

THE DAY JESUS SHOUTED

JOHN 7:37-29

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. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." 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.

I have officiated numerous weddings over the years, and have led couples in placing their wedding rings on the appropriate finger. But until recently, I didn't realize why the "ring finger" was the finger next to the pinky. Apparently it stems from a 2000 year-old Greek tradition. Physicians believed that a special "*vein of love*" ran directly from this finger to the heart. Thus, it was appropriate for the *love band* to slip around the *love finger*.

Soldiers greet each other with a salute, *but why?* The military tradition goes back to medieval times when soldiers were commonly clad in armor. When they met on the road and wanted to demonstrate peaceful intentions they'd lift their visor and expose their eyes. The position of the hand against the forehead outlived the use of the armor and became a formal greeting.

To this day it's traditional for barbers to have red and white striped poles in front of their shops – but have you wondered why? In times past, barbers doubled as surgeons. They not only cut hair, but performed operations. When they finished a surgery they used towels to soak up the excess blood, then hung them on a pole to dry. As the wind whipped through the air it wrapped the red towels around the white pole forming red and white stripes.

And have you ever wondered why it's traditional for coat manufacturers to sew buttons on the sleeves when they serve no practical purpose? The custom dates back to the French general, Napoleon. One day he was inspecting his troops when he noticed a soldier wiping his nose on his jacket sleeve. It so disgusted Napoleon, he ordered new coats for all his soldiers - this time with buttons on the sleeves to prevent any wiping.

Traditions are funny. We create them - imbed them in the culture - stress their importance - enforce people's compliance - then in a relatively short period of time we forget why the tradition was started in the first place. Such was the case with the Jews. They had thousands of traditions they stringently and meticulously performed. Jewish culture was steeped in ritual, yet like us, they often lost touch with their significance. Mechanical, obligatory ritualism became a Jewish trademark - especially during the holy days - the religious feast days.

The particular feast referred to in verse 37 was the Feast of Tabernacles, the most joyous of all the Jewish Feasts. It consisted of 8 days of celebration. In Leviticus 23, where God lays out the festive calendar, the Feast of Tabernacles was the only feast where the people were commanded to "**Rejoice before the LORD your God.**" God intended for it to be a happy time. Five days earlier they observed Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement. This was a day of affliction, fasting, and mourning over sin. God told Israel the Day of Atonement should be, "**A Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls.**" In contrast Tabernacles was to a time of joy and rejoicing.

During this heart-warming feast families were reunited. The streets of Jerusalem were full of laughter, and joyful music overflowed the Temple. In the Jewish prayer book the Feast of Tabernacles is referred to by the title, "**The Time of our Rejoicing.**" Tabernacles was a celebration - a jubilate'.

The two watchwords for the Feast of Tabernacles were *appreciation and expectation*. The feast looked *backwards* and *forwards* at the same time. On the one hand, it was a time of thanksgiving to God for His deliverance from Egypt and provision throughout their 40 years of wilderness wanderings.

The name "*tabernacles*" sprang from God's command to spend the feast in tabernacles or tents. The Hebrew name "*Sukkoth*" means "*booths.*" When the pilgrims arrived in Jerusalem for the feast they took palm branches, and built huts or booths. They decorated these huts with the fruits of the harvest. They hung clusters of grapes on the walls and from the ceiling. It was like a giant campout. The kids loved it. It brought people together. All week neighbors

lived out under the stars in their little thatched huts.

It was all a reminder of the nomadic life they lived as they wandered through the wilderness. God protected them from the elements and animals. He provided supernatural shoe leather. Their clothes refused to wear out. God also provided their daily bread. At night He sent manna. When Israel rose all they had to do was walk outside and collect that day's portion. There was one requirement in making the booth – you had to see the sky through the roof. God desired the Hebrews to gaze at the stars – behold and admire His handiwork. God wanted Israel to be drawn again to their Creator.

