

9.30.2018 Trinity 18 (John 7:37-53)

*“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water”* (John 7:37-38).

Over the years beverage companies have come up with some great slogans. You may remember the makers of Gatorade calling it The Thirst Quencher, and later, the remedy For That Deep Down Body Thirst. For nearly twenty years Sprite told consumers to Obey Your Thirst, and then decided that Freedom From Thirst was a more liberating catch phrase. These are great slogans, but every soft drink lover knows that You Can't Beat The Real Thing. Coke Is It. It's The Best Friend Thirst Ever Had. The message that these companies are presenting is clear. You have an intense thirst, a thirst that only their product can satisfy. That's the message, but what does a person who lives in our culture really know about being thirsty?

In a physical sense, not much. We live in communities where there's a Big Gulp, a Dollar Drink, or a Dutch Bros on just about every corner. We live in homes with refrigerators filled with cold milk, our favorite kind of juice, and at the touch of a button, a never ending supply of clean, ice-cold water. We really don't know anything about physical thirst, but inside each one of us there is a thirst that nothing of this world can satisfy. David described this thirst in the Psalm we read this morning, where he wrote, *“O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh also longeth after thee, in a barren and dry land where no water is”* (Psalm 63:1-2).

It's been 3,000 years since David wrote those inspired words, but the truth they express hasn't changed. This side of heaven is a *barren and dry land*, a desert where we wake each morning thirsting for comfort this world cannot provide. Mankind is both troubled and blessed with an insatiable spiritual thirst placed on our hearts by our Creator, to the end that we may continually seek the only One who can fulfill the desires of our immortal souls. The old saying is true: There is a “God-shaped hole” in all of us, an “infinite abyss that can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object,” Almighty God

(Pascal, Pensees VII). We were made for Him, and by design man will never be truly content until he finds God, and if, after the joy of finding Him, our foolish pride or sinful nature leads us to fill our lives with the things of this world, the insatiable spiritual thirst that God has placed on our hearts will turn us back to Him again and again and again.

Jesus said, *“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink”* (John 7:37). These words are God’s simple and direct invitation to any man who thirsts, to every man who thirsts, to come unto Christ and find the *“living water”* that satisfies the deep spiritual thirst within us. There is nothing *“of this world”* that can satisfy our spiritual thirst, but by the grace of God *“in this world”* He has provided His Word and Sacraments that we may quench our thirst for union and communion with Him. Our Lord’s invitation to all who thirst can be seen as a plea to remain close to Him through the Church He established, because it is here, in His house, where we hear the Word of God and receive the Sacraments instituted by Christ Himself. To neglect regular church attendance is to place oneself in danger of dying of thirst. We die of spiritual thirst when we allow our thirst for Christ to die, when the things of this world become more important to us than spending the morning with God. We must thirst for Sunday morning corporate prayer. We must thirst to hear and receive the Word of God. We must thirst for Christ, for His precious Body and Blood which He gives to us so freely when we meet at His table for Holy Communion.

Jesus offers to every person something only God can provide: *“rivers of living water”* that will flow from those who believe in Him out into the world that He gave His life to save (John 7:38). St. John defines the living water which Jesus spoke of as the Holy Spirit, and in our lesson this morning we discover a vivid and wonderful picture of how the Spirit works in our hearts and lives. As we, who thirst for Christ, come unto Him and drink, we receive the living water that satisfies our deep spiritual thirst, we receive the Holy Spirit, and through His indwelling power the life of every believer is completely transformed. We drink of living water, and the Spirit moves in such a way that we become the salt and light that makes the world thirst for Christ. They thirst for Him because they recognize something distinctly different flowing from us, what St. Paul refers to as *“the fruit of the Spirit.”* He tells us that through the Holy Spirit the Christian manifests *“love, joy,*

*peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*” (Galatians 5:22-23).

The world sees these qualities flowing from us like “*rivers of living water,*” and this experience makes people thirst for God. The world looks at the authentic Christian and wonders where all this life-changing, life-giving living water is coming from, and therefore we become the instrument that God uses to show every person that what they truly thirst for is found in Him. This is precisely why we must be continually mindful of that which flows from us. Every moment of every day we should ask ourselves the question: What kind of drink am I offering to the thirsty world?

Consider this thought: A few weeks ago our church was open for the city-wide yard sale. On Friday and Saturday we handed out hundreds of bottles of water, and people thankfully received what we offered because it was the real thing. This bottle was the best friend thirst ever had, and perhaps it can be seen as an image of what every Christian is called to be in this *barren and dry land*. A clear, cool, clean, and refreshing drink of water for a thirsty world. This is what we are called to be, but even just a little bit of this world, the flesh, and the devil can really get in the way of our ability to be the cool refreshing drink that draws others to God.

In Galatians, where St. Paul writes about “*the fruit of the Spirit,*” he also addresses the worldly and opposing “*works of the flesh*” (Galatians 5:19-21). There he lists examples such as immorality, impurity, jealousy, and anger. If we allow such things to contaminate the precious living water with which Christ has quenched our spiritual thirst, the water that flows from us won’t look so appealing. Nobody wants to drink polluted water. Nobody would have stopped if this is what we had to offer at the sale, and nobody will be drawn to God if this is what they see flowing from us. This is why we must stay close to Christ, His Church, and the Sacraments. In this *barren and dry land* we must stay thirsty for Jesus Christ and the gifts of forgiveness and grace that only He, the Lamb of God can offer, always remembering that “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (1 John 1:9).

May God give us grace, that through the power of the Holy Spirit, rivers of

clear, cool, clean “*living water*” would flow out from this congregation and into our community. May God work in us and through us in such a way that our words and deeds will make the world thirst for Him, the One who brings the life of God to the thirsty soul. “*To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen*” (Jude 1:25).