

Sunday 17 March 2024

Milford Baptist Church

Words of Life from the Tree of Death

Jesus' Last Words from the Cross

John 19:28-30 – The Word of Distress

One thing you may or may not know about me is that I really enjoy running.

I love getting out, hitting the pavement, working up a sweat.

I run for my physical and mental health, as well as the enjoyment I get from it.

But it's hard work. Any exercise is, right?

Once I finish my run and get home, I look forward to taking my shoes off and I have the practice of going to sit on a chair in our back yard, taking out the 2 litre bottle of water, and I drink as much as I can.

My throat is parched. I'm a little dehydrated. My body needs some sustenance. Because I'm thirsty.

Today I want to talk to you about thirst. Not just physical thirst like this, but our thirst for the things we yearn for and desire in our lives. Some of which are good, and some not so good for us.

In our passage today we see that Jesus was physically thirsty. He has been through a lot. Here he is being crucified, near the end of his life, and every time he speaks its total agony for him as he pushes his lungs up just to get words out.

And here we again see His suffering on the Cross. "I am thirsty."

I'm struggling. My body is weary. My strength is failing me. I am at the end.

The things that Jesus went through for us.

We're in week five of our series, 'Words of Life from the Tree of Death.'

Each Sunday leading up to Easter we've been focusing on seven sayings, seven mini-sermons that Jesus made from the Cross as He was being crucified.

We've looked at the **Word of Forgiveness**, where Jesus pleaded with His Heavenly Father, "Forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.

We've looked at the **Word of Salvation**, where Jesus spoke to one of the thieves beside him, who repented and asked Jesus to remember Him when He came into His Kingdom. Jesus looked at him and responded, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

We've looked at the **Word of Relationship**, where Jesus brought His mother Mary and beloved disciple John together. "Dear woman, here is your son, here is your mother."

And we've looked at the **Word of Humanity**, as Jesus cried out "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

Today we look at the **Word of Distress** – Jesus near the end declares, "I am thirsty."

The roadmap for today is that I want to spend the bulk of our time looking at what this reveals about Jesus in this moment and how it fulfilled Scripture, then look at Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman who is also thirsty for the water of life, before finishing with a time of response for desires and longings in our lives where we too are thirsty for Jesus and the water of life.

Before we read the passage, let's pray.

John 19:28–29

Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.

I am thirsty. Or in other translations, Jesus says, "I thirst."

Christ's physical pain and discomfort on the Cross is highlighted right here.

He is out of breath. Tired. Distressed.

He is thirsty. He is dying.

His death is not preventable. He knows it.

He is on the Cross, at the point of death, and this is the only time from the Cross that he cries out for his physical needs.

I am thirsty.

Let those words stay and wash over you for a moment.

This is God in flesh, The Eternal begotten son, the one who has enjoyed deep close intimate relationship and fellowship with the Father and The Spirit.

The one who became human.

The one who lived a perfect life.

The one who never sinned or put a foot wrong.

The one who willingly went to the Cross.

The one who was beaten, lacerated and endured such turmoil and anguish.

Here He is on the Cross, naked for all to see, shamed and mocked.

And he cries out, "I am thirsty."

I don't know about you, but this really gets me. It shows His genuine humanity. And it reminds me of Jesus' other emotions He truly showed while on earth.

For instance, remember when Mary talked to him about her brother Lazarus' death and she said, He would not have died if you had been here.

Do you remember Jesus' response?

The shortest verse in the entire Bible, John 11:35, *Jesus wept.*

There is something that happens inside of us when we see Jesus experiencing and expressing His emotions. Because we get it. We understand it. We live it.

We weep over death and the loss of our loved ones.

We go through physical discomfort and suffering like Jesus – not to the same extent, but I bet all of us here could say at one point in our lives we have suffered.

We have been mistreated.

We have been abused.

We have been let down.

We have thirsted for justice.

Jesus looks at the crowd of people around him, closes his eyes, and says, "I am thirsty."

It's interesting to note that earlier while they were beating Him, the Roman soldiers tried forcefully to get Jesus to drink some wine.

