

Flowing Waters of Life

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Water; Life / John 7:37–39

Introduction

Happy Birthday Church! Many people call today, Pentecost, the birthday of the New Testament Church. After all, it was the day that the Holy Spirit came with power from on high. The gospel writers do not record the Pentecost, only Luke does in the Book of Acts. Today, we hear though the promise from Jesus about the Holy Spirit. In the account in Acts of the Pentecost we see the Holy Spirit coming with tongues of fire and a mighty rushing wind.

Today we are going to encounter Water combined with God's word...not tongues of fire.

Important uses of Water

Water is a very familiar and important thing to us. Our earth is made up of 70% water. The human body is made up of about 66% water. We use water in all forms, solid, liquid and gas. We use water to drink and to irrigate. We use water to clean, to cook and many other useful things. When those hot summer days finally arrive that I am looking forward to, we will once again know that cool refreshing taste and feeling of the water going down our throats or the feeling as we jump into a lake, river, or swimming pool to cool off, or perhaps even run through the sprinkler. We know water very well! We rely on it for life.

In our gospel lesson for today, Christ says to each and every one of us today:

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“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ ”

Feast of Booths

Just a little earlier in the reading, we find out that the day on which Jesus makes this remark about the “water of life,” is the last day of the Feast of Booths. Seem a little odd for this to be

read on the Feast of Pentecost. TO us today, it doesn't matter. We have no idea what this Old Testament feast is all about.

The Feast of Booths or "Succoth" was a time to give thanks for the harvest that God had provided for the Israelites. After the threshing floors and the vineyards had been cleaned up after the harvest, the Festival of Booths began. Much like our own traditional holiday of Thanksgiving, the Feast of Booths celebrated the plenty that ISrael had by comparing it with a time when there was not plenty, the time when they lived in booths and tents in the Exodus wanderings. The last day of this celebration was considered to be an extra day.

On this extra day, a prayer was to be said asking God for two things - the first that He would stay with the children of Israel, and the second, that he would send water in the form of rain even after the harvest was over - so that the animals and humans could have water even after the grains and grapes had been gathered.

This is the day that Jesus stands up and announces, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." When Jesus is announcing is that He is the answer to these prayers for God to be with His children and for water to keep everyone from thirsting. He announces this beginning here in tthe fest of Succoth, and He continues to announce this gift of living water until the end of time, where we find him saying the same thing in Revelation.

Still, water can also be a very destructive thing!

Destructive Water

20 years ago, many of you remember the devastating floods from the Red River that was flowing through homes and businesses across the land, especially in River Front towns such as Grand Forks. Floods come in all shapes and sizes. When flood waters rise they can wash away homes, businesses, and lives in a matter of moments.

I'm sure you also remember seeing on the news the devastating affects that happen because of rapid rising water with Hurrricanes along Coastal areas or the destruction of a Tsunami. Water doesn't just provide life...water can also destroy life.

Even in the bible, water can be a destructive thing. It is the element with which God wiped out almost all of humanity in the great flood. It's the element that God used to wipe out the Egyptian army that is following Israel. Water even causes the disciples to doubt their Lord when they are facing a destructive storm on the sea.

We are wary of water because we know that it can bring about change. We look at the amount of water that God has for us, and we see that it is enough to be damaging to our lives as we know them. You see, maybe we just want a small sip of this water, instead of the great flood that Jesus is offering to us...because we are afraid of the change that will happen in our lives.

You see might become thirsty for water...but you might be looking for water that can poison you, because you don't see the need for the true water or the poisonous water looks like the real refreshing clean water.

And then, out of our hearts, flows anything but living water. Really what flows out of our hearts is worldly satisfaction. Perhaps even a sort of death valley dryness flows out of you as you reveal what you truly thirst - money, reputation, possessions - you know the bigger, the better, the newer, the greater...and a dry bed of fleshly desires. When we drink water like this, we don't even see the other people around us that are desperately thirsty.

Yet the water that Jesus promises is full of life. It's not polluted, but it is destructive to the life that you know, the life of sin that you reside in. You see Christ's water cleanses you from sin, it releases you from that grasp that Satan has on your life.

You see, you are thirsty, you are thirsty for something good in your life...because there isn't just the polluted water that you drink, but you also have the terrible tsunamis of life threatening your very core...whether it be a death of a loved one, a disease so terrible you can't even name the name anymore, maybe it's another physical, emotional, or mental malady. You all have them...so you thirst.

Christ's water of life

Let me tell you this Christ has a water that is clean, that is refreshing, that destroys whatever is unholy in your life. It even calms your fears and calms your life...even if it seems as if everything is going crazy.

You see, this Lord of Pentecost has come for your salvation. He yet loves you, for from him has flowed to you torrents of life, not destructive ones, but life changing torrents that make you his child. Much as was prayed for at Succoth. He is so rich in abundant love for you that Jesus, the spring of immortality, lived in abject lowliness for you. Christ, the water of salvation, laid down his life for you, for your forgiveness and salvation. From the cross of Calvary has flowed to you the forgiveness of all your sin. Every hammer blow that nailed the Lord, the water of satisfaction, to the cross means the remission of your sins. Every drop of blood that flowed from the wounds of Jesus means the healing balm of life-giving water for you eternally. The streams of water that flows from his side provides you life eternal. None of your sins will ever count against you, included your own want for self-preservation or your lack of concern for mission, even to your family, friends and the community that sits beyond these walls. This love for you from the hill of crucifixion and the open tomb of Easter spells your deliverance. You are washed with the font's flowing water of grace, dubbed a child of God, ready to be led by the Lord to glorious springs of living water. Your thirst for his forgiveness is quenched as I declare to you once again by his command, "I forgive you all your sins."

What happened after that first Pentecost - when the church was born? You see the church grew, much like you grow each year. The church grew in number, because the Holy Spirit was alive and well. The Holy Spirit was living and active. So I declare to you today, and urge you dear brothers and sisters in Christ, redeemed and washed by the blood of lamb and giving the Holy Spirit in Baptism, pray that the Holy Spirit would lead to continue in the mission of the church, to go and share the good news to those that are hurting and in need of the true life-giving water that flows from Jesus through the Holy Spirit and using you to be that messenger.

That's the Pentecost promise, the promise of redeeming flood, the promise that the Holy Spirit will be your constant companion as He guides you in your Baptismal Life!

In Jesus name. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus Our Lord and Savior. Amen.