

## Rivers of Living Water - Sunday May 27<sup>th</sup> 2012

***<sup>37</sup> Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. <sup>38</sup> He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" <sup>39</sup> But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.***

***John 7:37-39***

Beloved in the Lord,

Do you sometimes lack wisdom? Do you sometimes think to yourself: "If only I had more faith?" Do you feel lonely at times? Do you experience times when you don't know who to turn to for advice? Do you find that at times you lack courage and strength?

The invitation today from Jesus is to come to Him in faith and to draw from the well of Living Water. In our text today, Jesus compares The Holy Spirit to rivers of living water. These rivers never run dry because the source of the water is God Himself.

The Holy Spirit is the third person in the Trinity. He comes forth from the Father and the Son. He is the *doing* force. He fulfils the will of the Father in Jesus name. Jesus taught many things about the Holy Spirit. Here is a sample:

***"<sup>7</sup> But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. <sup>8</sup> And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; <sup>9</sup> concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; <sup>10</sup> and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; <sup>11</sup> and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.***

***<sup>12</sup> "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup> But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. <sup>14</sup> He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. <sup>15</sup> All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you." John 16:7-15***

What I would like to emphasise from this teaching is that The Holy Spirit always acts in such a way as to honour and glorify Jesus. Jesus said that The Holy Spirit would not speak on His own initiative, but would speak whatever He hears from the Father and from Jesus. The Holy Spirit does not do His own thing, but fulfils the will of The Father in Jesus name. In simplistic terms we could say that He (The Holy Spirit) is a servant of The Father and The Son.

When Jesus was in the world, as a human being, He strived to fulfil the Father's will. It was The Holy Spirit who empowered Jesus to live a perfect life of obedience to The Father. It was The Holy Spirit who gave Him wisdom and understanding and everything else that He needed to do God's work.

Jesus relied on the Holy Spirit. That means that we too must rely on The Holy Spirit, in order to live as God has ordained. If we are to honour and glorify God in our lives we need to rely on The Holy Spirit.

Operating in our own strength and knowledge and wisdom we will not get far, but will fail miserably. We will soon discover the truth of Paul's words to the Romans:

***<sup>18</sup> For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. <sup>19</sup> For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want." Rom.7:18-19***

Operating in our own power we know what we should do, but we cannot do it. We often do the opposite of what we should do.

Paul continues:

***But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.***

***<sup>21</sup> I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. <sup>22</sup> For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, <sup>23</sup> but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. <sup>24</sup> Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! "***  
***Rom.7:20-25***

Paul comes to the right conclusion that he cannot defeat sin and do good on his own accord. This is an important conclusion to draw, this is an important place for each of us to reach, because only when we realise this, will we turn and be drawn to the cross. At the cross of Calvary our old ego is killed and we are clothed with Christ Jesus. But that is not all. We need to also understand that we need His power all the time, continually.

We need to draw from the wells of living water every single day. We need the Holy Spirit! As Jesus left the world, on Ascension Day, He left a specific instruction for His disciples to wait for The Holy Spirit to come. Then He said: ***"but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*** Acts 1:8

This promise was fulfilled ten days later, when on the Day of Pentecost they were baptised in The Holy Spirit.

From that day forward, the disciples no longer operated in their own strength and wisdom. They relied upon the Holy Spirit in all things. God was able to use them mightily, because they relied upon Him in faith.

A strong example is Peter. Before Pentecost, Peter was passionate but powerless. He believed and genuinely wanted to serve Jesus. He even promised to die with Him if necessary. But when the time of testing came on Maundy Thursday, Peter denied that he even knew Jesus. Oh, but after Pentecost, we meet a new enlivened and emboldened Peter. He gets up to preach and three thousand people are baptised into the faith. The Church was born.

We read further in the book of Acts that Peter became a leader in the new Church, and many special miracles were done in Jesus name, through Peter, and finally he died a martyr for the faith.

The Holy Spirit operated through Peter and the other disciples. He was the power, He gave them the words to speak, and He performed mighty miracles in Jesus name.

My friends absolutely nothing has changed. As it was then, so now, we need The Holy Spirit in order to live a successful Christian life.

I return to our foundation text: ***“ If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. <sup>38</sup> He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” <sup>39</sup> But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.***

The first vital point is that we must acknowledge our thirst. We need to come to the understanding that without Him we cannot function. We need His power.

The next stage is to come to Him and receive. He freely gives. Our Church founder Dr Martin Luther always emphasised that The Holy Spirit works in, with, and under God’s Word. This tells us how we come to the rivers of living water. We read and receive God’s Word. We give God’s Word priority in our life.

We must also come to God with an empty vessel so that He can fill it. This is purely logical. For example: You have a source of good, clean, natural spring water and I want to fill my water bottle with it. I must give you an empty bottle to fill. If I give you an already full bottle there will be nowhere for your water to go. My bottle must be empty in order for you to fill it.

In order for us to be filled with The Holy Spirit, to have these rivers of living water, we must present to God an empty vessel. This means that we crucify our old self at the cross. We empty ourselves of our opinions, desires, and will. We come empty, devoid of our ego and will. When we come to the Lord empty and pray please fill me with Your Holy Spirit, He will.

Paul puts it like this in Romans 12:1-2

***“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”***

To offer yourself to God means total submission to Him. You let go of the steering wheel of your life and hand control over to Him. Not my will – but Yours be done. Not the world’s wisdom, but Your Holy and precious Word. Not man made traditions and philosophies and religions, but worship in freedom, in Spirit and in Truth.

May we have the sense to bow before Him, empty and humble, that He may fill us with His Spirit.

***Amen.***

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.