The Feast of Tabernacles reminded God's people of *God's past provisions*, but in addition, it also pointed them to *God's future promises*. Living out under the stars reminded the Hebrews that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. They were sojourners in route to their eternal home. The feast was scheduled at the end of the harvest - and looked to the end of the age when God would complete His great harvest of souls and establish His Kingdom on the earth. During the feast 70 bullocks were sacrificed on the altar. The priests said they represented the 70 nations that comprised the Gentile world and spoke of their inclusion in God's coming Kingdom.

The most important ritual associated with the Feast of Tabernacles took place each day in the Temple. A processional of priests made a journey... A parade marched from the courtyard of the Temple and out its gates... through the southern streets of Jerusalem... to the pool of Siloam... where they filled their golden vessels with water and then returned to the Temple... As the priests marched they played their instruments. Folks sang Isaiah 12:3, "**Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.**" When the procession of priests returned to the Temple they poured out the water on the altar of sacrifice - and sang **the Hallel psalms... Psalms 113-118.**

This ritual was so important to the Feast of Tabernacles, the whole feast also went by the name, "**House of Outpouring**" - a reference to this tradition. It's also interesting the gate use to enter and exit the Temple with the water was named after this ceremony. They called it the "**Watergate.**" The first priest through the watergate was named "**Levi Nixonstien...**" just kid'n. Ironically, in our culture the word "*watergate*" is synonymous with scandal and betrayal - but at the time of Jesus the word spoke of salvation and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on God's people. It was a reminder of God's promise to throw open His spiritual sluice gates and flood the land with grace!

The outpouring of the water - as with the entire Feast of Tabernacles - looked *both backwards and forwards*. It reminded the Hebrews of God's provision in the wilderness... When they were thirsty God told Moses to strike the rock and out poured water. God was faithful to slake their physical thirst. But it also pointed to God's promise to one day send His Spirit to *indwell and immerse and influence* all mankind - both Jew and Gentile alike. In Joel 2:28, God had promised Israel, "**I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh**". When the priest at the head of the parade arrived back at the altar in the Temple, and tipped his vessel, and water began to roll over the lip of the jar – the spilling of that water was suppose to heighten the people's expectations that what the priest was doing *symbolically*, God would do *spiritually*. God would one day *pour out His Spirit* from the *golden jar of His grace*.

Each of the 7 days during the Feast of Tabernacles, the ceremony of outpouring in the Temple was performed. The ritual was called the "**Hosana.**" But on the 8th day, the last day of the feast, the ceremony was embellished and given a grander name... "**Hosana Rabah,**" or the "**Great Hosana.**"

Every four years when the Olympics are held the hottest tickets are always for the closing ceremonies - the grand finale! Ticket buyers know the Olympic organizers always save the best for last... and everyone wants to be there! The same was true in the Temple. It was packed with people that day. It was as John puts it, "**The last day, that great day of the feast**". The Jews had gathered for the closing ceremonies. The booths had been taken down and the people had brought the dried out branches with them to the Temple. The priests had made their daily rounds with their golden pitchers... from the Temple through the Watergate... to the Pool of Siloam and back again. But this time they filled their vessels twice as full. When they reentered the Temple they approached the altar with their pitchers sloshing over the brim.

In these closing ceremonies rather than simply pour the water on the altar as they had done the seven previous days they had a different procedure... This time they marched around the altar seven times - a reminder of their victory at Jericho. Their desert wanderings had ended when they marched seven times around the city of Jericho - blew their trumpets in obedience to the Lord - and miraculously the walls of the city had come tumblin' down.

