

**Sermon Series Four: Believe and Live**  
**(The Gospel of John: Signs of the Messiah - 1:1-12:50)**  
**John 7:37-39**  
***Rivers of Living Water***

<sup>37</sup> *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.”* <sup>38</sup> *Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”* <sup>39</sup> *Now this he said about the 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.*

All of us regularly receive invitations. We may receive invitations to a wedding, to a house for dinner, to a concert or to be a follower on twitter or a friend on Facebook. Some of these invitations we gladly receive and they cause us to be excited. Others are not so welcome, and we find ourselves asking, “Do I have to go there?” Or, “How can I get out of responding to that one?” Well as we come to our text, we are given the most important and joyful invitation that we will ever receive. Jesus welcomes us with the words, *“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink... Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water!”*

The setting of our text is the last and greatest day of the festival known as The Feast of Tabernacles. For seven days the priest have marched in solemn procession from the Pool of Siloam to the temple and poured out water into a basin on the west side of the brazen altar. Many Jews have accompanied these priests. Some of them have drunk from the pool, while others chanted Isaiah 55:1 and 12:3; “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters... With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” It was such a joyful occasion that the Mishnah stated, “He that never has seen the joy of the water drawing has never in his life seen joy.” The priest would pour water into the basin at the time of the morning sacrifice. And another priest would also pour the daily drink offering of wine into a different basin. Then they would both pour out the water and wine from both basins before the Lord.

What did this all mean?The pouring out of the water symbolized God’s provision of refreshing water for his people as they wandered in

the wilderness and also the rains that would later provide for the harvest. They would think back to the time when Moses struck the rock, and out of it gushed living water. The Jews regarded this provision of water as harbingers of the great blessings which one day they would experience under Messiah's rule over all the nations. The pouring out of wine symbolized God's giving of his Spirit in the last days.

With this in mind, we can begin to appreciate the beauty of Christ's invitation. As Christ announces his invitation he stands, (something unusual for a rabbi who would always sit to teach) clearly demonstrating how important this invitation is. Jesus is saying that he is the fulfillment of all that the Feast of Tabernacles had anticipated. He is the Messiah. He is the "Rock" from which the water flowed in the wilderness.

But you ask, "What does that matter to me?" To you Jesus is saying, "If you thirst for God in any way, come to me and I will fully satisfy that thirst." Drink your fill, that is, enter into a trusting, ongoing, fully committed personal relationship with me, and when you do, I will fill your dry and thirsty soul - deep down into your innermost being - with an abundance of refreshing life-giving water.

**But what is this water? What are these rivers of living water?** Jesus is saying: **1)** that when Jesus sends the Holy Spirit, he will do such a powerful inward work in your life that it will well up and burst forth out of your being - bringing multiplied blessing to others. People will know that you have been with Jesus. They will see his character manifested in everything that you do. They will see his *love* (the unconditional kind that loves others no matter what). They will see his *mercy* (an immediate reaction to forgive someone who has confessed and turned his back on his sin and wants to begin again). They will see his *strength* (that steadfast endurance in the face of seemingly impossible circumstances). And they will see his holiness (a revulsion and abhorance for the sin in your life). They will see Jesus! **2)** Jesus is also saying that this day will come after his death, resurrection, and ascension. He must first return to the Father to be our advocate before the throne and to prepare for us our future dwelling place. And then he will send another Comforter, just like himself - the Holy Spirit. The

Holy Spirit will come upon his people at Pentecost in a new way, with an outpouring unlike anything ever before. *“Those who believe in him”* includes will include people from every tribe and nation. But what exactly happens when the Holy Spirit comes to us. Today, we will look at several ministries of the Holy Spirit that satisfy the thirsts of our hearts:

### **I. He gives us life!**

\*\* We can finally quench our thirst to live, really live! All of us want to live life to its fullest! Now we can!

1. John 3:6 says that we are born of the Spirit. We are given life by the Spirit - abundant life! Where we were dead and enslaved by sinful practices before we came to know Christ, we are now made a new creation - a new creature. The old tired ways are passing away and a new life has taken their place (Second Corinthians 5:17).

2. Further, Romans 8:11 tells us that it is the Holy Spirit that will give life to our dead bodies when they are raised from the dead in the future. This means that ultimately every part of us will be totally transformed into something that is beautiful and perfect in every way.

### **II. He purifies us!**

\*\* We can finally quench our thirst to be free from the devastating impact of our sin.

1. At the time of our salvation, the Spirit does the initial work of cleansing us from sin in our lives. That is, he sanctifies or makes us holy (First Corinthians 6:11). We are washed clean - whiter than snow.

