

Roland Burrows: 1 November 2020

(Sermon Summary)

Christ, the living water: John 7: 37-39

In this passage, Jesus is in the temple on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. He stands and cries out His invitation: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink".

The Jews celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles to keep alive the memory of their deliverance from Egypt. On the last day, they remembered how the Lord provided water in the desert when Moses struck the rock.

The apostle Paul speaks of the rock in 1 Cor.10:4, where he says that the rock followed them. Some rabbis believed that the physical rock actually followed them; Calvin thought that the stream of water from the rock flowed alongside them throughout their journey, while other commentators interpret this to mean that God always provided enough water for them to drink. What is more important, however, is that Christ was with them. They drank from the spiritual rock, Christ. He can meet both physical and spiritual needs and is with us every step of the way.

The priests would take a golden pitcher to the Pool of Siloam, fill it with water and carry it through the streets of Jerusalem to the temple, reciting Isaiah 12:3, "With joy you shall draw water from the wells of salvation". The Old Testament has many other references to living water, such as Joel 3:19, "a fountain from the house of God"; Ezekiel 47 (where a river flows from the house of God, eventually bringing life to the Dead Sea); Isaiah 55; Psalm 36:9 "with you is the fountain of life" and Zechariah 13, " a fountain opened to the house of David". As the people watched the priests' ceremony, they would have known that this was only the dimmest shadow of what is described by the prophets.

The language of living water in the Old Testament helps us to grasp the wonder of salvation. The barren human soul begins to bear wonderful fruit, experiencing the vitality, joy and gladness that come from Christ.

Jesus **stood**, unlike the rabbis who would sit. He is far more than a teacher. He **cried out** in a manner that was startling and electrifying. He declared Himself to be the very source of the water of life, thus claiming to be God. Jesus, the living water, is the answer to our soul's deepest need. Sadly, many ignore Christ's offer of living water - like the man with the muckrake in Pilgrim's Progress, who rummaged through rubbish while an angel stood behind him offering a golden crown. Jeremiah talks of people "hewing out broken cisterns" for themselves. People look for fulfilment in learning, pleasure, wealth, and fame but their true need is met only in Christ.

Do you have a thirst in your soul? Christ invites you to come and drink. "Anyone can drink", said Spurgeon. True, we need the work of the Spirit to open our eyes and hearts, but nevertheless, we are all invited to come.

Because so few people today are drinking at the fountain of living water, we see society crumbling, with a lack of love for others, violence, drugs, a decline of courtesy and so on.

But Christ's living water can change society. "Blessings abound where'er He reigns". Bernard of Clairvaux built his monastery in a haunt of robbers called "The Valley of Wormwood". It became the "Valley of Lights" as people were born again.

There are no terms and conditions on coming to drink: the invitation is for anyone who thirsts.