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The Feast of Pentecost

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Vienna, VA

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“Dehydrated?”

Text: John 7:37-39; Acts 2:1-21

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

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.”

They say that by the time you feel thirsty, your body is already short on water. So thirst is good. It is a warning sign that you need something. But you need to keep on drinking. Those who know about such things say that for good health you should drink six to eight glasses of water each day. Because dehydration really messes with your body. I learned this with my father, when we were taking care of him. Some health problem would arise - and lots of different ones - and we would take him to get looked at, and re-hydrating him often took care of whatever the problem was. The problem was the symptom that he needed water.

But you can't drink just *any* water. Some water is not good for you. Sometimes I'll watch one of those survivalist shows and the people come across the water they need and it looks really good and they really want to drink it, but they know they can't - they need to boil it and purify it first. If they don't it can make them sick or kill them. There are things in there you can't see or taste but can do a number on you. And drinking salt water just makes you *more* thirsty and the salt in the water actually dehydrates you! So the more salt water you drink the thirstier you become!

So just drinking isn't the answer. Drinking these kinds of waters might *seem* to work, they *seem* to quench your thirst and help you. But then you find out later that no, they hurt you, were ultimately unsatisfying, and perhaps even lead to your death. You need to drink water, but you need to drink *good* water.

And remember Covid? (Remember that? :-) One of the really frustrating things (for me, at least) was that for so long many water fountains were closed and shut off. So I often couldn't get the water I needed and wanted.

Jesus talks about being thirsty today. He's in the Temple during the Feast of Booths, one of the three big festivals in the Jewish year. They remembered when their ancestors lived in booths while in the wilderness for 40 years, and that all that time, God provided for

them. Manna to eat, water to drink, clothes and shoes that didn't wear out. Part of the ceremonies of that week involved water, for on more than one occasion, God had provided water from a rock for them to drink when they were thirsty and in need. That's the context of Jesus' statement here, that if you're thirsty, come to Him and drink. Which is what Paul tells us in First Corinthians, that's actually what happened when the people of Israel were given water from a rock to drink in the wilderness, that rock wasn't just a rock - *that rock was Christ* (1 Corinthians 10:4)! Only He can give us that water we need to live. Living water. Water of life.

Now, John tells us that Jesus didn't mean literal water here - He was talking about the Holy Spirit. That what we're thirsting for not just in our bodies but *in our lives*, only He can provide. And just as He did in the wilderness, He has come to provide us exactly that. Exactly what we need.

The problem is, how often do we keep trying to drink the wrong water? Water that does not really satisfy? Water that may look good and seem good and seem to satisfy us, only to find out later that it didn't, and couldn't. And that, in fact, this water we gulped down actually hurt us. We actually have an expression that talks about this: *Don't drink the Kool-aid*. You've probably heard that. Water with a bit of flavoring in it to make it taste better. Don't drink the Kool-aid. Don't drink what they're giving you. It's not going to help.

So what are all the Kool-aids out there today? Things that people look to, or drink, to satisfy what they're thirsty for? What they're longing for? You even. People longing for significance, or maybe meaning and value for their life, or maybe fame or happiness or love, maybe success or admiration. And to satisfy these "thirsts," people turn to work, drugs, sexuality, sports, different philosophies, all kinds of things. And maybe like bad water, they seem to work at first. Give them what they want. Satisfy their longing, their thirst.

But then . . . People retire or can't work anymore and then they're lost. Sports stars retire or suffer a career-ending injury and then there's a hole in their life. Drugs and sexuality are like drinking salt water - they don't satisfy, they just leave you more and more thirsty. It doesn't work. None of it works. And so folks are dehydrated. *Spiritually* dehydrated. Not content. Searching. Longing. Thirsty for something. See all the problems in our world today? Are the problems the problems? Or like with my father, are they the symptoms of the real problem - of the *spiritual dehydration* causing them all?

And remember, by the time you feel thirsty, you are already short on water. You have to keep drinking. Thirst is good. It is the warning sign that you need something. And Jesus is saying today: *what you need, I have. For out of the heart of Jesus flows streams of living water*. Not just water, but *living* water. Water of life. Water that gives life.

