

## Living Water

Sermon for the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Easter

Sermon Text: John 7:37-39



<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.*

For 40 years, the people of Israel had to wander in the desert. For almost an entire lifetime, they had to fight for survival every single day. No drop of water was allowed to be wasted in this time. No breadcrumbs may be lost either. And yet the time in the desert was still full of blessings. The 10 commandments were given during this time. And the people had to learn how to focus on the important things in life. The Israelites should never again forget that. And that's why a day of remembrance was established. The feast of remembrance was called the Feast of Booths. During this feast, the Israelites built booths. The book of Leviticus describes it and the Jews do it to this day. During the highlight of this feast, a priest walked down from the Temple Mount to the pool of Siloam. There he filled a jar with water and carried it up to the Temple Mount in a ceremonial procession. The people cheered and at the sound of the temple music, the water was poured out of the jar together with a pitcher of wine into silver dishes on the altar. People thought about how wonderfully God cared for His people in bad times.

Jesus came to Jerusalem on such a feast day. At first, He stayed there covertly and observed everything from far away. He saw the joy of those who carried the water but also saw the many who were excluded from the festivities. That made Him sad. But it also made Him sad that the people cheered so much about past times and yet were all the more blind to the present salvation among them. Their entire joy and their entire hope was focused on the earthly things like land, water, and wealth. Consequently, they had missed the whole purpose of God. They completely relied on God's work through Moses in history. But they couldn't recognize how God wanted to give much better things through Jesus Christ. They were entirely fixated on the earthly water and God's salvation in this world and couldn't see at all how God wanted to bless His children for eternity. "If you knew with whom you spoke..." Jesus said once to the Samaritan woman..."you would ask Him to give you living water."

During the procession with the golden water jug, Jesus could no longer be silent. He cried out into the crowd: *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink! Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"*

Jesus sees the crowd of people and hears the shouts of joy. But do they really draw joyfully from the well of salvation? Don't they remain thirsty, despite all the beauty of the festival, and actually have no water that can really satisfy their thirst? Jesus calls such people to Him and wants to quench their thirst. Jesus also calls to us. With His call, "if anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink," Jesus invites us to draw from the fullness within Himself. We find no fulfillment from that which we possess. Jesus has

spoken an absolute “yes.” “Yes,” He wants to quench thirst--truly quench thirst. Yes, He who is God incarnate truly wants to be like a river of water within us and be present in our lives. But Jesus also speaks a clear “no.” “No,” to all the things that only outwardly quench thirst. The words of Jesus are a promise and commitment, but they are also at the same time an absolute “no” to any possible replacement of life and salvation that human beings prefer, which even obscure God’s eternal “Yes-word” to us.

Some might hear these words of Jesus and say: “Don’t bother me with your either/or. Isn’t it better that we live out our lives for a limited time here on earth: eat, drink and be merry while we can... then hopefully a quick and painless death. Indeed, it appears that some people manage quite well to live without the either/or and they also get along quite well with the earthly realities. Life with the end station of death appears to be a plausible alternative to the either/or of the Lord Jesus. What’s wrong with it? **Thirst!** I remember when I was a child how we ran around in the streets. But in the hot African sun, it didn’t take long to build up a huge thirst. Then I simply ran barefoot and dirty into the kitchen, to the great annoyance of my mother, and just turned on the faucet to the fullest and drank fresh water immediately and directly from the faucet. That was delicious! That’s how it is for us human beings without God. For a time, we can get along just fine without God. People can get used to anything. They can even come to terms with the final destination being death. That’s just the way it is. But no one can endure that forever. Eventually you do get thirsty. I can no longer live like this without God. There must be something else besides just death!

Jesus calls it out. His audience knows it. We also know it. Without water, there is no harvest; without the harvest, there is no life. You can clearly recognize this based on the realities of our earth. Can’t you also recognize it in the unendingly vast universe? Without Jesus, there is no life. Our Christian faith quenches thirst. I know that I can pray in the name of Jesus, sharing my innermost wishes and feelings with the One who alone can truly understand me and my whole life. And the love.... how wonderful that God can say and says: “I like you! Exactly as you are with all your faults!”

Dear congregation, this is the water that Jesus wants to give us when He calls us to Himself: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink!” When we follow His call, the living water will fill us... It shall be a spring overflowing within us. So we will always have enough living water to let His good power flow out into our surroundings, to our fellow human beings.

Life will go out from us: mourners hear words of comfort that lift them up so that they can regain hope. Those who are voiceless find in us one who will speak for them, those who are weak find one who makes himself strong for them. The aged experience help and joy – there is someone who has time for them and listens to them. The young sense how well-meaning we are with them. The poor see that we can share and our giving doesn’t shame them. The sick are visited, the lonely find themselves back in community, those who are depressed dare to smile. Our power will strengthen others: our fellow human beings stand up tall with us. Because Christ and His power lives in us. There arises the courage to persevere in a difficult life with hope for a good future. “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink!” With Him alone there is living water – for free. “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” From us and out of us, it flows to people in our surroundings and does to them what Christ Himself wants to do.

May God send us His Holy Spirit to fill us and flow through us to others! Amen.