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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
May 24, 2015
Pentecost Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 44:1-6, Acts 2:1-15, 40-41

Hymns: 236; 232; 235:1-3; 233:1,5,7 (230)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 7:37-39

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." 39 But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, Who sent the Holy Spirit, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: The Holy Spirit

On this Pentecost Sunday we focus our attention on the third person of the Triune God. When we think of God the Father we refer to Him as our Creator. We know that Jesus is the Only-begotten Son of God who came down to earth to be our Redeemer. We think of the Holy Spirit as our Sanctifier. Sanctification often brings to mind our efforts to live a better life. That is our efforts to avoid sin in our lives. What becomes apparent as we look to the

powerful working of the Holy Spirit is that it isn't about our efforts, but rather about the powerful working of the Holy Spirit that separates us from sin in our hearts and lives. Our flesh is weak. Sin is an ever present evil in this world, and would drive us to despair as it take its toll in our hearts and lives. What the Lord Jesus reveals in our text is that ---

THEME: The Spirit Refreshes Us with the Living Water of the Gospel.

The Scriptures compare our lives to a pilgrimage, a journey through this life that isn't simply a walk through the park, but rather often a trying trek through a barren wilderness. Our text presents –

I. Jesus as the Oasis for the Sin Parched Soul.

John 7:37 “On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.’”

Jesus had traveled to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. It was a weeklong festival observed every year during which all men were required to leave the comforts of their homes and live in tents. It was a week that was to remind them of the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, and how the Lord had cared for them throughout that time. They were to be mindful of how the Lord had faithfully delivered them from the many different hardships that afflicted them in those years. They were to make a spiritual connection to the Lord's care for their souls.

When we put Jesus' comments in this context we better understand why Jesus was making the point so powerfully for the assembled pilgrims in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus made this statement with a loud voice. Jesus was making a public proclamation that should have focused the people's attention on Him as the real deliverance that was sent to them to deliver them from the wilderness of this life and the sin which so easily ensnares and destroys men's souls.

This point remains for us yet today. We still live in a sin parched world, in a spiritual desert. We still see people wandering from one false spiritual mirage to another seeking relief from the thirst which sin has brought to them. It is not to be found in this world. The wandering from one false hope to the next only increases the spiritual deprivation and drives men to despair. In this spiritual desert Jesus cries out with a message of hope and refreshing, **“Come to me and drink!”**

Are you thirsty? By nature, before we were brought to Jesus in the refreshing waters of Holy Baptism, we were completely parched spiritually, but the Lord brought us the waters of life that reinvigorated our dry souls with the message of God’s love and forgiveness. We still need these life giving waters that are found in Jesus. His invitation to us is still important for us. Think of it, is it enough for you to drink a glass of water one time early in your life, and then your set for life? Of course not. Everyone needs to be refreshed with water daily, indeed several times a day especially on hot days or times of vigorous activity, or dehydration will set in. When that happens the body will struggle to function, and finally start to shut down, and ultimately cease to function all together. Without water death will come in only a few days, and it is not good for us to deprive our body seeing how little water we can drink.

The spiritual waters which the Lord Jesus supplies for our souls are even more vital to life, but it is all too easy to deprive ourselves of these life giving waters. As the law reminds us of our sin, and burdens our consciences, or as we struggle with the temptations of life, and its tribulations and persecutions, the refreshing waters of the gospel of Christ are essential to our spiritual welfare. Neglecting the Word of the Lord will cause serious spiritual dehydration, and endangers one’s soul. Hear the voice of Jesus. He calls to you! He calls **loudly** proclaiming Himself to be that thirst quenching water of life that our sin-parched souls need so desperately, which our souls need regularly.

As we drink of the water which is Christ a miraculous thing happens.

II. Rivers of Living Water Flow from Hearts of Believers

John 7:38 ““He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.””