Now Jesus had used this figure of speech before. It was John that recorded that too - when Jesus met a Samaritan woman at a well in Samaria (John 4). She was trying to quench her thirst for love, for acceptance. She had had five husbands and the man she was now with was not her husband. But nothing worked. Nothing gave her security. She was still a social outcast. Until Jesus came by. He spoke of this living water that actually quenches the thirst we have in our souls. ***Sir, give me this water***, she said (v. 15). And Jesus did. He did not reject her or look down on her. He was the Messiah for her. There was forgiveness and life for her from Him. And once she drinks this water, she is a new woman. She goes back into the town that shunned her and tells them of Jesus, so they, too, can come to Him and drink. And they do.

Now Jesus says this same thing - not at a well in some little back-water town in Samaria - but in the Temple itself, during one of the three major festivals in Jerusalem, and on the great and final day of that festival! He says, whoever you are, wherever you're from, whatever you've done, wherever your searching, whatever Kool-aid you're drinking, ***come to me and drink***. I have the water you are thirsting for. Living water. And not just a little - in abundance. Water of life. Water that gives life. For all people.

And then John tells us, as I mentioned before: ***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***. But once Jesus was glorified, once He was crucified, resurrected, and ascended, there wouldn't be a drink here, a drink there - that river would flow forth to give drink to all people. An abundance which would never run out.

And a mere ten days after He ascended, that happened. The dam broke. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost. ***The mighty rushing wind*** and ***the tongues as of fire*** weren't the main thing that day - they were the *signs* that something greater was happening that day. At first, the people in Jerusalem that day, for that great festival of the Jews, thought that the disciples had drunk not living water, but ***too much wine!*** But it wasn't wine that had changed them. It wasn't wine that was their "liquid courage" to do what they were doing. They were new like that Samaritan woman was new. They had living water. Water of life. Water that gives life. And it changed them. And they stood up in front of that great crowd, just as Jesus had done before, and said: ***This is for you, too***. God is ***pouring out His Spirit on all flesh***. To quench your thirst. To give you what you need.

For what we need *is life*. All those other things people are thirsting for that I mentioned before - significance, meaning, value, fame, happiness, love, success, admiration, and more - those aren't really the things; those are the *symptoms* of dehydration. What we need, all of us, is life. A life that matters now; a life that will go on. And that's what Jesus has for us. **You matter**. You matter to Him so much that He died for you. And even if everyone else in the world says you don't matter, you do to Him. And even if everyone else in the world forgets about you, He won't. The holes in His hands and feet and the

gash in His side are for you. Eternal reminders of how much He loves you and how much you matter to Him.

And, we're told, on that Day of Pentecost, when that living water was poured out, three thousand people were baptized that day. Three thousand people drank that living water and were washed in the water of God. Like the Samaritan woman, like the disciples, they were changed. They were given what they so desperately needed, but perhaps didn't know they needed.

And that's the water here for you today. Living water. Water of life. Water that gives life. That river of living water is still flowing. Water we need to keep drinking so we don't dehydrate. The Spirit coming to us in the Word, in forgiveness, in the food of God, to give us life. To keep us alive. When you stop drinking, what symptoms pop-up in your life? What dissatisfaction, what thirst, what searching? And what do you drink to try to satisfy that? And while whatever it is may work for a while, what happens when it doesn't any longer?

But still today Jesus has this living water for you and me. Still today He is calling out, ***If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.*** And still today, He is that rock in the wilderness of this world and life that gives us the drink we need - He pours out His Holy Spirit upon us, and that Spirit points us to Jesus, takes us to Jesus, and connects us to Jesus, to drink and live. Really live. And not just for a while, but forever.

Now, some might say - and do say - this is Kool-aid! The Bible, the Church, Jesus, Christianity, it's all just another brand of Kool-aid we're trying to sell you and get you to drink. There were people in Jesus' day who thought that, and there are still today. But then something happened that had never happened before: **the tomb was empty**. Jesus was risen and alive. The life He spoke He did. The life He spoke was real. And this life He would now pour out to us. This life that has changed so many. This life that has changed you. This life that you now live that is different - not because of new wine, but because of living water.

And this living water that flows from Jesus and to you, now also flows through you to others. As you live, as you speak, as you love and help. And when some say you're just drinking the Kool-aid, show them you're not! And tell them where this living water is, that they, too, can drink. All who are thirsty, all who are dehydrated, all who are drinking water that cannot quench their thirst and may even be killing them. Jesus' invitation still stands: ***If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.*** Living water. Water of life. Water that gives life. The life we need. The life we crave. Come, drink, and live!

Or as we sang earlier: *Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love* (from the Introit of the Day). Kindle in them life. Kindle in them Jesus. That we thirst no more.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.