form us to be a reflection of the Savior and His love.

Child of God, rejoice that such a river of life has washed over you. The treasure is revealed. You have come to the comfort of Christ, where now, so comforted, we are set about and *“able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”* Yes, you have come to Pentecost, and the Spirit who grants you to say, *“Jesus is Lord.”* Where, having drunk deeply of river of the water of life, we have been aroused from our sleep to be the Pentecost people He now calls us to be.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.*

May

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