

Sermon Pentecost 2014
John 7:37-39; 1 Cor 12:3-13
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Pentecost is great feast of how God quenches your thirst; with pentecost God came very close to us, forever.

God the Holy Spirit has come to his temple, the church, and He satisfies our soul.

Pentecost is also about how our Lord uses us to quench the thirst of others. God filled his community, the church, with himself, to make our lives full and good, and to draw other people to this new life as well.

1. Feast of Tabernacles - water

Jesus made a fantastic promise to all people who are thirsty - this was his great pentecostal promise. He promised the Spirit of God to come and work in the hearts of the believers after he would have returned to the Father. And indeed, 10 days after that, on the Feast of Pentecost, God sent his holy spirit to his church.

It was during another Jewish Feast, the Feast of Tabernacles that Jesus promised this coming of the Holy Spirit.

The people called the Feast of Tabernacles "the season of our gladness", for it marked the ingathering of all the harvests: barley, wheat, and the grapes were all safely gathered in.

This Feast of Tabernacles lasted a week; on each day, the high priest of Israel went to the pool of Siloam with a golden bucket, to bring water from this pool to the Temple. He did this in remembrance of the water which sprang up miraculously in the desert, to thank God for his care in the past when Israel traveled through the dry desert.

Trumpets sounded to accompany the solemn procession with the water; the people were excited, waving with branches of palm trees; meanwhile some verses from the Psalms and the prophets of Israel were chanted.

When the High Priest brought the water to the Temple he went to the altar of the burnt offerings and he sprinkled the water at the base of the altar. And the people rejoiced and prayed for rain in the time ahead, to ensure the harvests of the year ahead.

Rabbi Akiva, who died in 134 AD, wrote: "The Holy One, blessed be He, has commanded, pour out water before me on the Feast of tabernacles, in order that the rain (of the coming year) may bless you."

Josephus called it "the holiest and the greatest festival among the Jews" (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 3:10–4). It was not only a good time for the rich; it was laid down that the servant, the stranger, the widow and the poor were all to share in the universal joy.

One Rabbinic saying was: "He who has never seen the joy of the water drawing has never in his life seen joy."

2 Promises fulfilled in Jesus

About 550 years earlier the prophet Haggai had been urging the people of God to rebuild the temple that had been destroyed. The people were frustrated because the new temple was so much less glorious than the first one. Haggai (2:6-9) told them,

6 'This is what the Lord Almighty says: "In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. 7 I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory," says the Lord Almighty. 8 "The silver is mine and the gold is mine," declares the Lord Almighty. 9 "The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house," says the Lord Almighty. "And in this place I will grant peace," declares the Lord Almighty.'

This passage is a great messianic prophecy and in the time of Jesus the Jews were still waiting for the fulfilment of these promises. They rejoiced in the ceremonies in their Temple, and they held them strictly because they hoped that God would finally come and fill his temple.

The Holy Spirit - the glory of the Lord - had not returned to the temple yet; there was no peace. And the desire of all nations, usually seen as a reference to the Messiah, also had not come yet.

Interestingly, Haggai proclaimed these words not far from the place where Jesus stood up. More remarkable, he delivered this message in the seventh month, on the 21st day of the month. That is, the last great day of the Feast of Tabernacles. At the very day when Jesus also stood up.

Jesus was in the temple and gets up and shouts with a loud voice, to proclaim the Good News to as many people as possible:

"If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink . . ." Our Lord presents himself as him who can fill man's heart and bring him peace. "I am the one."

In this connexion St Augustine exclaims at the opening of his book Confessions: "You made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you"

That is quite a promise of Jesus! You may be happy because of your religious feast, you may be glad because of this great event, you may hope for God to give rain on your thirsty land,

... but if you personally thirst, I am the one to help you. Come to me and drink. I have finally come. Jesus pointed people away from Israel's temple service and feasts, to himself.

He spoke of a thirst for God, for truth, for real spirituality. And for that you must be with me, Jesus says. Not with the Temple service of Israel, however beautiful. Not with a beautiful cathedral service either, actually.

Jesus presented himself elsewhere as the True Temple, as the place where people can really find God. God does not live in a house built by human hands; He lives fully in Jesus. In him the fullness of God dwells bodily, St Paul writes in his letter to the church in Colossae.

3. Feast of Mission

Jesus says that he can quench our thirst so well, that not only will we be personally satisfied, but living water will even flow from us to others and not just a little bit. "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." We know that Jesus spoke here of the coming of the Holy Spirit in the believers, and the work of the Holy Spirit through the believers.

Many Bible commentators are a bit puzzled by Jesus' additional words that all this will happen "as the Scripture has said".

But listen to the Scriptures that were read out loud on the Feast of Tabernacles: Isaiah 12:3 was for instance read, "Therefore you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation."

Let me read it again, now in its context:

Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; 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. And in that day you will say, "Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name. Make known His deeds among the peoples; Make them remember that His name is exalted."...

The salvation of God has come - his name is Jesus Christ. He is the spring of our salvation; his name we proclaim in all the world.

Ezekiel 47 was also read, a passage that speaks of the mighty rivers of water which would pour out of the temple in the glorious messianic times.

God took Ezekiel in a vision to the door of the temple, and water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple.

Ezekiel presents the Temple in Jerusalem as the heart of God's renewal for Israel and the world, as streams of water fill the dry valleys and God's living water even makes the salty Dead Sea into a fresh water lake, bringing life to dry places, renewing the land and the earth. Read this passage at home if you have time today. Ezekiel 47.

When would Israel finally see this, Gods glory, in the temple of God?

The Jews in the time of Jesus were praying, "come God, come Holy Spirit, return to your temple!"

Jesus shouts it out and points at himself. He is the one to quench the thirst for God.

We have seen before, how God has made his people into the true Temple. He lives in our midst and he is present in our lives. Jesus is able to quench our thirst so amazingly well, that we our-

selves, both as a church and as individuals, become the source of life and wellbeing for this world. From God's Temple his grace flows into all directions.

And all this began with Pentecost when Jesus, having returned to the throne of God, sent the Holy Spirit, and filled his temple with himself. He is in our midst. Israel was waiting for the Spirit to return to the physical temple in Jerusalem, but God chose himself a new temple - first Jesus, then all the people of God who are connected with Jesus.

The immediate result of the outpouring of the Spirit in the temple of God, among the believers in Jesus Christ, is that God's mission to renew the world began. In accordance with the expectations of Israel the law of God immediately went out into the world when God returned to his temple.

We see immediately the movement of mission as commanded by Jesus - go into the world and preach the Gospel first in Jerusalem, then in Judea and Samaria, and then in the whole world.

The pentecostal story of thousands of people from all over the world hearing the gospel of our Lord in their own languages, is fully in line with the Old Testament promises of God and with the mission of the church.

As soon as the Lord returned to his temple by his spirit, the living waters flowed into all directions. The believers in Jesus Christ could not keep their mouth shut about what He had done for them.

Conclusion

What has he done for us? The first work of the Spirit in his temple is to renew us personally. To Israel, God promised, through the prophet Isaiah 44:3, "I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessings on your descendants."

That is what God does for you through Pentecost. He revives, renews, recreates, reconciles, refreshes, restores, rebuilds your life all the time.

Just as we, all the time, turn to our Lord Jesus to drink. We will never stop thirsting, we will never stop drinking, we never stop being satisfied by our Lord God. Because He is in our midst.

So when we thirst, we go to Him, in prayer. And we listen to his word. And we come to church for participation in Holy Communion where he gives us what we need. Because there He gives himself to you, to be with you always.

We drink, and he quenches our thirst with so abundantly, that we always have enough blessings for ourselves and even for others.

The same prophet Isaiah, in 58:11, promised the permanent presence of our Lord with us, just as He was with Israel in the desert:

"And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail."

Gods goodness for us never fails, as we never stop coming to him to drink. He is in our midst - Father Son and Holy Spirit.

And of this we can never stop speaking, to each other, and to the people around us.

Amen