

John 7:37-39

Pentecost

May 31, 2020—Shepherd of the Mountains, Pinetop, AZ

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

We heard about this living water not too long ago. Just three chapters ago in John’s Gospel account, Jesus was at a well with a Samaritan woman and said some similar things. And what always strikes me about this earlier account is her immediate response to His words. The woman runs to town to tell the others. **“Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?”** ^{John 4:29} You see, Jesus is the source. He is the fountain. And He had given this woman living water with His own Spirit-filled words. She started to believe. And what happened right after that? Her heart became a river of living water as she told others about Jesus. And they also started to believe.

Then we see the same thing happening as we look even farther back in our OT reading. The Holy Spirit is with Moses. But then the Spirit comes to rest upon the 70 elders also. And immediately there are results. They prophesy. And not only them. But God also comes to people they didn’t expect. Two in the camp also, Eldad and Medad, they receive the Spirit and prophesy too. We don’t know for sure what they said, but Moses wasn’t concerned. And from his words, his reaction, it looks like they also were speaking the Word of God. Living water flowing from Moses, from the elders, from Eldad and Medad.

This is the intended pattern. God’s living water flows into us by the Spirit, through the Word, and then it flows out from us too...out from us and into others. Rivers of living water. It’s a pretty neat design. And we see it in all three readings. In the OT, we see it happening with the elders and with Eldad and Medad. In the Gospel reading, we see Jesus talking about how this is going to start happening in a greater way at Pentecost, even while the three short verses from John remind us of how it also happened with the Samaritan woman. And then in our reading from Acts especially, we see it. In Acts we see the fulfillment of it.

You know the story. Ten days after the risen Lord, Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, 50 days after Passover, the disciples were gathered together in Jerusalem. There is a mighty, rushing wind. Tongues of fire appear over the disciples. They speak in different languages so that all present can hear and even understand their Gospel proclamation. It’s God the Holy Spirit at work. This is what Jesus promised.

The people are astonished. But some of them are thinking, “what shall we do with a drunken disciple early in the morning?”

Then Peter stands up. And his river of living water flows out from his mouth. These men aren’t drunk! Even if they were the partying type, it’s too early in the day. This is fulfillment of prophecy. This is so that you can hear about the fulfillment of the oldest prophecy. And now, **everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.** We are all redeemed by Christ! Join us! Repent and be baptized and believe in this promise which He has fulfilled for you too!

Living water, poured into the apostles by the Spirit through the Word, and flowing out of their hearts as rivers of living water. Immediate results. It’s awesome.

And yet, the words of Moses stick with me this morning. **“Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!”**

This longing for the sharing of the Word from everyone is on my heart this morning because of something I saw a couple of days ago. I was looking at a discussion on a social media group for our community, reading the comments. I didn’t recognize any of the people commenting. To my recollection, I haven’t met any of them before. But knowing nothing about them except for the

words they spoke to others online, given this evidence, I can only conclude that none of these people were Christians.

In our modern world, there is so much competing information out there. There are so many different opinions. This is nothing new. It happens with so many topics. Opposing views will always come up. Different ideas about the way forward will compete with one another. Coronavirus is not immune to this reality. Opinions differ. Comfort and precaution levels vary from person to person. People are frustrated by other people. People are tired. People don't want a new normal or a temporary normal; they want the normal normal. That's understandable.

But the words I saw surrounding this topic were not lifegiving water. They weren't even innocent mundane words. These words were vile. And the sad thing is that some of these people might say they are Christians.

How is it going for you? What is flowing out of your heart? Maybe you are wise enough to avoid arguments on social media, but what hate-filled words do you utter in your frustration in other places? When you're watching the news? After speaking with someone who challenges your views? I know I'm guilty of it at times. I try to guard my tongue. But even those words that don't make it through my lips often still rest on my heart. And when the words do come out, even if we don't attack a person directly, our words which don't just bend, but break and smash the 8th commandment to pieces still are a kind of witness to our friends and family who do hear them. Is what you are letting flow out of your heart a river of living water? Or is it the bile of your Old Adam?

It's so easy for us to cut others down with our words, either the spoken ones or those in our minds and on our hearts. It's preferable to us because then we end up thinking of ourselves as those being in the right, and the others being in the wrong. We're right. We're smart. We have all the facts. Others are wrong. Others are stupid. Others don't know what they are talking about. Us vs. them. You do it. I do it. We all do it. Or at least we are tempted to. And we are tempted to think that when we do it, at least it isn't as bad as how the other guy does it.

And I'm reminded of the Apostle Peter's sermon which follows this Pentecost experience. We heard some of these words on the 3rd Sunday of Easter. And we'll hear more again next week. As Peter's river of living water continued to flow from his mouth...it was cutting at first.

"This Jesus...you crucified..." With these words Peter makes it clear that the blame falls everywhere. Even if they weren't the ones who drove the nails through the Lord, even if they weren't the ones to pierce His side, it was their rebellion, their lawlessness, their sin. That's what crucified Him. That's why He needed to go to Golgotha. That's why He needed to suffer and die there, for their sin, and for yours and mine. This Jesus...who we crucified, not with our own hammer and nails, but by our rebellion, by our slander, by our unkind words, by our venomous verbal vomit...and all the other kinds of offenses. There is no us vs. them. We are all guilty of sins against God, and sins against one another. There's no way around it; we crucified Him.

And then Peter continues. The river of living water continues flowing. *"This Jesus...God raised Him from the dead. We are witnesses. He did this for us. He did this for you too. There is no longer any me vs. you, no us vs. them. There is no longer us vs. heaven. Repent and believe. This promise is for you and for your whole household, for everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord."*

Today as we hear God's Word, His Spirit is still active. And He is inviting us once again to drink from the source, the living water of Jesus Christ, the lifegiving Gospel. That living water gives to us forgiveness, not just for breaking the 8th commandment, but for all of our sins. It gives us faith. It gives us everlasting life. But it's not just for us. Again, Jesus said, **"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"** The intended pattern is for this to be what flows out of us—words that speak life.

The Apostle Peter would later quote more scripture. In 1 Peter 3 he quotes Psalm 34 in saying, **“Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For ‘Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.’”**

In the coming weeks and months, there will be many disagreements about many things. As we move forward trying to get things back to normal, as we look to the future leadership of the nation, even simply as we have the mundane conversations with our friends and families. One of our tasks as Christians, is to speak life, to let our words be seasoned with salt, to let the living water that has been poured into us by the Holy Spirit through the Word also flow out of us. Putting our faith, hope, and trust in our crucified, risen, and ascended Lord, let us each endeavor to speak and to write in such a way that people read and hear our words and can't help but conclude “these are followers of Christ.” Amen.

O Lord, Jesus Christ, as we live out our lives as Christians, fill us with Your Spirit and let the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.