

Sermon Draft

(Prop glass of water)

Text: John 7:37–39

Sermon: Pentecost 2023

Christmas—Jesus born among us! Easter—Jesus rises for us!

Pentecost—Jesus lives (acts) through us!

At Christmas, Christ came from heaven to be born into our broken world, so that by Pentecost’s Spirit we Christians from this broken world will be born into his heavenly world! At Easter, Jesus rises back to life, so that by Pentecost’s Spirit Jesus comes alive more and more in us!

One day, long ago, Jesus stood in the temple courtyard and shouted aloud: “Whoever is thirsty must come to me and drink!”

Sisters and brothers, (*Drink from glass*) when was the last time you were thirsty? (*Drink.*) I mean, really thirsty? (*Drink.*) Thirsty down to your soul? (*Drink.*) What about the kind of thirst that Jesus spoke about? Do you thirst for more out of life?

Millions today seek to quench their thirst with drink, with drugs and many other things. They're thirsty. Millions, millions bet that more money will buy them more of the good life. They are thirsty. Many, clambering over their neighbors, seek more power, more prestige. All these people thirst for better living. They would soak up some thirst-quencher. Anything to dampen the dry, withered soul inside.

Even more dangerous are the kind of people that you and I can be. People here taking church just as seriously as we have always taken it. People trying to be as good as we have always been. People not very thirsty for more. See the danger? Can we be smug with who we are? Self-satisfied?

Who, after all, sent Jesus to the cross? Was that dastardly deed done by the despised ones? The lepers? The prostitutes? The thieving, traitorous tax-collectors? How Jesus loved to be with such obvious sinners! Did they send him to the cross?

Or was it the people who judged themselves good? The religious people? The "moral majority" and their leaders?

In the book of Ezekiel, God showed Ezekiel a valley full of dried bones. Remember the story? These were not the bones of some foreign nation. These were the bones of Israel. God's own people. They had given up. They believed God could do no more. Are we like them? Bone-dry? Parched? Hopeless? Fearful God can do no more for us?

Lord, break our hearts! Break our hearts of those things that break yours! Quench our parched spirits with your forgiveness. Satisfy our lives with your goodness and your love. Irrigate our bone-dry souls with your gifts and let your Spirit saturate every area of our lives. Let us be satisfied with nothing less than Jesus! Make us to be like him. Deliver us from becoming self-righteous skeletons. Lord, let us be spiritually thirsty! Let us gulp down the living water that is Christ!

Nothing can quench our soul's thirst except God's Good News; that's why Jesus, standing in the temple courtyard long ago, shouted aloud (*Shout!*), "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink!"

Can you picture the scene? From all over the world, pious Jews had poured into Jerusalem. Waves of believers had washed in for the Feast of Tabernacles, their great harvest festival. The family of God had come together to celebrate in one place.

From the courtyards ringing God's holy temple, on down through the streets of Jerusalem, packed shoulder to shoulder, the people came. What brought them? even from the furthest corners of the earth.

“A full harvest, so full!” They came to give thanks. To pray. “Thank God! He watered our lands, turned pastures to vibrant green. He watered our vineyards. He drenched our orchards, showered us with succulent fruits. Thank you, God, for water!”

Water is life! God has always given water, even miraculously. In the Exodus, when God's people grumbled, “Why, Moses, did you free us from Egypt? There we were slaves. But here, we with our children, will die of thirst!” God commanded Moses, “Take your shepherd's staff. Strike that rock” and out of a rock gushed water! Life-saving water (Exodus 17)!

The miracle came new each year. What would God's Promised Land be with no water? Just beyond their green hills, everything is dried-out, sun-scorched wastelands. But in Israel that year, God had poured out his generous rains. Thank God for water! Worship him! Praise him! How? With water.

The crowd began gathering down at Siloam, the pool, the water reservoir, at the foot of Jerusalem's holy hill. This spring had watered Jerusalem since King David's day, a thousand years before Jesus. Even against huge armies besieging them, God's people had lived by this water. From that spring the priest took a golden pitcher. From Siloam, he drew a full draught of the life-giving water.

The whole parade of worshipers, wildly waving palm branches, roared. Then the priest led them up the hill towards the temple. Joyful trumpet blasts greeted the water. Beaming choirs sang out from Isaiah 12. “With joy [we] will draw water from the wells of salvation!” (v 3). And the priest with great ceremony poured out the water on the sacred rock—the very rock where Abraham nearly sacrificed his son Isaac. This same ritual, day after day, was repeated for all of the feast’s seven days. And the people wildly rejoiced. It was more than just water? The ceremony means much more. The rabbis, quoting the ancient prophets Ezekiel (47:1) and Joel (3:18), taught the crowd God’s promise.

“God sent Moses to save us in that desert. Moses split the rock, and out flowed water! Just so, God will send the Messiah, the Anointed One. The Messiah’s life-giving water will pour out. For God’s Word stands written, ‘A spring of life-giving water will stream out from the house of the Lord!’ ”

In that moment, the city fell into a prayerful hush. (*Stride out into congregation’s center.*) One man was standing. He shouted out (*Shout!*), “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.” (*Let Jesus’ words sink in as you retreat to the pulpit.*)

Who could he have been? Did he speak for God? Was he a prophet!
Could he have been the One whom the Lord would send? Him, the
Messiah! Or was he just that crazy carpenter from Nazareth there were
warnings about? Who do you say Jesus is? Perhaps that depends on
whether or not you are thirsty!

Once, with his shepherd's staff, Moses split a rock. Out gushed
water, life-giving water. On a rock outside Jerusalem God's enemies
raised a cross that held God's Son. From it flowed life-giving water!
From the wounds of Jesus, gushes out new life!

John, standing there at the foot of Jesus' cross, saw this with his own
eyes. To us, John (19:34) swore to tell the truth. "He was already dead. .
. . One of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden
flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given his testimony,
and his testimony is true."

Why did John have to be so graphic? John insisted that we know. Jesus was dead. His heart stopped pumping. His body fluids separated. He didn't just pass out. He wasn't playing dead. Jesus was clinically, certifiably dead. We must know this and we must know our sins killed Jesus.

Nothing can quench our soul's thirst . . . Except the "water" that flows from Jesus.

The Pentecost Good News! Jesus pours out from heaven his Holy Spirit. Jesus floods the world with his Good News. Jesus pours out his Spirit that we might trust him. Like a river, sparkling, fresh, life-giving water poured out on dead-dry bones, Jesus pours out his Spirit on us.

He does it with water! Baptismal water! Plain, earthly water, flooding over us with his powerful, wonderful Word!

It is the same as on that first Pentecost Day. These people, hearing Peter, were cut to the heart. "Our sins killed the Messiah! How can we be saved?" Peter told them, "Repent and be baptized. . . You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

There are days when you and I may feel like dead, dry bones. Lifeless. Loveless. Hopeless. It's God's way of making us thirsty for more! In our Baptism, Jesus promised us, "Whoever is thirsty . . . come to me and drink." He provides streams of life-giving water that flood us with life. In him we are alive. His life and his love flow in us out from us to our world!

Lord, more and more, let us come alive with your love, your care. More and still more, let us come alive with your Spirit to share! Quench our thirst! Let us be drenched; let us be overflowing in the mighty mercy of the Father, Son, and Pentecost Spirit.

Amen