

Where the Spirit Flows, Life Grows

Day of Pentecost – 05/24/26 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: John 7:37-39 Pastor Keith Besel

vv. 37-39a, [Jesus promised regarding what was to come at Pentecost,] (Literally), **“If anyone is thirsting, let him come to Me, and let whoever is believing in Me drink.’ As the Scripture said, ‘Rivers of living water will continuously flow from out of His (Jesus’) internal body cavity. Now this He said about the Spirit...’”**

Introduction

- ✘ Our human bodies are around 60% water, so, obviously, we need a lot of it. Without water we simply cannot live and grow.
 - ➔ But of course, our human existence is not only about our physical bodies; we also have a spirit. We can't obviously see the human spirit; nor can we measure it. So we can't say there's a certain percentage of the spirit that is water. But we can say that, for the Christian life, the Spirit is 100% water.
- ✘ On that first Pentecost, which we celebrate today, Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit in such a dramatic fashion and with such incredible results. And He told us in advance, in our Gospel Reading today, that the Holy Spirit is “living water” (v.38). And we know from the rest of Scripture, that it is the Holy Spirit that gives us life.
 - ➔ In fact, Jesus promises here in today's text that He is the One who pours out the Holy Spirit with His gifts of grace to quench our spirits' thirst and enable us to grow.

I. Jesus Invites Thirsty Spirits to be Quenched

- ✘ At the time of this Gospel Reading today it is the last day of the Feast of Booths, which included a ceremonial pouring out of water. This action recalled and celebrated three waters: first, the waters of Creation; second, the water that God poured out from the rock in the wilderness, which Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 4:10 was Christ Himself, and third, the waters of the River of Life that Revelation 22 tells us will flow from “the throne of God and of the Lamb” to quench the souls of God's people in eternity.
 - ➔ Well, it was during this ceremony that water from the Pool of Siloam would be poured out in the Temple, and in the midst of that holy rite Jesus now stood up and proclaimed His great promise in our text today.
- ✘ Now, throughout Scripture, water – either the lack or the abundance of it, reminded God's people, just as our drought conditions remind us right now, how much we all depend upon God both for the needs of our human bodies and lives, but even more how utterly dependent we are upon Him for the needs of our spirits and souls.
 - ➔ When Jesus says in verse 37, “If anyone is thirsting, let him come to Me,” He is not talking about physical thirst, but the spiritually parched soul that every one of us has as a result of our sin-contaminated and fallen human condition.
- ✘ Remember, before Adam and Eve first fell into sin, they could eat and drink to their hearts' content. Their bodies never lacked hydration or sustenance in God's paradise.
 - ➔ But now, because of our sin, just as the body will thirst and die without water, so our soul thirsts for and craves for God's righteousness and salvation, but the corruption of sin and the way Satan has twisted our thinking makes it so that we too often crave after the wrong things to quench our thirst.

→ What are those things? Things like popularity and acceptance by our peers; pleasure and entertainment; power and influence; success, wealth and material possessions; and praise from ourselves and those around us – but if those are the places that we look at to quench our thirst, my friends, we will forever remain disappointed.

→ And yet, the soul that is sincerely thirsting for God’s righteousness and salvation, will find full satisfaction and will be spiritually quenched because the Spirit that Jesus pours out in the abundance of His grace is what brings true acceptance, purpose, guidance, truth, unconditional love, joy, fulfillment and complete assurance for the future in Jesus and His saving work in our place.

✘ You see, Jesus was pointing all people, forward in this text, to see in His bodily sacrifice as well as the events of Pentecost, how He would pour out His pure, soul-quenching grace to overflowing upon every soul that believes in Him alone as Savior, God and Lord.

→ That’s why Jesus came to us here in human flesh, isn’t it?; to drown the old, sin-filled Adam in all of us, as well as to conquer Satan and his evil grasp upon our souls by taking our place on the cross of Calvary.

→ When we look at the original Greek of our text today, we can then see the connection that Jesus intends; one that many of the English translations somehow have missed. Those translations place the punctuation and verse number break in such a way that it makes it seem like the rivers of living water should be flowing out of our “hearts” as believers, instead of Jesus’ “body cavity” which is what the word κοιλία (koilia) refers to there in the Greek. Jesus even calls Himself the source of Living Water with the Samaritan woman in John, chapter four. And Paul says Jesus was the source of living water for God’s people in the wilderness that flowed out from Him as the Rock (1 Cor. 4:10).