This statement by the Lord brings real meaning to life. When we look at the world and start to view people by the difference they make in the world and how they touch the lives of others we will make a lot of assumptions about who is really important, vitally important to others. There are the wealthy people in this world who use their money to run businesses that provide jobs for many other people. But the gospel of Christ is more important than the jobs these individuals supply. There are people who have invented things that are a part of every one of our lives, things that have made life easier or better, and sometime even possible. However, none of these inventions are as important to life as the gospel of Christ. We might think of doctors or other health care providers that help the sick and bring them the medical treatment needed to extend their lives. Yet again, all the wonders of modern medicine fall short of the wonders of the gospel and the extension to life that only the gospel can bring.

Now consider the simple child of God, the person sitting next to you in church this morning, or you yourself. What do you bring to life in this world? Our first impulse might be to answer, “Not much.” That is not what the Lord says of you in our text. By the grace and power of the Holy Spirit you have come to Jesus to drink of those refreshing, life giving waters of the gospel. You drank in that wondrous message of how Jesus bore our sins in His own body on the cross. You have received in your souls the assurance of God’s love and forgiveness. You know the peace of God that comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus declares of you that this life giving water which you have absorbed is now flowing from your heart as a river of grace. The Lord is using you as a source of this water of the gospel as a spiritual oasis for others. Not only do we have our thirst quenched by Jesus but now Jesus is using us to bring that refreshing gospel to others around us.

This is not simply a phenomena of Judea where the disciples sat at Jesus’ feet. If that were the case it would not have come to you and me. We would still be wandering in the spiritual desert, parched and dying of spiritual thirst. Pentecost marked a new age in the

world, the last age of the world determined by the God of our salvation.

III. Jesus' Exaltation Initiates the Age of the Holy Spirit.

John 7:39 “But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

Everything up to that point in world history had been directed by God to bring to pass the coming of the Savior which God had promised would come into the world. The people of the Jews had been chosen by God to be the people from whom the Savior would be born into this world. Along the way there were people who heard of the wonders which God had done with the children of Israel who came to the Lord in faith. Some of these individuals were even included in the line of Christ, such as Rahab of Jericho and Ruth of Moab. The Holy Spirit worked faith in their hearts the even as people do today. No one ever has come to faith apart from the Spirit working that faith through the Word. However the time had not come for the gospel to be broadcast to all the world when God would call all men everywhere to turn away from their false gods and repent and believe the gospel. That would come only after Jesus completed His mission of redemption. Jesus promised that He would not leave His disciples orphans. He would send them another Helper, the Comforter, the Paraclete who was to be sent by the Father and the Son.

This was no new teaching. This is a gracious promise essential to God's plan for our salvation that the prophets foretold. In his Pentecost sermon Peter quoted the words of the Prophet Joel:

Joel 2:28-29 “And it shall come to pass afterward
That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your old men shall dream dreams,
Your young men shall see visions.
29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

This is the wonder of the Pentecost. Now that Jesus has ascended into heaven and our salvation has been secured, the Spirit has been poured out onto all flesh. The gospel went forth from Jerusalem where it was proclaimed in so many different languages on that Pentecost Day, and was taken back to the homelands of those who heard and believed that Jesus is the Christ who was to come into the world. This river of God's grace flowed from the hearts of many hundreds of new Christians who traveled back to their homelands following Pentecost.

Ultimately that is how that message of salvation came to us also, and now proceeds from us to those around us in our families in our community, and out from there also to the ends of the earth. The Spirit has been poured out in us for our salvation and from us for the salvation of peoples of every tribe and nation and language under heaven. The Spirit has been poured out in this way because **“God our Savior desired all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”** (1 Timothy 2:4).

We live in this age of the Holy Spirit. We have been blessed with faith in Jesus by the Spirit refreshing of our souls with the gospel. We have been blessed by the Spirit's power to be called to be witnesses of Christ Jesus to the sinners of this world. As this last age of the world continues so does this outpouring of the Holy Spirit so that sinners everywhere might be brought to the refreshing and soul saving waters of life that flow through us who believe to the praise and glory of our Savior Jesus Christ, and the Spirit whom He has sent.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.