

## Fed by Grace | Food in the Gospels

### *Anyone Who Thirsts*

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3.16.14

John 7.28ff

*Then Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, "You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know."<sup>29</sup> "I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me."<sup>30</sup> So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.<sup>31</sup> But many of the crowd believed in Him; and they were saying, "When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?"<sup>32</sup> The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about Him, and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to seize Him.<sup>33</sup> Therefore Jesus said, "For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me."<sup>34</sup> "You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come."<sup>35</sup> The Jews then said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find Him? He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He?"<sup>36</sup> "What is this statement that He said, 'You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come'?"<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.<sup>40</sup> Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet."<sup>41</sup> Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Still others were saying, "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He?"<sup>42</sup> "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"<sup>43</sup> So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him.<sup>44</sup> Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.<sup>45</sup> The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?"<sup>46</sup> The officers answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks."<sup>47</sup> The Pharisees then answered them, "You have not also been led astray, have you?"<sup>48</sup> "No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he?"<sup>49</sup> "But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed."<sup>50</sup> Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) said to them,<sup>51</sup> "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?"<sup>52</sup> They answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee."<sup>53</sup> Everyone went to his home.*

I thought I'd begin this sermon in an UNUSUAL way. I'd like to start the sermon with an unusual JOKE.

It's a "Knock, Knock.." - Joke.

You'll start the JOKE and then I'll finish it...ok? (Humor me!)

Alright, all together, on "three" – 1- 2- 3 (All together: "Knock, Knock...")

“Who’s there and what do you WANT?” (I didn’t say it was a FUNNY joke, only UNUSUAL) BUT that IS the question I want to ask today, “What do you want?”

Really: right now, at this point in your life, WHAT DO YOU WANT? Is it happiness? (Are you unhappy?) Do you want to be married? Do you want to be single? Do you want to graduate from High School? Do you want to be important... to be impressive? Do you want a MILLION/BILLION DOLLARS? Want a vacation? Want a new job? Do you want your kids to know God and to thrive and flourish in a relationship with God and IN the Church? Do you want pleasure, fame, good looks, success? Do you want your spouse to appreciate you...cherish you? Do you want to be LEFT ALONE (to escape and be unknown with no responsibilities or accountability)? Do you want to be thin? Do you want to be healthy? To be smart? Carefree? Just want to be happy?

Do you want to sex, money, power? Do you want God?

Who’s there and what do you want?

Jesus Christ goes to the CENTER of an immense public gathering and He screams out loud, “Whoever WANTS... if anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink...”

And when He SAYS that... there was something about His tone...His words...His way – even His opponents were halted, were stopped in their tracks and said, “Even if we don’t WANT to believe Him, there’s something HERE we find striking and even stunning...no one ever spoke this way.”

Today we think about DESIRE (What do you WANT?) AND the claims of Jesus Christ: 1) What is Meant By His LOUD invitation 2) How Can He Possibly Make This Invitation 3) What Will Happen If You Take Him Up On It

It’s a MASSIVE national HOLIDAY... He was in the North...He fed the 5000 (Bread in the Wilderness, like the New Moses, the Perfect Moses, who was actually the source of the Bread, in fact the True Source of Spiritual food)... and then it’s time for everyone to GO on national holiday...sort of like our New Year’s Eve – everyone goes to Times Square... but here, everyone went to Jerusalem, the Temple, the Axis Mundi, the Center of the World.

And there’s an ENORMOUS party, the Feast of Booths that celebrates the years when the Israelites were pilgrims, wandering in the wilderness and living in tents,... so people set up “Succoth” tents and lived in them and had a party for eight days! (Still happens in our area, our Jewish friends celebrate Succoth in late September or October.) And at this feast, there were constant reminders of BOUNTY and of HARVEST and of God lavishly providing for His people... Jesus had just made bread in the wilderness and now He would remind them of WATER in the wilderness...the water that GUSHED from the Rock!

And each year when all the pilgrims FLOWED into JERUSALEM for the commemoration of Succoth, that was in October (harvest-time, grapes, olives, wine and oil flowing – gushing like water), THERE was a daily reminder of all God’s GUSHING love for His people and His extravagant gifts/blessings – and the daily reminder WAS a little parade that went down from the Temple, down to a well. The priest would fill a gold pitcher with water from the well and then pour it on the altar before the morning sacrifice and worship. And as the water spilled on to the floor and out from the Holy Place/altar, the people would sing:

“For the LORD GOD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation. Therefore you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation.” (Isa 12.2-3)

And then music and shouting and celebrating God’s good promises and generous gifts in our whole history... BUT on the last day, the GREAT DAY of the party... There was no procession and there was no water drawn and spilled on the altar...and it was then that Jesus must’ve raised His voice to say, “If anyone is thirsty, let Him come to Me and drink”, as if to say, “I am the missing water...the source that never runs dry ...”

Look at the invitation: It is a UNIVERSAL invitation. No qualifications are mentioned, “If ANYONE...” i.e. if anyone wants to be fulfilled, anyone who senses a need, a thirst, a deep desire...ANYONE.

And then the word thirst is unqualified as well. it doesn’t say, for instance, “if anyone has a holy thirst” ... or “if anyone thirsts in a Christian sense” (or a spiritual sense) or if anyone thirsts to be a good or righteous person...Simply, “if ANYONE, THIRSTS...” For what, we are NOT told!

An old English minister, John Brown of Newington wrote a wonderful set of books in 1850 called, *Discourses and Sayings of Our Lord Jesus Christ* and he wrote these eloquent words about this invitation:

It doesn’t matter if the person is right or wrong in his opinion about what is missing from his life that has caused his sense of dissatisfaction. It doesn’t matter what he believes to be the missing ingredient and how it would complete him. The person may be thirsting for something which, if he got it, would only worsen his thirst. He may be seeking something that if he obtained it would only make him more miserable. None of this matters: the only thing that matters is thirst...

A more all-inclusive description of human beings, I believe, could not be imagined. “If anyone thirsts”, is simply equivalent to saying, “Whoever wants to be happy.” If a person can be found who is perfectly happy, or who has no desire to be happy, that person is not invited. Until such a person is found, we must insist that this invitation refers to everyone.

As if Jesus Christ is saying, “the party is almost over and then its back to your routines... the inevitable let-down is coming...the morning after...the Monday after vacation... BUT THIS PARTY IS POINTING TO ME...and to My party that NEVER ENDS.

I am promising to satisfy whatever thirst you have.

And this invitation is to “come and drink”. It’s not simply to nod in approval...or undergo a ritual...or sign a card or make a commitment. It’s to become a drinker. To be coming and drinking (both in the present and ongoing tense – to continually and even repeatedly be coming and drinking).

Its another call to internalize what He is – to ingest as in the Bread of Life... to actually taste the sweetness of the honey (not simply know how its made or the different varieties) to even to simply feel it in your fingers but to taste and see...to be drinking and coming... which are only symbols for believing.

Now how is it that any Person could MAKE this kind of invitation and the claims behind it? Well, as Jesus Christ gave them Bread in the Wilderness and a very VIVID flashback to Moses... so now, He gives a similar reminder of the Water in the Wilderness.

At that time, God came to His Bride, the church and He brought her on a honeymoon, He carried her into the wilderness, a pilgrimage, camping, in Tabernacles. In some way, He joined them. HE ALSO CAMPED IN A TENT, a tabernacle, THE Tabernacle.

His presence was represented on the Mercy Seat. His presence was seen in the Cloud and the Column of Fire. And now, with that in the air, at this celebration of those events, God is come to His unfaithful bride again...and He is saying, “I AM the Tabernacle, the dwelling of God is among YOU... I am God become a Pilgrim...the Word became flesh and “tabernacled” among you (John 1.14) ...the dwelling of God is among men! I am HE! The symbol is become reality.

“And as the Rock was struck in the wilderness with the Rod of Judgment... a symbol of My being judged for YOU... but now the SYMBOL will be realized, will become substance right before YOUR EYES. “

I will actually be judged in YOUR PLACE... I will experience infinite thirst IN YOUR PLACE when I gasp on the Cross “I THIRST” and will be answered with sour wine with total deprivation and JUSTICE – I will take what YOU DESERVE.

“And I will be pierced and out of My side will flow water...like it gushed from the Rock in the wilderness. And from what I accomplish, water will gush from Jerusalem like Ezekiel ch. 47 foretold, first a trickle, then a tiny flow, then a little stream, a brook and finally a TORRENT ... you wonder if I’m going among the Greeks...YOU HAVE NO IDEA! My salvation will spread to the whole Roman Empire in just one generation – grace GUSHING from here and inviting a dusty, parched, fallen world to DRINK.”

Now, what does it mean, in practical terms to come and drink? How will you KNOW when you are actually drinking this water ? And what difference will it make especially for WHAT YOU

WANT (remember my unusual joke, “who’s there and what do you WANT?”) what will this do for your THIRST and your wants?

What it means to come and drink, as we’ve already mentioned is to believe. In this episode, something happens in the hearts of these hearers, a spiritual reaction of some sort... His words ring so true that they’re sort of mystified...they’re struck. “This is certainly the Prophet...This is the Christ?” Did they become followers of His? Maybe.

It was a divided bunch...questions and conspiracy theories and suspicions and cynicism, skepticism was thick in the air...but even the officers (the Temple Police) were beginning to think, “THIS makes sense! And NO HUMAN BEING has ever spoken this way!” Even when their bosses were ridiculing them, they were beginning to believe. And that is, indeed, how faith begins for many people. You begin to doubt your doubts and to see things adding up.

There will be questions – e.g. they were hung up on the origins question (“where will the Messiah be born?”)...which is NOT altogether unimportant...

So, questions persist... but the real issue is always our heart more than our head. We will to be independent and do-it-yourself people...to deny our thirst and our insufficiency. And we insist on holding on to our own wells...often drinking salt water that only makes us sick.

To come and drink is to repent and believe. It involves a kind of abandonment of self-sufficiency. It looks to what God did in Jesus Christ, God dwelling in the Tent, the Flesh, God incarnating so that He could, as a Real Human Being, He could fulfill my deepest need, could satisfy My debt. To drink, to believe means that I take what Jesus Christ did for me and I receive it as GOD’S GUSHING LOVE, grace is a torrent, a river of love and forgiveness...of deep inner resources...and faith drinks it in...and drinks again and again and everyday I hear “Come and Drink... I have what you need...and want...I have what no other source can give...”

Lastly, there is a real EXPERIENTIAL aspect to this and a SOCIAL aspect as well.

Experientially, you MAY want to be married...or be a pro-athlete or want your boss to chill out or your kids to shape up or your spouse to listen... OR you may just want a million dollars or a million girlfriends or to be as famous as... Justin Bieber...

But Jesus Christ is saying, “Underneath all your deepest wants and needs...even under your desire for sex, money and power (none of which are BAD if used the right way) but underneath these GOOD DESIRES is an even deeper desire for Truth, Beauty and Goodness.

And while I give you flashes of this in things like human love and affection...and in success...and in freedom and choices...and flashes of true joy in artwork and music and Cheesecake... but My Spirit keeps reminding you that I AM THE SOURCE, I made you for Myself and I am the Fountain

of Joy and the River of Life... Your thirst I implanted in YOU cannot be satisfied by anything OR ANYONE in this world...

The beer commercial ends with the worlds most interesting man saying, "STAY THIRSTY...my friend" and that's good advice. Buddhism wants to eradicate our desire...BUT the Gospel wants to kindle it and then satisfy it ETERNALLY.

Our bigger problem MAY NOT be that we THIRST to be married (and it's just NOT happening!) OR that we're unemployed (and nothing on the horizon!) OR "can't pay my bills" OR "I'm just LONGING for this son of mine to know God" OR "longing for freedom from this temptation that ensnares me again and again..."

YOUR real problem, and the real spiritual danger MAY be that you are just...HAPPY...full, sated... "He who is full loathes honey but to the famished, any bitter thing tastes sweet" (Pro. 27.7)

These unfulfilled desires MAY just be your greatest spiritual allies, sending you over and over again to the True Fountain.

Last, when Jesus Christ is struck, and when water gushes from the Rock, when He sends the Holy Spirit to us on Pentecost (Sunday, June 8<sup>th</sup> this year!) – when the Spirit comes, He not only reminds us that our joys will all lead us to the Person of Joy, the One who IS Truth, Beauty and Goodness and the Spirit makes all our sorrows work toward an eternal weight of GLORY...

But in the meantime...He, the Spirit, is welling up in us – He is making the one who keeps coming, keeps, drinking, believing, repenting, believing, repenting – HE IS ALSO MAKING US A SOURCE of refreshment to the people around us...LIVING WATER flowing out of us to REFRESH the lives around us...Remember the woman at the well. She foreshadowed this: as she repented and believed, she became willing to expose her own weakness and failings and even shame to others ("come see a Man who told me everything I have ever done!") and it resulted in a whole town coming into God's joy...

The Spirit makes us refreshing people as we continue to repent and believe.

The passage ends with the words, "Everyone went to his home." So let me pray and we'll sing and then do that!