

PENTECOST

June 4, 2017

St. John 7:37-39: ***“Living Water”***

- I. *That Glorifies Jesus.*
- II. *Come to Us Through Means.*
- III. *That Fills Us Throughout Life.*

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St. John 7:37-39

Dear Friends in Christ,

I want to put in front of you what are not only familiar and revealing Scriptural truths about the human condition, but, also, truths very few want or will tolerate. First, "Christ died for the ungodly." (Rom. 5:6b) Second: "While we were enemies." (Rom. 5:10a) Third: "And you were dead in...trespasses and sins..." (Eph. 2:1) Fourth: "(we) were by nature children of wrath." (Eph. 2:3b)

These are confrontational truths. The mass of humanity vehemently rejects them. You were - I was - humanity is - by nature **ungodly, an enemy of God, spiritually dead, children of wrath**. And here's the part that brings screams more of disapproval: we could do nothing about it.

This is Pentecost Sunday. We're examining . . .

LIVING WATER

I. That Glorifies Jesus.

Before we look at our text, I ask you to listen to these words of Jesus from the sixteenth chapter of John's Gospel:

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 the 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. (Jn. 16:12-14)

The question is obvious. 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 [redeemed - purchased back from death and hell] and lead a godly life...".

The Holy Spirit makes me holy - not I make me holy. He does that because as Scriptures state, "you were dead in...trespasses and sins..." (Eph. 2:1) Again and again, the spiritually dead cannot make themselves spiritually alive, much less acceptable to God! In our text, Jesus says, "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." (vv. 37b-38) 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)

Again: How does this glorify Christ? Well, we glorify Christ because "out of (our) hearts flow rivers of living water." We have been made alive in Christ. We know the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through Christ's suffering, death and resurrection. As Peter says, "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 called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Pet. 2:8-9) We proclaim the excellencies of God's love in Christ and, in so doing, glorify Christ.

II. Come to Us Through Means.

Now, here's the part so critical for our understanding: Without Christ our lives here will amount to nothing more than - well - life here. God opens our hearts and minds through the Means of Grace - Word and Sacrament - that we might have eternal life.

Once again, our text records Jesus' words: "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 Holy 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." (vv. 38-39) The giving of the Holy Spirit was prophesied centuries before by the Old Testament prophet Joel - these words of Joel as recorded in the Epistle lesson which describe the events of that first New Testament Pentecost: "And in the last days it shall be, as God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh...And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:17 &21)

If you go to the second chapter of the Book of Acts you are confronted by the on-going fulfillment of the flowing "rivers of living water" - the giving of the Holy Spirit - in these very familiar words of Peter:

"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sin, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (the Third Person of the Trinity who works and sustains faith). For the promise is for you and for children (the ones present at that time and not some imaginary *age of accountability*) and all who are far off (the generations to come), everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." (vv. 38-39)

As we have emphasized with you in the past, let no-one ever, ever persuade you that there is an additional and greater filling in or of the Holy Spirit to be gained beyond being Baptized with water in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. In fact, listen to this from the ninth chapter of the Book of Acts which contains the account of Paul's conversion. He was taken to the home of a man named Judas where he would be confronted by a man named Ananias. The account then reads:

So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized... (Acts 9:17-18)

This is so simple! First, he would receive his sight. We're told, "immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight." Secondly, he was to "be filled with the Holy Spirit." We're told, "then he rose and was baptized." And all this fits with Peter's words which we considered a few moments ago: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ (that's the only Baptism commanded by Christ - Baptism with water, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit) for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

This fulfills what Jesus says in our text - one more time:

"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, whom those who believed in him were to receive..."

Living Water. The receiving of the Holy Spirit who works and sustains faith through Word and Sacrament!

III. That Fills Us Throughout Life.

Several months ago, one our Pilgrim sisters passed on to me a writing from C. F. W. Walther that appeared in a devotional called "Treasury of Daily Prayer." I would like to read a portion to you. It is very uplifting and reassuring - says what needs to be said and carried with us each day:

"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 with 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 with his relatives were brought to salvation and carried to Mount Ararat, so also did the water of my 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)

It was Edward W. A. Koehler who wrote "Even as we sometimes bring about a change of mind in men by argument and persuasion, so God by the power of His Word persuades unwilling men so that willingly and joyfully they trust in His grace." (Koehler, "A Summary of Christian Doctrine, Concordia Publishing House, 1952 edition, p. 126) And for this we are humbly grateful. The Holy Spirit took us - we who were spiritually dead - and made us alive in Christ. And though we still struggle with sin, purely, for the sake of Jesus, God forgives and claims us as His. This He impresses upon us daily through both the written Word and the visible Word of our Baptisms.

We have received the Living Water - the Holy Spirit. We are part of that glorious band of God's people "who (as Joel says) calls upon the name of the Lord (and) shall be saved."

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott