

If Anyone Thirsts...

Daryl Wingerd

“On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink’” (John 7:37).



Jesus made this dramatic statement in connection with the water-drawing ceremony associated with the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles. Water was drawn from the pool of Siloam and carried to the Temple where it was then poured out before the Lord. For the Jews, this called to mind the Old Testament accounts of God providing life-saving water for the Israelites in the desert, as well as passages like Isaiah 55:1—“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters.”

Jesus’ point was to proclaim that He was the fulfillment of what the Feast of Tabernacles anticipated, as well as many water-related pictures and promises in the Old Testament, and every picture of salvation as the quenching of one’s thirst. As He said to the Samaritan woman in John 4:14, “whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever.”

Water has never been one of my favorite beverages. If the amount of water most health experts say I should drink every day could somehow be condensed into a single pill, I would gladly wash it down with my morning coffee. Since that isn’t possible, I’ve developed a discipline of water intake, but I’m not always happy about it. When I’m not thirsty, I have to make myself drink water. But when I’m thirsty—really thirsty, like after working outside on a hot day or following strenuous exercise—nothing satisfies like a glass of H₂O. Sometimes I feel like I would die without it.

That kind of thirst, in a spiritual sense, is what Jesus spoke of.

Do you know what it is to thirst like that? It’s an important question, because Jesus’ invitation that day was only to those who thirst. He didn’t invite already satisfied people to come and sample a beverage, as though out of religious curiosity or experimentation. He invited the *thirsty* to come and *drink*—to draw deeply from, and become eternally satisfied by the water in the only well of true salvation. It was an invitation to people who felt that they would die unless they found the only water that truly satisfies.

So, do you know what “If anyone thirsts” really feels like?

- If you are beginning to recognize that most pleasures and pursuits are ultimately vain and unsatisfying, and have begun searching diligently for truth and meaning and purpose in life . . .
- If you are terrified by thoughts of the day of judgment and do not know how you will fare on that day . . .
- If you do not have, but desire, the hope and enduring joy possessed by all true followers of Jesus . . .
- If you have come face-to-face with your own sin and guilt before a holy God, but do not know where to go from there to ease your troubled conscience . . .
- If you have come to suspect that the “I’m a good person” philosophy is an alternate path to hell apart from knowing and loving Jesus . . .
- If you know of Jesus life and crucifixion and have begun to hunger for a true knowledge of what it all really means . . .
- If you despise thoughts of eternity because they are always connected in your mind with the certainty that it will be spent in hell . . .
- If you have come to understand the brevity of life, the certainty of death, the uncertainty of the timing of your death, and the moral inevitability of the justice and punishment that follows . . .
- If you have caught a glimpse of Christ by reading the Bible or hearing others speak of Him, and now long to have an even clearer and ultimately unobstructed view of Him in His glory . . .

. . . then you are thirsty.

Being thirsty is good, and is a prerequisite to drinking the waters of salvation. But being thirsty is not the same as salvation. You must come to Jesus and drink if your thirst is to end in satisfaction rather than death.

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