

COME AND FOLLOW: The Stream That Never Runs Dry

John 7:37-44

Pastor Bonita Wood

February 21, 2010

A man is crawling through the Sahara desert when he is approached by another man riding on a camel. As the rider approaches, the crawling man whispers through his parched lips, "Water. . .please. . .can you give. . .water..."

"I'm sorry," replies the man on the camel, "I don't have any water with me. But I'd be delighted to sell you a necktie."

"Necktie?" whispers the man. "I need water!"

"They're only four dollars a piece."

"I need water."

"Okay, okay, two for seven dollars."

"Please! I need water!" the man exclaims.

"I don't have any water, all I have are ties," replies the salesman, as he heads off into the distance.

By now the man has lost all track of time, crawling through the desert seemingly for days. Finally, nearly dead, with clothes tattered and skin peeling under the relentless sun, he comes to an oasis with a restaurant. Summoning his last bit of strength, he staggers to the door and confronts the headwaiter.

"Water. . .can I get. . .water," the dying man pleads.

"I'm sorry, sir. Neckties required."

Have you ever really been thirsty?

When you are thirsty, there is not much else you can think about, like neckties for a restaurant. When you are thirsty, you cannot get it out of your mind.

It is all you think about.

As we come to our text today, it is found in the context of thirst.

We are going to look at the gospel of John chapter 7:37-44

Which you saw so brilliantly recited for you today by our very own Bible Storytellers.

In this passage, we are with Jesus in Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Feast of Tabernacles was a time to remember when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and Israel lived in the wilderness before coming to the Promised Land.

One of the rituals of the Festival was intended to remind them of the time that they were very thirsty.

Here is how the story goes as it reads in Exodus 17:

[1] All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. [2] Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to

them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?” [3] But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” [4] So Moses cried to the Lord, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” [5] And the Lord said to Moses, “Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. [6] Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.” And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. [7] And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

So...

During the feast, water is poured out to remember the wonderful supply God gave to the Jews in the wilderness (cf. Exodus 17:1-7).

Each morning at the time of sacrifice, the priests would draw water in a golden vessel from the Pool of Siloam and carry it to the temple to be poured out.

It was a very festive time each day, as people would wave palm branches, rejoicing and praising God.

This is the background, then, to which Jesus speaks, when He says:

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.”

One thing that I pray catches your attention today, is that though...

Jesus was rejected and condemned, Jesus continues to offer Himself to those who will hear and receive Him. What Jesus so loudly and publically proclaims to one and all is an invitation and then a promise.

If you're thirsty, then come to Me.

The condition for the invitation is an awareness of thirst.

Jesus calls people to recognize, to become aware of, their inner thirst.

There is no lasting earthly satisfaction - marriage, family, money, fame, enlightenment, travel, athletics, academic achievement- nothing completely satisfies us.

Any satisfaction or significance we gain in our quest fades quickly and becomes a vague memory, if remembered at all.

Oh, certainly, there are happy events along the way, unexpected moments when we experience pure delight, like a brand new granddaughter.

But those moments are fleeting, and we can never go back in time to relive them and recapture the sensation.

Why then do we keep seeking for something to satisfy us?

Simply put, it's because we have to. You and I are thirsty people.

We long for a deep satisfaction, the kind that makes our insides come alive, that makes us enriched people.

We thirst.

Whether we realize it or not our souls are thirsting for God.
Every desire, every aspiration, every longing of our nature is nothing less than a yearning for God.

We were born for His love and we cannot truly live without it.

He is the joy for which we have been searching all our lives.

Everything that we desire is found in Him-and infinitely more.

Augustine said, *“Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in thee.”*

So that rock that Moses struck in the wilderness, was a foreshadowing of what Jesus would do for us.

When Moses struck the rock, life-giving water came out.

In the same way, Jesus was about to be struck, he would soon be crucified, and He would fulfill this text.

He would offer life-giving water.

So, as the water is poured out during the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus, in effect, is making the claim, “I am the Rock.”

“I am that Rock you celebrate.”

“I can satisfy your thirst.”

“I can satisfy your innermost needs.”

And make no mistake friends, **WE ARE DESIGNED TO BE SATISFIED.**

Jesus offers Himself so that we will have hearts that are content and souls that are satisfied.

Since we are designed to be satisfied, we will find in this passage from John three courses of action we need to take to accomplish that state of contentedness.

I want you to pull out your sermon notes as I describe these 3 steps to you because after each step I want you to join me in a chorus I learned when I was a little girl and every time I think of Jesus pouring his life-giving water into me and me pouring that water into others this song comes to mind:

You will find it on the bottom of your notes.