2. After this initial break with sin the Holy Spirit begins to daily cause us to separate ourselves from sinful practices and to grow in holiness of life (Second Thessalonians 2:13; Romans 8:13). By his power we are able to put to death the sinful practices in our lives. Where once our lives were dominated by sexual immorality, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, addictions and all sorts of evil (Galatians 5:19, 20), we now manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23). We now know what it means to genuinely love, to feel the thrill of vibrant joy, to know the calm of complete peace, to understand the strength of being patient, to reach out with compassion and kindness to those who are suffering and demand large amounts of

our time, to be gentle where once we were harsh, to have self-control where once we found ourselves constantly out of control. The Holy Spirit is creating a brand new you!

### **III. He empowers us for service!**

\*\* We can finally quench our thirst to have the power to do what we believe we must do.

1. We have the power to stand up to defeat our arch enemy. James 4:7 tells us that when we resist the devil he will flee from us. As we turn to him and say “No!” he flees from us.

2. We have the power to proclaim the great news of the gospel. Acts 1:8 and 4:8, 31 speak of how the Holy Spirit gives great power so that we can proclaim his Word confidently. When we feel timid and afraid, suddenly he provides a boldness that we never thought possible. And not only that, but he provides the words to give a strong defense for what we believe, a solid explanation for the hope that burns within us (First Peter 3:15).

3. He gives us spiritual gifts, talents, and abilities that empower us in serving God’s people as well as our community (First Corinthians 12). We all desire to fit in, to contribute, and God gives to each of us a special place and a special service in his church. We may have a special Spirit-given gift of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, the gift of helps, prophecy, evangelism, teaching, etc.

### **IV. He seals us!**

\*\* We can finally quench our deep thirst to feel secure.

1. He guarantees our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13). He protects and preserves us as Christians until one day we receive our final and full inheritance in the new heaven and new earth. He is the royal seal, the divine engagement ring, that certifies and that declares that we have been accepted by God.

2. He bears witness with our spirit, whispers to our soul, the assurance that we have been saved and that nothing can separate us from God’s love (Romans 8:16; First John 4:13).

### **V. He unifies us!**

\*\* We can finally quench our thirst for unity. Most of us have a desire that we all get along. Even one Super Bowl Ad reflected it.

\*\*\* The Super Bowl commercial for Coke featured a montage of the cruel and hateful ways that people use technology today—from nasty online comments to bullying text messages. Then, it breaks to a server room filled with wires, where a worker accidentally spills his Coke onto "the internet." You can picture what happens—the red (happy) surge of energy flows through the world's connections, replacing the blue (*suspiciously* Pepsi-colored) of hatred, cruelty, and just-plain-meanness. All around the world, the power of Coke renews and rejuvenates, bringing happiness! While the corporate messaging—Coca-Cola as the potential for healing human negativity—is laughable when you think about it, the ad provided a powerful example of our thirst for unity. What if there was a force *truly* able to remake the whole world with harmony, joy, and happiness? The Bible says that there is, the Holy Spirit, and that process has already begun.

1. When the church began in the book of Acts, it was marked by an unprecedented unity (Acts 2:44-47). They got along. Paul instructed that all believers be eager to maintain that unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). Most of us want a church that is marked by an attitude of reconciliation and love when problems arise.

2. Although we will never see it perfectly in this life, what we do find among spirit-filled believers is an interdependency, an intimate fellowship, a unity of purpose, and a desire to do that which is for the common good (First Corinthians 12:7).

## **Conclusion**

All of us experience or have experienced a profound thirst in some way. As we have seen, we may thirst for security and so try to find it in possessions or power. We may thirst for unity to replace the division and fighting that is so prevalent in our society. And so we look for a leader who can satisfy this basic thirst of ours. We may thirst for the day when our bodies and our emotions will be free from the cancer of sin.

Against this backdrop of profound need Christ is issuing to you an invitation today. "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink and out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." I long for such a flood, don't you? **Spurgeon spoke of it back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century comparing it to**

the incoming tides on the Thames River that lifted the great river barges. When the tide was out nothing could move these barges as they lay in the mud of the river's bottom. A team of men could not move them. Machinery could not even move them out to the sea. But then the tide would come, and soon they would be seen floating. When the tide returned, even a child could move them by his hand.

Yes, we all know some "boats" that need floating. They live quiet lives of desperation because they do not know God. They are thirsty, dry, searching for someone or something - anything- that can satisfy.

What would happen if each one of us who knows Jesus would become a blessing to them? What would happen if we would become that agent of change for others? Imagine how all of us together, empowered by the Holy Spirit, could become a great river of God's grace flooding and transforming lives all around us.

Yes, we Christians might first need to be dramatically changed, to experience a fresh infilling by the Holy Spirit. We might need to stop resisting him, stop quenching him - stop putting out his fire in our lives through our disobedience and apathy. We might need to be reminded that within us is the One who has all the living water that we will ever need. The supply is already there, but we have put a kink in the hose. Are you thirsty? Jesus says, "Come!" Drink your fill! Will you come and drink?