# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

**“Living Water”**

**John 7:37-39**

**February 17, 2019**

In our ongoing sermon series on Jesus in John’s Gospel we have arrived at the seventh chapter. John begins the chapter by telling us that Jesus left the region of Galilee and made his way south to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, one of the three annual pilgrimage festivals of the Jews. Jesus knew that there were those in Jerusalem who sought to seize him and get rid of him, yet he came. First he came quietly, staying out of public view. Then he came publicly, as he began to teach in the temple courts. But finally, as we will read in our passage, he cried out in a loud voice to all who would hear.

Each day during the seven days of the festival, one of the chief priests would lead a procession down to the pool of Siloam. Out of the water of the pool he would fill a golden pitcher and carry it back to the temple and pour it over the altar to remind the people of the days in the barren wilderness when God gave their ancestors water out of a rock. After psalms of praise had been sung and public prayers had been spoken, there was a time of reverent silence. It was perhaps during this time of quiet that a voice rose in the crowd. I invite you to turn with me to John 7:37-39

On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, “Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.’” (When he said “living water,” he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.)

Who would dare to speak up like that at such a holy moment? Who would shout out, drawing the attention of everyone away from the central event of the feast, to himself? This is Jesus, the One John has declared the Son of God, the Lamb of God, and the Messiah of God. This is Jesus, not interrupting the ceremony but interpreting its meaning for all who would hear and believe. “You are thanking and praising God for the water which quenches the thirst of your bodies. Come to me if you want water which will quench the thirst of your soul. Drink deeply of me and living water will flow from your heart.” Come – drink - living water will flow.

“Anyone who is thirsty may come to me!” “All you who labor and are heavy laden, come to me and I will give you rest.” Are you tired, worn out, burned out on trying in your own strength to manage your life then, come to me. Walk with me and work with me. Watch how I live life and learn to live freely. Only Jesus can truly satisfy the deepest longings of our heart.

It was Saint Augustine who wrote in the 5th century, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in God.” C. S. Lewis and others in our modern times put it this way: “Within each one of us there is a God-shaped emptiness, and nothing but God can fill it.” David understood this truth and wrote in the 63rd Psalm: “My soul thirsts for you in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.” There is no water in this dry and thirsty world which will satisfy. There is no amount of money, no attainment of power and position, no human relationship that will satisfy the thirst of our soul. The ever-increasing paradox of our lives is that the more driven we are to find happiness in what this world has to offer, the less content we become. Are you thirsty? Come to me. Move your life in the direction of Jesus and he will make happy your soul.

Come to me . . . and drink. What does it mean to “drink”? It means being with Jesus. Later in John’s Gospel Jesus will tell his disciples that they are to be with him, like a branch is with the grape vine, for only then will their life bear the fruit of a relationship with him. To drink of Jesus is to be in prayer with Jesus, spending time in his presence as we speak with him of our joys and sorrows, as we thank him for his blessings and ask him for his guidance. To drink of Jesus is to be in his Word, reading Scripture, meditating on it and putting into practice what he is teaching us. To drink of Jesus is to be in worship with his people, praising him for all he has done on our behalf.

Prayer, Scripture, and worship. Sadly there are those who balk at these practices of the spiritual life because they hear them as duties to be performed. And, in one sense, they are duties to be performed. Prayer, Scripture and worship are all required activities according to God’s Word, but they are duties which call us to what ultimately satisfies. To put it differently, if your desire is to come to Jesus and drink of the water which will satisfy your soul, these, and others like them, are the duties that will draw you into the kind of living by which your will experience satisfaction for the thirst of your soul. The satisfied life is not awarded from without, as if some magic genie has waved her magic wand and you are now content. The satisfied life grows from within, as you drink of Jesus. And, as it grows, as it fills you up, your life will begin to overflow and others will benefit from what Christ is bringing about in you.

Come . . . drink . . . flow. “Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.” We are filled up in order to flow out. In Palestine, the river Jordan flows south from the Sea of Galilee, making its long journey until it runs into the Dead Sea. While the Sea of Galilee teems with fish, there is no life in the aptly named Dead Sea. Why not? Because there is no outflow. The incoming water grows stagnant and eventually evaporates, having done nothing to bless the land or its people. So it is with Christians who come to Jesus, but have nothing of his to offer others. Now, as John makes clear, it is the Holy Spirit in us who enables our lives to flow into the world. We are not left to do this on our own, relying on ourselves. Rather, having come to Jesus and drunk deeply of his love and grace, the Spirit will equip and guide us to share Christ’s love and grace with others.

When we get full of anything we overflow. The person full of resentment will overflow with bitterness. The person full of covetousness will overflow with greed. But, the person who continually is coming to Jesus and drinking from him, that person will overflow with Jesus. That person will think of others before thinking of himself. That person will reach out to those who are hurting and do what she can to address their need. And in the process of doing so, their hearts will be satisfied, their thirst will be quenched.

When I first began working in full-time youth ministry, someone shared two verses with me which became my touchstone for working with adolescents. Isaiah 58:10-11, “Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon. The Lord will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be life a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring.”

Would you like to be an ever-flowing spring, guided by the Lord, given water when dry, a light shining in the darkness? Then come to Jesus, drink deeply from him, and living water will flow from your heart.