

PENTECOST

May 28, 2023

St. John 7:37-39:

“Water for Eternal Life”

- I. That Glorifies Christ.
- II. Come to Us through Means.
- III. Two Quotations.

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St. John 7:37-39

Dear Friends in Christ,

I want to take us back to the garden after Adam and Eve had eaten the forbidden fruit, after they discovered they were naked and ashamed; back to that moment when we're told, "...they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden...and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden (Gen.3:8)." Do you know why they hid themselves from the Lord? They were afraid because they had rejected the love of God for one desire of the flesh. They surely remembered God's warning: "...in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die (Gen.2:17b)." They did not know the love of God any more because they "were (spiritually) dead in...sin (Eph. 2:1)." Unless God intervened, there would be nothing but struggle, death and eternal, burning agony. Can we really grasp how much God hates sin - just one?!

From Genesis 3:15, the first promise of the Savior, to the closing words of Revelation is the account of "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son" to save the soul and body parched with sin, dying, death, and hell. To fill with....

WATER FOR ETERNAL LIFE

I. That Glorifies Christ.

First, I want us to hear these words of Jesus from the sixteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel:

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you all things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you (Jn.17:13-15).

So how does the Holy Spirit glorify Jesus? The answer: By working faith in us. Listen to this from Luther's Small Catechism: "What is the special work of the Holy Spirit?" Answer: "The Holy Spirit sanctifies me (makes me holy) by bringing me to faith in Christ, so that I might have the blessings of redemption and lead a godly life." Purchased us back from death and hell.

The Holy Spirit makes us holy, not we make us holy. He does that because, as Scripture states, "you were dead in trespasses and sins...(Eph.2:1)." Again and again, those who are spiritually dead cannot make themselves alive, much less acceptable to God. And that fits with these words of Scripture: "but God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved...(Eph. 2:4,5)." Grace is the undeserved love of God for sinners; for you and me.

But there's more to the answer of the question, "How does this glorify Christ?". It glorifies Christ because as Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. Now this he said about the Spirit... (v.38).'" Do we ever think or say something along the line of, "Well, I've heard all this before. I've got a life to live!" So, how bored and tired could we ever be of remembering these words we've heard so many times: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who call you out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Pt.2:8,9)?" So, tell me - no, let's ask ourselves: "How focused and distracted am I by a world that can shut down the flow of the rivers of living water? How often do I proclaim the excellencies of Him who took me out of a mad run to the grave?"

II. Comes to Us through Means.

Without Christ our lives here will amount to nothing more than...life here. Brief! God opens our minds and hearts. Everything we have been given in Jesus is by the working of the Holy Spirit who enters our lives through the written and spoken Word, and the visible Word of our Baptisms and the Lord's Supper; the Means of Grace - *Living Water* that flows to us.

We cannot forget the Day of Pentecost and these ever familiar words of Peter:

“Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sin (baptized for forgiveness), and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children (the ones present at that time and not some imaginary age of accountability) and for all who are far off (the generations to come - us), everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself (Acts 2:28,29).

It cannot be over emphasized: the gift of the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit Who works and sustains faith in us through the Word and Sacraments. As Jesus said before His crucifixion:

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, 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. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you (Jn.16:12-15).”

Where the Word of Jesus is so is the Holy Spirit. Again, in Baptism the Holy Spirit enters in, as we sang in our opening hymn.

III. Two Quotations.

I have two quotations to put before you this morning. And I must tell you that they are lengthy. But I also must tell you that I have found them very, very meaningful. They are deep and filling waters. First, these selected parts from a prayer of Thanksgiving for the Sacrament of Baptism written by John Gerhard. Gerhard is considered the most influential Lutheran theologian of the seventeenth century. Again, this is lengthy. It is most worthy of our praying. He wrote:

“O Eternal and Merciful God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I give you humble thanks. In the washing of Holy Baptism, You cleansed me from all sin, received me into the covenant of grace, and made me an heir of eternal life...

“How great is your goodness that you found one who was not even seeking You. You listened to the one who was not yet praying. You opened the door to the one who was not yet knocking (Matthew 7:7). Your mercy is far greater than any praise I could render. Your mercy is beyond my comprehension. I was baptized in Your holy name (Matthew 29:19). Your name was invoked on me (*in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*). I was received into the heavenly family; Christ became my brother. I became a temple of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is a heavenly washing; therefore, when I was baptized, I was washed clean and purified from all my impurities... Everything Christ, my Savior, merited by His holy obedience and by the shedding of His precious blood He entrusts to the saving font of Baptism. Thus Baptism is like being sprinkled with the blood of Christ. The precious blood of Christ cleanses me from all sins (I John 1:7) and makes me whiter than snow in God’s sight (Psalm 51:7)...

“...As the Holy Spirit descended on Christ at His baptism and as the voice of the Heavenly Father stated that this is the beloved Son, so I have been made a partaker of the Holy Spirit and an adopted child of God by the participation in that same Baptism. I give to you, my God, eternal thanks for this immeasurable kindness.” (Johann Gerhard, *MEDITATIONS ON DIVINE MERCY, A Classic Treasury of Devotional Prayers*, translated by Matthew C. Harrison, Concordia Publishing House, Saint Louis, 2003, pp.83-85).

This second quote is from C.F.W. Walther. It was passed on to me in 2017 by a Pilgrim sister:

“Should the Christian stand all day long at the grave of all joys which he enjoyed in the past years? Through Holy Baptism a great stream of joy has been conducted in his heart, which does not drain away, but streams forward with his life until its waves carry him into the sea of a blessed eternity...

“For Baptism is a bath that washed me not only once when I received it - washed me pure in Christ’s blood - but continuously washes me clean even daily for as long as I hold it in faith. For just as that same water of the flood drowned the sinners, but Noah and his relatives were brought to salvation and were carried to Mt. Ararat, so did the water of Baptism drown my sins, but my soul was brought to the eternal mountain of divine grace...swallowed up all my damnation and is for me a sure wall before God’s wrath and punishment.” (Treasury of Daily Prayer, pp. 1077-1078)

Though we still struggle with sin and often find ourselves in distress and sorrow over our guilt, purely for the sake of Jesus God forgives and claims us as His own. As Jesus said, “...whoever drinks of the water I will give him will never be thirsty again.” As Jesus said, “The water I will give him will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life (Jn. 4:14).”

We have been given the Water For Eternal Life. God help us to guide others to drink.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott