

“Rivers of Living Water” (John 7:37-39)
The Day of Pentecost, June 8th, 2014
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Introduction: How are we to relate to and understand the gift of the Holy Spirit?

1. At the beginning of the 20th century, just over 100 years ago there was a big Azusa Street revival that occurred right here in Southern California that commenced the modern-day Pentecostal Movement.
 - a. One had to receive “the gift of the Holy Spirit” to truly be born again.
 - b. Water-baptism would be insufficient for being truly baptized by the Holy Spirit. That is, being baptized with water had to be followed by being baptized with the Holy Spirit. This is two-baptism theology.
 - c. One may know if they’ve received this true outpouring of the Holy Spirit if one is given the gift or ability to “speak in tongues” (that is, a heavenly language produced by the Holy Spirit).
2. We don’t believe in or teach these things as Lutheran Christians.
 - a. For one thing the one baptism taught in Scripture at Ephesians 4:5 – and John 3 for that matter -- is both a ***water and Holy Spirit*** gift. When the water of Holy Baptism was poured out upon you at your baptism, you also received the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is why the Holy Scriptures refer to Holy Baptism as it does [please read with me when I get to the underlined portion]:

Titus 3:5: ***“he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.”***

- b. As for speaking in tongues, we believe that this gift is subservient to the preaching and proclamation of Word of Christ. This why St. Paul said that he would rather speak 5 clear words to instruct others than speak 10,000 words in a strange tongue that could not be received nor understood (1st Corinthians 14:19). The tongues are all of the various languages used to proclaim the Gospel. And the Lord has indeed gifted His Church to proclaim in many tongues, in many languages, but the goal is always that people receive the clear Good News of salvation in their simple and understandable language!

- c. These languages are given precisely for the most important work of the Holy Spirit: to make known the Word of Christ for the sake of saving faith being formed in the hearts of hearers. Thus Christ taught His first disciples in John 16 that the Holy Spirit's ministry would be to glorify Christ (vs 14) and take what is of Christ and declare it (vs 14 & 15).
- d. The whole point is that we are not to look for the working of the Holy Spirit through extraordinary signs and wonders, but through speaking and through words.

Part 1: But this is hard for us to accept, our sin makes us want more:

- 1. In our sin, God's way is insufficient, we want to be amazed.
- 2. After I arrived to a former parish, I asked the question from the leadership what they were expecting from my sermons each Sunday. One of the older members answered very enthusiastically: "I want you to blow my socks off!" Not only did he speak unrealistically, but he also spoke in a fleshly and in a spiritually enthusiastic way. To be fair, however, he was speaking for all Christians in accord with their sinful nature.
- 3. We live in a culture and world of instant gratification, we want to be wowed, impressed, entertained, we want to get a buzz from what is before us; and we use our smart-phones and i-pads to give us a constant flow of stimulation. We want big things from what is before us. Latest surveys reveal that the average American using a smart-phone is on it between 2 ½ to 3 hours a day. And all of the apps and all of the portals are designed to give you a good time; to stimulate.
- 4. My family will sometimes watch "America's Got Talent" and it is interesting to me that the acts are continually try to push the envelope so to speak. Sometimes you will have dance numbers or dare-devil acts that try to present something that has never been done before or never been seen before. They are plugging into our thirst for something that will delight us...we are all enthusiasts and we want God to touch us in the same way.
- 5. The colossal problem with this, however, is that when we go along with this kind of stimulation-mentality, then we don't know how to live in the Christian faith:
 - a. We start to judge our faith based on how we feel.
 - b. We start to rate our faith based on what we do.

- c. In other words, we replace the Gospel of Christ with the Law...our "faith" starts to depend on US and it no longer depends on Christ.
6. What does this reveal about us? It reveals that we are thirsty people. We are dry inside, very, very dry. In our sin we continue to do the things that we know we ought not do; in our sin we are -- as I said last Sunday -- *incurvatus in se* (curved in on ourselves) and sinful from "head to foot" as in our flesh we hate God and hate His Word. In our sin, we don't want to hear words, we want to be stimulated. And this is why there are so many religions...we are dying of thirst and we want to be stimulated...we want to feel something because we see in our sin death staring us in the face, eye-to-eye. We are desperately sick in sin and dying of thirst. We want to live, but we don't know how, but the problem is that we keep insisting that it is up to us to figure it out; it is up to us to save ourselves...someway, somehow...so we keep seeking the stimulation that our thirst demands.

Part 2: So God's solution is water.