Author and pastor Max Lucado describes this moment:

Jesus. Lips cracked and mouth of cotton. Throat so dry he couldn't swallow, and voice so hoarse he could scarcely speak. He is thirsty... Before the nail was pounded, a drink was offered. Mark says the wine was mixed with myrrh. Matthew described it as wine mixed with gall. Both myrrh and gall contain sedative properties that numb the senses. But Jesus refused them. He refused to be stupefied by drugs, opting instead to feel the full force of his suffering. (*Grace for the Moment*, 113)

As hard as they tried to get Jesus to drink earlier, He refused.

He didn't want to take anything that would lessen the suffering He was experiencing and about to endure. He wanted to remain conscious and in control of His emotions.

Stop and think about that for a while.

Jesus could have drunk the wine and that would have numbed his senses, perhaps made his suffering a little easier, or at least dulled what was happening for him.

But he didn't. He endured it all without any drugs, medication or sedatives.

He embraced the suffering willingly.

And now, on the Cross, He cries out, "I am thirsty."

Now is the time for Him to drink. Why is that?

Let's look at verse 28 a bit more in-depth.

It says this: *Knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty."*

Knowing that all was now completed.

Jesus knew that His work on earth was coming to its end. His death on the Cross was imminent. He had set out to fulfil His Father's will, to drink from the cup of suffering prepared for him before the foundation of the earth, and He was giving His life for the sake of all who would believe in Him and follow Him.

It was almost at its completion. The suffering would soon be over.

Knowing that all was now completed and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

What is the Scripture referred to here?

Let me try answer this.

Christ was the Lamb of God; we are told earlier in John's gospel. The perfect lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Christ came to fulfil the entire Law and carry out all prophetic Scriptures in every detail.

If even one part of the Law was left unfulfilled, Christ's perfect life and substitutional death could have been questioned.

In his life and death, He fulfilled all the legal requirements that were listed in the Mosaic Law. The law given to Moses and the Israelite people.

This was in regard to the Passover Lamb, the sin offering, His high priestly office, and His birth details. Every one of them was filled and fulfilled to perfection in the person and mission of Jesus.

So why now, "I am thirsty," to fulfil the Scripture?

Come with me to Psalm 69 verse 21:

They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.

This is part of a Messianic psalm that is fulfilled in Jesus at this particular moment.

He remained fully conscious as He drained the Father's cup of bitterness, the agony of the Cross. After crying out "I am thirsty," He receives a sip of vinegar for His thirst so that Scripture might be fulfilled in all details of His life and every facet of His death.

It's amazing to me that every detail of His life and death was important and significant in some way to his mission and the fulfilment of all Scripture.

Jesus fulfilled every single one of the Messianic Scriptures and He knew his work was now completed.

"I am thirsty."

He was thirsting on the Cross.

As we look at this picture of Jesus thirsting on the Cross, let's consider how other people thirsted during this time.

Judas thirsted for money. He betrayed Jesus.

Herod thirsted for power. He wanted Jesus to perform for Him.

Pilate thirsted for absolution. He wiped his hands clean of Jesus' death.

The mob thirsted for blood. They cried out, Crucify Him!

The soldiers thirsted for sport and mockery. They beat Jesus and put a robe on his body and a crown of thorns on his head.

The religious leaders thirsted for vengeance. They wanted to see Jesus suffer and die.

All of these people thirsted for something that led to Jesus being crucified.

Their sin put Him on the Cross. Their deep, dark desires and longings led to the crucifixion of Jesus.

Let's stop for a moment and ask ourselves the question, what do we thirst for? What are the deep needs in our hearts, so secret that we keep them to ourselves?

What are the painful things inside of us that often create shame, hurt or despair?

What are the longings we often fail to put into words?

Do we desire answers, help, comfort, security, safety, control, happiness, pleasure, an easy life?

Let me get more personal,

What is it that you are thirsting after in life?

And what are you using to quench or satisfy that thirst?

We all have things in our lives that we turn to, in order to quench or try satisfy those desires. I wonder what it is for you.

For me, it's one I mentioned at the start. Running or physical exercise. When I feel out of control, overwhelmed, stressed or a bit down, I turn to this to help quench those deep desires.

I can also turn to food to quench those desires. Maybe you're like me. Food can be a bit of an easy way to try satisfy longings and desires. Comfort eating is a real thing.

I wish I could say I always turned to Jesus, but this is not always the case. I'm getting better at it, I'm growing at him being the person and thing I turn to first, but I'm still a work in process.

