

RIVERS OF LIVING WATER

John 7:37-39

Dr. Doyle Sager, First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Missouri,

Pentecost Sunday, May 31, 2020

READ/WATCH: <https://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/rivers-of-living-water/>

Is anyone this morning feeling spiritually parched, thirsty, wilted and weary? Is anyone frustrated with your spiritual life? You try hard, but nothing works. You want to do better, but there is no power to change? God has help for us in the person of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost Sunday, fifty days after Easter, is the day when we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit as recorded in Acts 2. Sometimes the Holy Spirit is pictured as fire, a dove or wind. But in this morning's text, the image is water.

Experts tell us that we can go three weeks without food but only three or four days without water. Palestine is arid, hot and dusty. A water analogy communicated clearly. Jesus Christ meets the deep human need of the soul. Nothing else slakes our thirst as Jesus can. We can't get those deep needs met elsewhere.

The setting of John 7 is the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles. For seven consecutive days, water from the Pool of Siloam was carried by a priest in a golden pitcher, then carefully poured into a sacred bowl. As the priest walked, the people sang and trumpets blasted. The next day, the ceremony was repeated, for seven days.

On the last day, the climactic day of the festival, scripture says Jesus "cried out" (v. 37). Jesus was not a shouter. But to be heard and to stress importance, he shouted. "Anyone who is thirsty, come, believe, drink." This is the water flow of grace, forgiveness, the Cross, new life. Andrew Sung Park gives us a rich mental picture of this overflowing grace. He says when Christ died on the Cross, the Trinity was broken open and the Holy Spirit poured all over creation [*Did God Kill Jesus?* by Tony Jones, p. 273]. God's love did not stay in the stratosphere; it came to earth and become concrete in the Holy Spirit in and among us.

But notice. That's not all. Jesus goes on to speak of rivers, not puddles or stagnant pools. We are brought into a relationship with God not only to receive but to share. We are not merely recipients of the Holy Spirit. We are conduits. Fresh water, flowing from the center of our being, serving a dry, parched world. This is why Pentecost Sunday is always a time to gain fresh strength for the church's evangelistic-missionary vision, God's heartbeat for all the world.

Furthermore, we know that sometimes rivers overflow their banks and cut new channels. Sometimes the Holy Spirit overflows old structures, old ways. We've all pondered how the pandemic has pushed us to new ways of sharing the gospel. Overflowing rivers!

Years ago, I preached a sermon on Jesus, the water of life. After the service, a woman whom I'd never met came up to me and said all her life, she had been trying to please God, avoid sin and avoid punishment. But she never could find a satisfying relationship with God. But in Christ, that day, she found her deep thirst satisfied. What's more, she felt new power—the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus stood up that day and said, "I'm not offering you more of the same—pious words, good intentions, elaborate rituals. I'm offering satisfying and empowering life." Out of our inner being, rivers of living water.