This grand finale' – this 7-fold circle around the altar was a wonderful way to end the feast and send the people home. It reminded them that God is able to give them victory over all their enemies - past, present, and future. When the priest finished his 7th lap, and emptied his pitcher the people erupted in praise. They sang Hosanna – chanted their psalms - and shook their branches toward the altar. *It sounded like thunder sticks at a ball game.* It fulfilled the command to praise God, "with heart and mouth *and hands.*"

Once the crowd had died down there was a silence... The feast of Tabernacles wasn't quite over. It concluded with several animal sacrifices that needed a moment of preparation between the ceremony and the offerings. So here's the scene... the altar is soaked - the floor of the Temple covered with dried leaves - the people are catching their breath as the priests prepare the sacrifice - *when suddenly, from the back of the Temple a voice shouts out!* The phrase John uses, "cried out" - when translated literally means - "*the bellow of a raven.*" It was like a shrill yell, a harsh scream, a shriek. Donald Gee refers to this moment as "**The Day Jesus Shouted.**"

Jesus didn't shout often. He usually spoke calmly and gently, but on this day He cried out. He broke up the closing ceremonies with a clarion call... "**If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.**" The crowd was stunned - frozen in their tracks... I'm sure priests dropped their shovels and spilt hot coals on the floor. The sacrifice tumbled off the altar and jars were kicked over. You've never seen so many jaws dragging the floor in one place... Jesus had stunned the crowd with His impeccable timing and shocked them with the boldness of His offer...

The Jews, and priests, and people alike, had all been muddling through a ritual. They had tipped their hat to tradition. They'd enjoyed the feast as a family time, a social event with friends. This was a traditional celebration of Judaism – no one had come to this feast expecting anything revolutionary... NAAll week they'd been immersed in symbolism. They'd been shining their barber poles - saluting each other – playing with their wedding rings - sewing buttons on their sleeves... But most, if not all, of the people had given little thought to what it all meant – to what it pointed... For astute Jews their traditions may've caused some nostalgia - or a faint hope for the future. But I'm certain not a single person that day had seriously considered that these rituals would have a bearing on their present reality...

In essence Jesus was saying to them, "*Wake up! I want to turn your rituals into realities - your symbols into substance You've poured out water in this Temple, but I want to pour out my Holy Spirit in the Temple of your heart!*" When we dissect it, the cry Jesus uttered actually contained four calls... He says **admit** you're thirsty... **Submit** your will to Me... I'll **transmit** the Holy Spirit... And you'll **emit** a river of living water. This was Jesus' cry on that last, great day of the feast, and this is His promise to you and me today!

Perhaps you come to church every Sunday. It's fun - it's good fellowship - it's a social event - even a family time. It's a vital part of your weekly routine... But that just it – it's a routine. You've made coming to church a tradition – a barber pole - a salute to God – it's the wedding ring in your relationship with Jesus. It's about as relevant to you as buttons on the sleeve of a jacket. You come to church, but are you really expecting an encounter with God?

I hope you to listen today. The raven call of Christ caws again from the back of *this* room, "**If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.**" Jesus wants to turn our *ritual* into *reality* - a *tradition* into a *condition!*

Jesus says, "**If anyone thirsts**". Do you long for more? Do you believe there's more to walking with God than what you've experienced to this point? Is there a deep down discontent in your heart - a persistent, pounding that won't let you rest or be at peace? Everyone thirsts, but some people won't admit they thirst for God.

In his classic book, "Mere Christianity," CS Lewis writes about our deepest hungers. "**Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water.**" If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably, earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the *real thing.*" Millions of Americans suck on a pacifier – sex, or drugs, or fame, or success - and never realize it's God they desire.

Jesus wants us to admit that we're thirsty for Him! And He's not just crying out to unbelievers. The call of Christ was for everyone that day under the sound of His voice - His disciples included. I don't care how far you grow or mature spiritually - or how deeply you sink your roots into God - Jesus wants you to admit that you thirst for more?

If you're a transplant from the north or west we've got a southern expression. It's used to describe a strong thirst. "I've got the cotton mouth". Imagine asking for water to wet your lips, moisten your tongue, and sooth your throat - yet instead, someone sticks a ball of cotton into your mouth. Does your soul feel like its suffering from *the cotton mouth*? It's dry, and it's parched, and it's in need of a long, deep drink of something wet and refreshing. Jesus says to us today, "Will you admit you're thirsty for Me?"