→ Why is this so important? Do you remember what happened immediately after Jesus had died? John 19:34 says, “One of the soldiers pierced [Jesus’] side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.”

II. The “Living Water” Jesus Gives is The Holy Spirit

✘ So, how does that connect us to the gift that Jesus promised to pour out upon His people on the Day of Pentecost? Consider 1 John 5:6-12 that says, “This is He who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. ... And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

→ That’s why Jesus died, so that you and I, along with all who believe in Him might have life instead of the death and condemnation that we deserve.

✘ But how does He intend for us to personally receive the benefits that He won for us on the cross? Well, Jesus knows that we need more than just words or feelings. We need something real; something that is eternal; that doesn’t change.

→ And so, Jesus promised in John 16 just before His death, “If I go (i.e. to My death), I will send [the Helper] to you.” “When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth...and He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you” (vv. 7,13-14).

→ This Spirit is of course, the Third Person of the Trinity, God Himself, sent by Jesus to be with us; to be our “Helper”; to testify to Jesus’ death on the cross; and to grant us forgiveness along with the water and the blood that poured out from Jesus’ side.

- ✘ So now on the Day of Pentecost, as we heard Luke’s account in our second reading from Acts, the time had come; Jesus had died, and Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*
 - ➔ And as we heard in 1 John, wherever the Spirit is given, Christ is present with His gifts of life!
- ✘ In fact, that Spirit and those gifts come to us, NOT from within ourselves like so many people incorrectly believe today. But the living water; the Holy Spirit comes from outside of us; flowing to us from the Father and the Son.
 - ➔ We don’t deserve Him; we can’t earn or purchase Him. And yet, without Him our spiritual thirst cannot be quenched and we will suffer in the scorching eternity of hell with Satan.
- ✘ Yet make no mistake; Jesus wants every one of us to be with Him forever. So He sends His Holy Spirit to us in spite of our sinful nature and our thirsting for the things that He forbids and He knows will harm us.
 - ➔ And He pours His quenching water out upon us in the life-saving and faith-creating waters of Baptism; in the gracious flood of truth in His perfect Word of Scripture – both read and proclaimed; and in the soul-nurturing strength of His body and blood that He now feeds to us from the cross here in Holy Communion.
 - ➔ These are the means; the instruments that Jesus put in place, through which He promises us that the Holy Spirit will work to quench our souls with His amazing grace. There’s no need to look anywhere else, folks. And that’s a comfort for us, because now we don’t have to wonder where to look. We don’t need to grope around in all of the wrong places trying to address our soul’s thirst. No, we know where to come to be filled up; to be comforted; to be covered with the love and grace and forgiveness and strength and assurance that we need so much. Just come to Jesus’ gifts here in His Word and Sacraments.

III. Where the Spirit Flows, the Christian Grows...

- ✘ And the beauty of this gift Jesus has poured out upon us and for us in His Spirit is that He is not just a one time and done kind of gift. No, Jesus promised in verse 38, “Rivers of living water will continuously flow...”.
 - ➔ As the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit flows continuously in the present tense. Not just within us as individuals but also through us as a community of His redeemed and refreshed people in His Church.
- ✘ You see, being Christian is not just about “me and Jesus.” He created us all for a relationship, with Him first and foremost, but also for a loving and active relationship with each other. So, He intends our spirit-fed life to be about “us and Jesus” together!
 - ➔ The Spirit is always flowing, Jesus says, as a “river of living water” within you right now and for the rest of eternity. That means that, because He is always flowing, then you, my dear Christians, are intended to be always growing in your faith; being led and fed and inspired as you partake of His gifts of Word and Sacrament.
 - ➔ Which means that you are regularly bowing before Him, along with the Father and the Son in faithful worship; the very place where He has established His Church to administer and pour out His gifts of grace.
 - ➔ And just as we heard that it happened on the first Pentecost with the believers gathered there in Jerusalem, so the Spirit works within and among you and me. He inspires and guides all souls who are believing in Jesus to continuously be glowing – not with tongues of fire as He did on that first Pentecost, but still shining the Gospel light of Jesus in our everyday activities and interactions with others, so that more and more souls might be quenched with Jesus’ life and salvation.

→ As Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

Conclusion

✘ What a great relief to our drought-parched souls it is to be dripping every day with Jesus' gracious gift of the Spirit; to be quenched through and through with His gift of life, flowing, growing, bowing, and glowing into eternity with 100% of Jesus. Amen.