And yet as most of us know, Jesus is the only one that can quench all our desires, the only one in whom we can find full and complete fulfilment in.

Jesus said these words at a religious festival, *"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."* (John 7:37-38)

Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit here. His work was not complete and the Holy Spirit had not been given yet. But the day was coming when God would pour His Spirit out on His people.

And we get to experience that today. The streams of living water that Jesus refers to here, is the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit within us.

All we need to do is receive.

Jesus will fill us. Jesus will quench our thirst. Jesus will meet our greatest desires and longings.

We see this in Scripture. Let's look at John chapter 4 and Jesus' encounter with the Woman at the well.

This is an instance in His life where He personally and powerfully met with the Samaritan woman. She had a thirst that she could not quench or satisfy, despite how hard she tried.

It's interesting that the story starts off with Jesus tired and thirsty. His disciples have gone into the town to buy food. It was the middle of the day. The hottest part of it and Jesus sits down at a well.

Enter the Samaritan woman. Because she's here at the hottest part of the day and by herself, this tells us that she is marginalised, trying to avoid seeing people, and most likely living in shame.

Jesus says to her, "Will you give me a drink?"

This must have shocked her a little, because here was a Jewish man addressing her, and that just didn't happen back then.

She responds, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman, how can you ask me for a drink?"

This is the opening for Jesus to go deeper. He says to her:

“If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

This must have started to capture her interest, and the conversation continues for a bit, with Jesus going deeper and in verse thirteen telling her:

“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

The woman desires this water. She is longing for this water and she tells Jesus.

He responds by asking her to bring her husband.

She says, I don't have a husband.

He says, “You're right, you have had five husbands and the man you have now is not your husband.”

She says, you must be a prophet and talks about the place to worship God.

Jesus responds that a time is coming when the place of worship is not as important as the heart of worship. People must worship God in spirit and in truth.

She says, “I know the Messiah is coming and He will explain everything to us.”

Jesus declares, “I am He.”

And right at this time the disciples arrive and wonder what they have just missed.

This Samaritan woman is thirsty. Not just for physical water. But for spiritual nourishment. She wants to be close to God. She is waiting for the Messiah. She didn't realise that she was speaking directly to Him.

Jesus knew her thirst, her desire, and he met her where she was at. Broken, shunned by society, a sinner with five ex-husbands and living with a man she is not wed to now.

Jesus met her desire for spiritual depth and connection.

She was thirsty to know God. And be known by Him.

Friends, as we come to land this morning and have a time of response, let me ask this of all of us:

Are we thirsty to know God in our lives and be known by Him?

If we were to have a conversation with Jesus about the spiritual depth and connection we long for, would we come to the same conclusion as this woman?

She was transformed. She left her water jar (her old life) behind, went to tell everyone about the hope she had found, and lived free and forgiven. Her thirst for longing was completely satisfied.

She was looking for physical water, but Jesus offered her living water.

Water sustains an earthly life – we need it to live; but Jesus offers us life forever.

A lot of people desire the fountain of youth, but we have something so much better in Jesus, we have the fountain of eternal life.

We can come to Jesus in our lives and find a satisfaction for our thirst and desires just like this Samaritan woman.

Let's take some time to pause, consider Jesus' words and ourselves in the stories today.

Can I ask everyone to close their eyes and focus on what God is saying to you.

I believe He is here and He wants to meet with each of us.

When Jesus is on the Cross crying out in distress, I am thirsty, let's ask what are we thirsty for in our lives?

What are the longings that we have?

What are the pains or disappointments that we are carrying?

What are the things in our lives that cause us distress?

And when Jesus met the Samaritan woman exactly where she was at in her life, where do we need Jesus to meet us?

What is the lack in our life that only He can meet?

Where are our lives parched and we need the water of life to wash over us?

What words and promises do we need Jesus to speak and fulfil in our lives?

In the very last book of the Bible, and one of the very last verses, this is what Jesus says to you:

Whoever is thirsty, let him or her come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Friends, we need to come back to Jesus again and again in our lives.

We get thirsty for different things. Some good and some not so good.

We need Jesus, as the water of life, the source of eternal life, to fulfil and satisfy our deepest longings and desires.

In ways that only He can.

In this posture of openness and humility before Him, let's spend some time asking Him for these things now and then I'll close in prayer.