1. That's right, God's solution is water.
2. And I will now say something really profound: only water is water.
3. If I drink too much coffee, it will mess with my voice and I need my voice because of my vocation as pastor and preacher! If I drink too much of the caffeine in that coffee or in soft-drinks that isn't good for my heart. If I drink too much of the sugar in other drinks that's not the greatest thing for me either. If I drink too much milk it starts to mess with my digestion. There is nothing like water! And when you're really, really thirsty...it's amazing -- and as much as we demand to be stimulated -- there is NOTHING like water when you are really thirsty...nothing is better than water!
4. So Jesus stood up and cried out on the last day of the feast in Jerusalem:

"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scriptures has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' Now this he said about the Spirit whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 7:37-39)

5. Jesus was saying that our solution for every need, esp. for knowing that God is for us, that we are loved, that we are forgiven, that we will have provision for eternity is Himself. And the way we get connected to our Lord is through the Holy Spirit, but

this is where we need to know exactly how this happens and not let our sinful enthusiasm, our need for stimulation to get in the way.

6. When our Lord spoke these words, He did so during a very important feast of the Jews called The Feast of Booths, also known as The Feast of Tabernacles, also known as The Feast of Ingathering. It's important to have a basic idea of what was going on here.
7. This feast commemorated the Exodus when God led His people from slavery – getting them out of Egypt – and into the wilderness and eventually to the Promised Land. The whole feast remembered how God cared for them while they were in the wilderness. It celebrated God always giving them what they needed. And boy did God provide. He provided in fact in some miraculous ways!
8. When they were in the dry wilderness, God gave them water!

Exodus 17:1-6: ***“All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ²Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, ‘Give us water to drink.’ And Moses said to them, ‘Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?’ ³But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled, against Moses and said, ‘Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?’ ⁴So Moses cried to the Lord, ‘What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.’ ⁵And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.’ And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.”***

9. So there was this feast that remembered how God always came through with life-giving water and so this feast came toward the end of the long dry season. “The harvest was complete and attention turned to the need for rain, which would bring prosperity in the coming year.” (Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 197)
10. As a result, water was the big theme. The priests would process out to the sacred pool of Siloam and fill a pitcher with water and then process through the city with the water...they would go to the Temple and specifically to the Water Gate which led to the sanctuary...the ram's horn would sound three times. And then upon

entering the temple courts, the priests made a solemn procession around the altar with the water (always with the water) saying in accord with Psalm 118:25: ***“Save us, we pray, O Lord! O Lord, we pray, give us success!”***

Then the priest with the pitcher of water climbed the ramp leading to the top of the altar. He held up the pitcher before the crowd and tipped the pitcher to one side. The water poured out into a small bowl with a spout that drained into the altar. “The outpouring of the water was a visible petition that as God provided water for the people in the past, he would send the rains again and grant prosperity to his people during the coming year.” (ibid, 197 and quoting from the *Mishnah*, Sukkah 4:9)

11. So the picture is of the thirsty people seeing water, water, water...water used in this festival to pray to God for more water. And on the final climatic day, the priest added a flourish by processing around the altar seven times. Water, water, water, water, water, water, water...that was the theme. Asking the Lord for water!

12. And this is where our Gospel breaks in...when this happened – when everyone had their thirst for water on their minds and knowing that it only comes from God – Jesus says, ***“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink...Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”! (John 7:37-38)***

Part 3: Jesus pointed the people to the Best Water of all!

1. This was not about confusing anybody.
2. The Jews knew that another way in which the word “water” was used was to describe what comes from great teachers and great wisdom!

Proverbs 13:14: ***“The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life...”***

Proverbs 18:4: ***“...the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook.”***

And to delight in God’s Word meant this description about true children of God:

Psalm 1:3: ***“He is like a tree planted by streams of water...”***

3. And why was this kind of water so important?

Zechariah 13:1: ***“On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.”***

4. The Holy Spirit/the Living Water would flow from those who receive the Word of Christ (the Only Wise God), and they would have their most important thirst met: your sins are

now forgiven. Your thirst for life to last and not be destroyed is met in Jesus; and the work of the Living Water the Holy Spirit is to give you the Word of Christ and His Holy Sacraments to bless you, to assure you with that which truly quenches your thirst: the forgiveness of sins, so that life for you is now eternal.

5. That is, the Living Water -- the Holy Spirit -- is not poured out to tickle your fancy, to stimulate you, to lead you to a false "second baptism," but His ministry is given to lead you to the One who gives all saving water and who sends the Holy Spirit, the One whose water in Himself is our life:

John 19:34: ***"But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water."***

1st John 5:6-8: ***"⁶This is he who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷For there are three that testify: ⁸the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree."***

Come thirsty sinners! Come and receive the blood of Christ who entered your thirst and shared your thirst and died for you; and as you receive His blood, you will receive the water He sends. Once again, you will be filled with the Holy Spirit received through the water of Holy Baptism. Water, water, water...all for you; assuring you that your thirst for life is being fulfilled once again as your sins are washed away through Christ whose blood covers them all; and once again assured that life for you is eternal through the One whose over-flowing life is now yours because He defeated death for you...how do you know? Because the Living Water, the Holy Spirit given to you leads you to and keeps you in the Word of Christ! It is this Word that is now in your hearts and upon your lips and that is the sign that the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon you!