Then Jesus says, "Come to me and drink". The skeleton of a woman was found in the hot sands of the Mojave Desert. A few feet away was a note that she'd scribbled just before she died. It read, "I'm exhausted and must have water! I don't believe I can last much longer!" Obviously, she didn't. She died of dehydration and sun exposure... but how tragic that she died just two miles from an oasis called, "Surprise Springs" - where cool, fresh subterranean water bubbles up in abundance. Thousands of people that day in Jerusalem were dying of thirst - what they didn't know was that a spring of living water was right there in their midst.

In John 4, Jesus met a woman in by Jacob's well in Samaria. He told her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again..." Well water can slake a thirst - but it can't fulfill our spirit. Just as you can't fit a square peg in a round hole - you can never fulfill a spiritual need with a material object. Buy your boats and cars and houses and furniture... Eat the world's finest foods... Drink its most expensive wines... Gorge yourself on the ultimate in entertainment... Climb to the highest rungs of power and success... Dance in the limelight of stardom... *But you'll thirst again - you can count on it!*

Jesus tells the Samaritan woman, "But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." Living water has a paradoxical property - it slakes your thirst fully and completely; yet simultaneously it causes you to thirst for more of the same! With God you are *full* and *thirsty* at the same time. All your needs are met, yet you want more of Him! Jesus is saying to us, "If you want to drink of living water... come and submit your life to Me."

In Jeremiah 2:13 God describes the two-fold sin of Israel, "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns - broken cisterns that can hold no water." They'd forsaken the fountain, an unbroken flow of refreshment - and looked instead to cracked, leaky reservoirs as their source of refreshment. Jesus offers us a drink, but to receive it we must leave behind the broken cisterns - the world's attractions - and submit our lives completely to Him.

I heard of an ancient tribe of hunters in Africa who bagged elephants for food. But when they made a successful kill - rather than drag the heavy elephant back to camp they simply moved their camp to the elephant. They built their camp around their source of food. This is what the desert nomads of Israel do even today. They camp around a well of water until it dries up, then they move on to a new water supply.

And this illustrates the call of Jesus to you and me... You can drink *freely* of the water, but the fountain doesn't flow to you - you come to the fountain. You uproot the old habits - you forsake familiar surroundings - you rebuild your life around the fountainhead - Jesus!

John adds the footnote in 7:39 that Jesus made these promises before He was glorified... Before He received the authority to pour out living water He had to go to the cross to earn the right. Once He ascended to heaven and entered His glory; then He was given the prerogative to give gifts to men. Just as an angel was placed in the Garden of Eden to guard access to the tree of life, likewise Jesus has been placed in charge of the living water. In Matthew 3:11 John the Baptist said of Jesus... "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." Admit your thirsty, then come to Jesus and submit your life to Him...

And then Jesus says to "drink". This is how God transmits the Holy Spirit- with a drink - with a spiritual slurp. God wants you to take a big gulp!

The ritual performed on the Feast of Tabernacles looked back to God's provision in the wilderness. Twice the Hebrews ran out of water and came crying to Moses for help. Twice God met their need in a miraculous way... The first time God led Moses to a rock and told him to strike it with his rod. When he did water gushed out! The second time the people bring their need to Moses, God tells him, not to strike the rock, but to simply speak to the rock.

In 1 Corinthians 10:4 Paul tells us that this had prophetic implications. The rock was a type of Jesus who God struck on the cross. He was crucified in our place. By His stripes He brings healing to our lives. But Jesus doesn't need to be struck twice. His work on the cross was sufficient for all sin – now, all we have to do is speak to the rock and the Holy Spirit releases a river of spiritual refreshment that flows into our lives...