SING THE SONG

Spring up O Well, within my soul,
Spring up O Well, and make me whole,
Spring up O Well, and give to me,
That life abundantly!

I. The first course of action is to GRASP.

Jesus invites us to come.

This is a theme that continues throughout Scripture.

The prophet Isaiah would announce:

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters...”

Jesus continues the invitation.

“Come!”

“Make the move!”
 “Reach out as I reach out to you!”
 “Grasp on to me!”
 Each one of us can come.
 Each one of us has access to Jesus.
 No one has to be left out.
 It is a universal invitation.
 If “anyone” desires to drink they may.
 There are no ethnic, intellectual, or social qualifications.
 You just come...
 It is an invitation to love God.

SING THE SONG

Spring up O Well, within my soul,
 Spring up O Well, and make me whole,
 Spring up O Well, and give to me,
 That life abundantly!

II. The second course of action is to GULP.

We can satisfy thirst if we drink.
 But I must mention at this point that there is one condition.
 You have to drink.
You have to accept the invitation.
 If I stand here thirsty, with a glass of water in my hand, and I don't drink it, what good is the glass of water?
 I must take it, bring it to my lips, and drink.
 We need to gulp it down, if you will.
 We will not be satisfied until we drink it.
 The great thing about what Jesus offers is that He will never run dry.
 He will always have more than we need.
 And it is always available for us.
 We don't have to wait in line (like waiting for a drink at a fountain).
 This concept of thirst is used to describe the emptiness of our souls.
 And Jesus always desires to fill our emptiness.
 We can fill our emptiness with more of Jesus by everyday making an intentional effort to do so – to be more like Jesus.
 Reading God's word, praying, meditating, going to Sunday school and Growth groups.
 We need to drink and drink deeply of Jesus everyday.

SING THE SONG

Spring up O Well, within my soul,
 Spring up O Well, and make me whole,
 Spring up O Well, and give to me,
 That life abundantly!

III. The third course of action is to GUSH.

We are filled with water that never stops..

It keeps going.

When we are filled with the water Jesus offers, it does not stop with us.

It gushes out of us!

It keeps coming and touches those that we touch.

We become, in effect, a former thirsty person showing thirsty people how to get a drink.

We have living water that gives us power, joy and hope.

I believe that the promise is not only that we will be satisfied, but that we will be satisfying.

We should and will become a blessing to others.

We will share the power.

We will share the joy.

We will share the hope.

Kevin and I had the privilege of experiencing Niagara Falls for our honeymoon.

I was so impressed as I stood at the edge of the cascading water.

There was so much of it.

And it is never became exhausted.

It just kept coming.

In the same way...

We are designed to be fruitful.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 5 to be filled with the Holy Spirit...

The water is a picture of the Holy Spirit in us.

And just as water produces fruitfulness, so does the Spirit of God satisfies us and enables us to bear fruit.

We are to become, as the passage in John alludes, like a mighty river that flows and touches others.

We do this by serving the world, serving the people God created and loved and who He wants to - come and drink.

My deepest soul-thirst is not just to be a receptacle, but to be a river.

And you know what?

Rivers can't be held back!

Try to stop the Amazon, the Nile or the Mississippi

It is impossible - they can't be held back.

And neither should we.

Just as rivers are places of life, we are never more alive than when the Spirit is flowing through us.

Have you noticed this as well?

Rivers change things!

They don't keep the status quo.

They constantly clean their environment.

They change course.

They change their depth and run deeper.

Sometimes, they even overflow the banks.

There is always progress.

There is always a pushing forward.

Rivers describe adequately what it is like to be a Christian, a person with their spiritual thirst quenched.

SING THE SONG

Spring up O Well, within my soul,
Spring up O Well, and make me whole,
Spring up O Well, and give to me,
That life abundantly!

Come to Jesus...as you are and see Him as He is; He invites you to come; He desires you to come; He holds out His hand for you to **grasp**...

Spring up O Well within my soul.

Believe in Jesus...take Him and drink Him in; take big **gulps**; know the blessing of His Presence in Your life; for when You have His Presence, it is just the beginning of a life of satisfaction...

Spring up O Well and make me whole

Share Jesus...take the blessing of satisfaction and be satisfying to others; serve the world; **Gush**; share the good news, for it is Jesus that meets that deep down soul thirst.

Spring up O Well and give to me, that life abundantly.