

Streams of Living Water
John 7:37-39
June 8, 2014
Pentecost / Confirmation

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Grace, mercy, and peace from the source of living water, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Without a constant supply of water, human beings die very quickly. Without living water, the human soul dies eternally. Today's short Gospel reading tells us quite a bit about living water. We learn where living water comes from, what living water does, and who can lay claim to living water. Let's examine those three facts about living water.

Jesus says: *If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him* (Jn 7:37-38). Jesus proclaims that he is the place where living water can be found. This is one of the times when Jesus puts himself in a class by himself. He doesn't say he is one place where living water can be obtained. Jesus is the only place living water can be found.

However, having said that, understand that Jesus is not the living water. John makes that very clear in verse 39 of the reading: *By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified*" (Jn 7:39). The living water that we cannot live without is the Holy Spirit.

Too many Christians either ignore, forget about, or don't understand the person and work of the Holy Spirit. But, according to Scripture, the Holy Spirit is the living water that is released by faith in Jesus. So, let's take a quick look at some of the things the Holy Spirit accomplishes.

It is the Holy Spirit, who comes to the unbeliever and convicts him of his sin and, thereby, shows that person his or her need for a Savior. On Maundy Thursday, Jesus told his disciples: *When [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment* (Jn 16:8).

It is through the Holy Spirit, the Father draws people to faith in Jesus. Jesus said: *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him* (Jn 6:44).

It is the Holy Spirit, who seals the believer's salvation. Paul writes *Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption* (Eph 4:30).

It is the Holy Spirit, who fills the believer and makes us fit for service to God and others. To the Ephesian church, Paul writes: *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit* (Eph 5:18).

Salvation involves all three persons of the Trinity. However, it is the Holy Spirit, who resides in the Christian and helps the Christian go from one day to the next. The Holy Spirit is the water of life and Jesus is the source of that living water.

Before the living water of life could be dispensed to a world dead in its sin, the fountain of that living water had to be opened. There is wonderful and meaningful symbolism which can be drawn between opening a well and the opening of the fountain of living water.

To open a well a hole must be dug. The earth must be ripped open if the water of the well is going to be available. The same holds true for the fountain of living water. On Calvary, the fountain of living water was torn open. Jesus allowed himself to be tortured and crucified so the Holy Spirit, the living water, might flow out and quench the spiritual thirst of sinful humanity.

It's important for you to understand that when Jesus died on the cross he did it for you. Jesus didn't die because he was a bad man. Jesus died for you because that was the only thing that could keep you from spending eternity in hell. Jesus died for you because he loves you. Scripture says Jesus loves you so much he didn't wait for you to love him first. Paul writes: *God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us* (Rom 5:8).

Don't think for one minute that Jesus didn't die for you, personally. In fact, if you were the only sinner in the world, Jesus would still have willingly gone to the cross.

Living water also brings blessings. One of those blessings is salvation. Every sinner stands condemned before God. On our own, no one is good enough to avoid eternity in hell. The Bible tells us: *The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God*" (Ps 9:17 KJV).

However, when that same sinner receives the faith the Spirit brings, he is saved from the torments of hell. He is delivered from death and protected from the wrath of God. Romans 5:9: *Since we have now been justified by [Christ's] blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!* If salvation was the only thing we received from the Holy Spirit drawing us to Jesus, it would be enough. But there is more.

We also receive satisfaction. A Christian, who feels unsatisfied or unfulfilled, has a faith issue. In the living water, the Holy Spirit brings us everything we need.

The NIV translation of Scripture doesn't do justice to verse 38 of our reading. Listen to word for word translation from the Greek. *The one trusting in me just as said in the writing, rivers out of the stomach of him will flow of living water*" (Jn 7:38 NA27).

I find it interesting that the living water will flow out of the stomach. The stomach is the one part of the body which is never satisfied. Feed it now and it will be crying for more later. Jesus is saying we will receive satisfaction even in our most needy parts. Our depleted, sinful soul will be satisfied with living water. And that satisfaction will be without end.

Living water also brings strength, an unending supply of strength. It takes a lot to get through this life. It takes more than a sinner can generate on his own. Living water brings a constant supply of power into the believer's life. That power gives us the hope and joy we so desperately need.

There are people who say they could never lead a Christian life. They claim it's just too demanding, and they're right. Without the living water in us, we can't even get close to living a Christian life. Being what God wants us to be is impossible without God's help. But we have the Holy Spirit in us. We have the living water. Therefore, we can say with Paul: *I can do everything through him who gives me strength* (Philipp 4:13).

The presence of living water in us also gives us the ability to do service. Our text makes it clear that the living water will flow out of us. What does that mean? The living water, the Holy Spirit, will flow through us and out to an unbelieving world. We are the vehicles God intends to use to take his living water to those who are dying of spiritual thirst. God intends to glorify himself by using us to minister to others in such a way that they see God. That's why James tells us: *Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead* (James 2:17).

The last question to answer is "Who is able to receive living water?" Jesus says there are three requirements which must be met if the Holy Spirit is to dwell in someone. Strange as it might seem, these requirements cannot be met without the help of the Holy Spirit. But God is good and he will meet his own requirements if we just let him.

First, a person must thirst for God. This thirst is not something we can generate within ourselves. In our natural state, we will never see a need for God or his salvation. So, the Holy Spirit comes to the sinner through Scripture. And it's our job to see to it the unbeliever is presented with the truth of God's Word. When the unbeliever, with the Holy Spirit's help, sees his sin and his need for salvation, there will be a thirst for the living water that flows from the fountain of Jesus.

Second, a person must come to Jesus. There is much talk in some churches about coming to Jesus, or about finding Jesus. No one has ever come to Jesus without the presence of the Holy Spirit. And no one has ever found Jesus because Jesus was never lost. Jesus said: *The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost* (Lk 19:10). Jesus found

us. We didn't find him. Someone comes to Jesus by not rejecting the work of the Holy Spirit in his or her heart.

Third, Jesus said to have living water you must have faith. Again, faith is not something you can develop on your own. Faith is the gift of the Holy Spirit. The book of Ephesians says: *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast* (Eph 2:8-9). Faith is free and the Holy Spirit will give faith to all who do not resist.

The word *all* is pivotal. God is an equal opportunity Savior. Jesus invited anyone who was spiritually thirsty. Anyone means everyone. No one is excluded from the offer of salvation. No one is excluded from the offer of living water.

Today, let the living water of God flow from you to another person. Tell someone Jesus loves them. Then show them Jesus loves them by your loving acts done in his name.