Jesus uses the word **"drink"** to describe what's required of us to receive the power, and joy, and refreshment of the Holy Spirit - and in doing so, this one word, **"drink"**, clears up mounds and mounds of potential confusion. Some people have mistakenly thought that before they can be filled with the Spirit they have to make a great sacrifice... or do a worthy deed... or completely empty themselves of every speck of selfish interest... Other people think they have to fall into a spiritual trance... or be prayed over by a charismatic evangelist... But Jesus gives us just one task, **"drink!"** Drinking is the most natural, simple, easily emulated action possible. You don't give a baby drinking lessons. It's the one thing they do instinctively. Just stick the nipple into a baby's mouth, and the ability to drink comes naturally.

Likewise, if you want the Holy Spirit to rise up within you... then submit to Jesus, and just drink! In the words of the old Sprite commercial - **"obey your thirst?"** Speak to the rock of Christ, then open up your heart, tip back the promise of God, and take a gulp of His grace - a slurp of the Holy Spirit. To have faith is the same as to take a drink... It's a natural response... I use to eat lunch at a BBQ joint that served sweet tea in an extra-large cups. It was more like a barrel. But this cup allowed me to take my last refill with me. I could bring it back to work, and sip on it all afternoon. It was great. This is God's desire for us when it comes to His Spirit. Throughout the day when you get thirsty, just tip back His promise, and drink in the refreshment.

Jesus says if we do... **"Out of (our) heart will flow rivers of living water."** Literally, *"rapids of white water"* - rushing, cooling, satisfying I refreshment. Too many Christians drink from stagnant water – from pools of ritual and puddles of ceremony. Rather than the clean, fresh water of God's Spirit. Their Christian experience is like an algae covered pond - a breeding ground for weeds and mosquitoes. Doubts, fears, sins fester – because they always take in, but never give out. There's no movement... just deadness. But when you drink of living water a stream arises from the dry dirt of your heart. It bubbles and percolates and builds until it becomes a raging river.

In Ezekiel 47 we're told in the Kingdom Age a spring of water will bubble up next to the altar in Jerusalem, and the water will begin to flow southward. In Ezekiel's vision, he saw about a third of mile downstream that the river was ankle deep... By the time the water had flowed two-thirds of a mile it was waist deep... And about a mile downstream it was over his head... This is a picture of what God wants to do in our lives... He starts you out splashing in His forgiveness and grace. Before long you're wading waist-deep in joy and peace. Finally, you're in over your head – you're drowning in sea of love and engulfed in His supernatural power.

When I read the call of Jesus **"on the last day, that great day of the feast"** I think of a whitewater excursion. If you've never been, you should go. What a rush to feel the power of a raging river flow under you. Thousands of gallons of water moving, twisting, bubbling up - and when you fall in the power overtakes you - you're completely enveloped in a massive sea of surf. This is what God wants to do with us – He wants to unleash His power in our lives! He wants us caught up in more of Him than we can handle.

As kids in SS, we use to sing the song, **"deep and wide, deep and wide, there's a fountain flowing deep and wide."** God wants to make this a reality in our lives today. He wants our experience of Him to be deep and wide! I heard a man once say that the greatest experience a person can have is to be a container. We have been made to hold - or contain - the life of God. This is an incredible calling, but I don't believe it's the greatest experience we can have... For God has not just called us to be a container, He's called us to be a conduit - not a stagnant pool, but a channel of blessing to others.

God wants to begin a river of blessing from beside the altar of your heart. Then watch it deepen and widen as it flows into the desert of this world. He wants you to be a conduit through which His grace and mercy flow to others.

Once, a little girl asked her mom, "Mommy is God as big as the universe?" The mom said, "*He sure is.*" She asked, "And is he living in our hearts?" She replied, "*Yes honey, when we become Christians He comes to live in our hearts.*" The mother could see the wheels turning in her daughter's head. Finally, the little girl concluded, "Well, if God is that big - yet He lives inside of us - then He should be showing through." And indeed He should be!

God wants to create a river in you this morning that will flow out to others...

But it's up to you to **admit** your thirst...

Submit your life to Jesus...

Take a drink - have faith - and He'll **transmit** His Spirit's power...

Then you'll **emit** a life-giving stream that will flow *from* your life...

Jesus comes to you by the Watergate. Open your heart to Him today!