

## I Thirst

(Sermon by Rev. John Dieterly, March 17, 2010)

Isaiah 55:1-11 (TEV)      <sup>1</sup> The LORD says, “Come, everyone who is thirsty—here is water! Come, you that have no money—buy grain and eat! Come! Buy wine and milk—it will cost you nothing!

<sup>2</sup> Why spend money on what does not satisfy? Why spend your wages and still be hungry? Listen to me and do what I say, and you will enjoy the best food of all.

<sup>3</sup> “Listen now, my people, and come to me; come to me, and you will have life! I will make a lasting covenant with you and give you the blessings I promised to David.

<sup>4</sup> I made him a leader and commander of nations, and through him I showed them my power.

<sup>5</sup> Now you will summon foreign nations; at one time they did not know you, but now they will come running to join you! I, the LORD your God, the holy God of Israel, will make all this happen; I will give you honor and glory.”

<sup>6</sup> Turn to the LORD and pray to him, now that he is near.

<sup>7</sup> Let the wicked leave their way of life and change their way of thinking. Let them turn to the LORD, our God; he is merciful and quick to forgive.

<sup>8</sup> “My thoughts,” says the LORD, “are not like yours, and my ways are different from yours.

<sup>9</sup> As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways and thoughts above yours.

<sup>10</sup> “My word is like the snow and the rain that come down from the sky to water the earth. They make the crops grow and provide seed for planting and food to eat. So also will be the word that I speak—it will not fail to do what I plan for it; it will do everything I send it to do.

John 4:5-14      <sup>5</sup>So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup>Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. <sup>7</sup>A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” <sup>8</sup>(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.)

<sup>9</sup>The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)

<sup>10</sup>Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”

<sup>11</sup>The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? <sup>12</sup>Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?”

<sup>13</sup>Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup>but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

John 19:28-29      <sup>28</sup>After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), “I am thirsty.” <sup>29</sup>A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth.

“I am thirsty,” he cried, before he died. Three short words, so basic to our human condition, but so unusual, bearing in mind that these words are recorded in the Gospel of St. John, where it seems that in almost every chapter, Jesus is the one who had come to quench the thirst of others. “I am thirsty,” he cried before he died, and there was nothing to offer him but sour wine.

The story of Jesus’ ministry began where there was plenty of water, not just to drink, but so much of it there that John the Baptist could declare, “I BAPTIZE with water ...” So much water that it could be used for washing—the most wondrous and significant washing of all, the washing away of sins.

But now Jesus cries, “I am thirsty.”

“They have no wine,” his mother said at the wedding in Cana, revealing another kind of thirst, what we might call a thirst for pleasure, or celebrating a joyful event. They had water, a lot of water—six stone jars each holding twenty or thirty gallons. And that time Jesus used that abundance of water to make abundant wine. Not sour wine, but the very best wine, wine that should have been served first.

But now he cries, “I am thirsty.”

Nicodemus, who came to Jesus at night, had another kind of thirst, a thirst for knowledge—or maybe understanding, or comprehension, or answers to his questions. “How can one be born again to inherit the Kingdom of God?” And Jesus said, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit...” WATER and the Spirit, both freely offered in abundance by the Son of Man.

But now he cries out in agony, “I am thirsty.”

We just read about another time when he was thirsty and said to the Samaritan woman, “Give me a drink,” Was this some kind of foreshadowing to the words he spoke from the cross, “I am thirsty?” But even as he asked the Samaritan woman for a drink, he offered more—abundantly more: “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water, for the water that I give will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” Water of life, eternal life.

But now he cries, “I am thirsty.”

At the poolside of Bethesda there was one poor soul who longed for water, reaching for water that was always beyond his grasp, water that someone else always came to first, so he could not be healed when the waters stirred. “Sir,” he said to Jesus, “I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is troubled.” And there, beside the still or “untroubled waters” Jesus gave abundantly, and the man was healed.

And now Jesus cries, “I am thirsty.”

He led the multitude into a deserted place, the wilderness, and fed them there, just as God had fed his people in the wilderness of Sinai long ago and again, he gave them an abundance, more than they could eat, as all who were there were filled and 12 baskets of remnants were gathered. Do we see a pattern growing here? Are we not offered abundantly more than we need? As it is recorded in John, chapter 6, Jesus said, “I am the bread of life; those who come to me shall not hunger, and those who believe in me shall never thirst. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.”

And now, it is HE who cries, “I am thirsty.”

There was a time when he gave a lavish offer, a generous invitation: “If any thirst, let them come to me and drink.” And there was an equally lavish promise: “The one who believes in me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of that person’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” Water aplenty, offered in abundance, freely flowing.

But now that one cries out, “I am thirsty.”

And that night before his crucifixion, there in the upper room, when others were reluctant to assume the role of servant, Jesus himself rose from supper, laid aside his garments, girded himself with a towel, poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to declare them clean. Their feet and our feet were washed by him whose feet are now spiked to a cross.

And from that cross he cries, “I am thirsty.”

Between the upper room and the cross, while in the garden he posed the awesome question: “Shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?” That cup he drinks, to the bitter dregs, despite the offered sour wine, until only one more thing remains. When finally his body hangs there on that cross, broken for us all, a spear is used to pierce his side, and as St. John tells us earnestly and reverently, blood and water came out! The final, all-sufficient gift to the world from the one who gave his all.

“I thirst,” he cried before he died, so that we may never thirst again. And it is true, just as he said, “If any thirst, let them come to me and drink,” and receive life, real life, eternal life! Amen.