

## A Concrete Promise

Pastor Matthew Ude  
May 28, 2023 - Pentecost  
INI - SDG

**John 7:37-39** <sup>37</sup> On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. <sup>38</sup> "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." <sup>39</sup> But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

How would you feel if your birthday present from your spouse was a note that said, "More love." Some people might not feel like it would not be a very good present, unless it was backed by something more concrete. "I'm going to do the dishes more. I'm going to take you dancing every Friday night."

Abstract things can sound good, but we usually prefer something more concrete.

When you walk down the aisle, and you get married, and you say I do, you're making that commitment to love one another forever. But what does that mean? The promise to love one another is an abstract thing. After you leave the altar, you need to make that abstract thing very practical. How are you going to live that love? How are you going to show it in your daily life?

What Jesus talks about in our text today might seem equally abstract. "Out of your heart will come fountains of water." What does that mean? How does that impact my daily life? It might sound abstract and because of that we might be quick to dismiss it. But scripture show us that Jesus is talking about something quite concrete.

When Jesus told the same thing to the woman at the well of Samaria, she took Jesus at His word. She responds I'll never have to draw water from this well again. She was mistaken but she was on the right track. She took Jesus' words too literally, but she was looking for something concrete, something that would change her life. That certainly is true about what Jesus offers here. It is something that will change our life.

But Jesus is not being abstract. Jesus is promising something very real and very practical. He is being metaphorical. It's not actual literal water that comes pouring out of our hearts. But what He is promising is very real.

If you look back earlier in chapter seven you find out that this is the festival of tabernacles. It would have taken place around about our month of October. This was a festival celebrating among other things the harvest. All the harvest was in by this time. The Israelites would live in tents around Jerusalem and thanked God for the crops.

As they celebrated the harvest, they did not forget also to thank God for the rain. There was a special ceremony of drawing water out of the pool of Siloam and pouring it out near the altar. There is some

historical evidence that this was done on the first seven days but not on the eighth. If that is correct it would have been on the last day when the water was not pouring out that Jesus called out "come to me and the water will be poured out on your heart"

In the midst of this thanksgiving festival, the same God who gave them the rain and the harvest stands in their midst and promises them something more, something greater, something better. Rather than rain and food that they need for their physical lives, Jesus is promising the water and food that they need for their spiritual lives. But again, this isn't something abstract. He is giving something real which has a very real impact in our lives.

There is no doubt what Jesus was talking about. The apostles John tells us that he was talking about the Holy Spirit and specifically also the day of Pentecost.

There is nothing abstract about the gifts that Jesus gave on Pentecost. It was a very concrete gift with immediate effect. There were flames of fire on their heads. They spoke in many different tongues. Most importantly they preached Jesus and Him crucified.

Jesus baked up His words with something real and important. He did it then and He does it now as well.

### **Out of you will flow living waters - a very concrete promise**

Paul tells us in Ephesians:

**Ephesians 4:8<sup>8</sup> Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men."**

What are those gifts?

**Ephesians 4:11<sup>11</sup> And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,**

Just as He gives crops to feed our bodies, so He gives pastor and teachers to feed our souls.

Again in 2 Corinthians Paul says:

**2 Corinthians 5:18-19<sup>18</sup> Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup> that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.**

Jesus gave us the gift of salvation and forgiveness. That is a bit abstract, but the second part is the work of sharing this forgiveness with others. To accomplish this ministry Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and still does today as well.

In Romans 12 Paul talks about ministry, teaching, encouraging one another, money, leadership, and being cheerful in all things. These gifts are a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. These things maybe are not as dramatic as speaking in tongues, but they are things that we need, practical things, concrete things.

Rainn Wilson has this new show where he travels around the world looking for happiness in different cultures. Happiness is an abstract concept, but Rainn is looking at very concrete things. In Iceland they find it refreshing to swim in 40\* water. In Bulgaria one young lady really finds it special to learn how to cook traditional Bulgarian foods from her grandma.

The prophet Isaiah speaking of the day of the Lord reminds us:

**Isaiah 12:3-4 3 Therefore with *joy* you will draw water From the wells of salvation. 4 And in that day you will say: "Praise the LORD, call upon His name; Declare His deeds among the peoples, Make mention that His name is exalted.**

This is a promise that the Lord would come and fill our lives not only with His forgiveness but with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit which we need to live joyfully In Christ.

### **Come to me and drink - a very concrete command**

If Jesus promises are concrete, so is His invitation, "come and drink."

Again, we might pass it off. We might think that all He means is a vague faith in the heart.

There are churches that take it this way. They think: "I believe. I have the Holy Spirit. I have this fountain inside me I don't need God's word. I don't need to do anything else."

But Jesus words are direct and specific. "Come and drink."

His promise is directly tied to the invitation. Those who do not drink, that is make use of God's word and sacraments, have no promise.

**Isa 55:1 "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price.**

The water is free, the gifts of God are freely given to whoever comes. But it is given to those who come and come regularly.

Sometimes we might wonder, why isn't my life filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit the way they were at Pentecost, or the way that Stephen was?

It could be that we are fail to recognize those gifts God has given us. It could be we are not drinking from Christ.

"Come and drink of Christ." Is your life filled with His word? Do you regularly come to eat and drink of the sacrament? The gifts are freely given to those who come and drink of Him.

**"Blessed are they who hear God's word and keep it"**

We hear this every week in church. It is a reminder to drink of God's word. To be blessed means to be filled with God's gifts. They are so blessed who come to hear His word.

Just as you are not going to grow crops in a dessert so you are not going to grow fruits of faith where there is no word of God.

**Mat 7:24 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:**

There are three major festivals in the church calendar, Christmas, Easter, and the one everyone forgets Pentecost. It's possible some of you may not have even known it was Pentecost today until you got here and saw the bulletin.

Each festival commemorates the work of one person of the trinity. The Father gave his son. The Son died and rose again. The Spirit is our helper.

Of the three Pentecost is the least abstract, the most down to earth, the most impactful on our lives now. There is a reason the methodist use the flame in the symbol of their church. Because they want to live their faith, they want that practical, concrete side of things. They want to know: how is Jesus going to change my life? This is a good thing as long as we don't lose focus on the salvation that is ours through Jesus Christ alone.

The festival of Pentecost is the celebration of that living water and the Holy Spirit who gives us knowledge, understanding, and fellowship with one another and so much more. **Amen**