

## **“What Comes From Your Heart?”**

John 7:37-39

The Day of Pentecost, Year A – May 15, 2005

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John 7:37-39

<sup>37</sup>On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, **“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, <sup>38</sup>and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’”**

<sup>39</sup>Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Prayer.

There is running at this time a series of television commercials for a popular credit card company. It stars David Spade, who portrays a call center manager for all the other credit card companies. He trains a new, overweight, rather dull, effeminate recruit to say “No” to every consumer telephone request. No to frequent flier miles. No to bonus prizes and gifts. No to cash back rewards. And he is creative in saying no ... No-can-do, No-arenio, No way Jose, No - arama-bama. The point is to highlight the benefit of the sponsor, that their company always says yes to its card holders. Each commercial ends with the tag line “What’s in your wallet?”

Today, my question to you is not “what’s in your wallet?” My question is “what’s in your heart?”

**“Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water,”** Jesus tells the Passover pilgrims who were within earshot (John 7:38)

On this day of Pentecost, we remember, we celebrate, we recognize the presence of Christ’s own Spirit in the lives of all of us who consider ourselves believers and disciples of Jesus. That Spirit came with tongues as of fire to our ancestors, the original disciples of Jesus, who, for fear of the Jewish authorities, found themselves frightened and secured away in the Upper Room. The Spirit filled them, empowered them, guided them to speak, to witness, to build communities of faith. It was by the power of the Holy Spirit that the early Church was born.

That same Spirit worked through 2,000 years of Church history, through popes, through saints, and through sinners, too. The Spirit suffered when the Church lost its way, but it did not depart. The Spirit thrives when we are penitent and faithful, when we loosen our natural resistance to its influence.

That same Spirit comes to us today, in our birth, in our baptism, with our worship, and in our lives. That same Spirit comes when we have been thirsty for truth and meaning,

when we have brought that thirst to God's throne, and when we have taken a drink of God's living water. What a beautiful metaphor for God's amazing grace: that we are empty, thirsty vessels, but are now filled by the eternal, living water, the Holy Spirit of Christ himself.

The mere fact that you are in attendance today bears witness to the fact that the Holy Spirit is already in you, and at work in your life. In my own experience, the Spirit is what gives me power and passion in my life. There is authority behind my words that comes from beyond me. I know it comes from beyond me; for without its influence, I would be incapable of preaching, interpreting the Word, celebrating the Sacraments, or of pastoring a church.

Spirit driven passion makes my life authentic. Personal levels of energy fall woefully short of expectations. The Spirit lifts me to new planes of authority when I preach or teach. The Spirit works through my words and actions to flow through my pitiful vessel and into the empty vessels of others.

I know it because I see it. I see the effect of the Holy Spirit working through me, the thirst in people's eyes, and how the living water that flows through me, comes into their lives and satisfies their thirst.

In my own experience, I lived with the knowledge that the Holy Spirit is in my heart, through-and-through, for most of my life. I've also learned that the temptations of being led by the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ, are many and dangerous.

1. There is danger that the person becomes more important than the message. Old testament prophets understood this danger. Many big ego pastors never learn this lesson. I live with this danger all the time. The successor failure of this community of faith has nothing to do with Todd Goddard, or for that matter, any pastor who is appointed here. The Truth proclaimed, the scriptures interpreted, the Eucharist celebrated, has nothing to do with who I am or how great a pastor, scholar, teacher, or administrator I might be. That's why I wear a white alb every Sunday- to bleach me out of the picture, to remove the focus from the celebrant, and to keep it on the message and majesty of worship. Everything related to Zion and this community of faith, has to do with the Holy Spirit, and its work in our midst.
2. There is danger in substituting the will of the Spirit for the will of the self. The motives of the flesh call out to me on a daily basis, just as I know temptation works powerfully in your lives, too. Instead of going that extra mile, I'd rather stay home and put my feet up and sink into my easy chair. Instead of giving something to eat from my own cupboard, I'd much rather belly up for secondson the main course. Instead of ensuring the best stewardship of the church, I tend to wonder "what's in it for me?" Instead of listening to the needs of others, my mind tends to think about other things. These temptations tend to pollute the natural flow of the Spirit, as living water, emanating from our hearts.
3. In my own experience, the third danger of living with the Spirit of Christ in my heart, is that I often allow the complexity of life impeded the flow of the Spirit, to redirect it, to raise barriers that the Spirit should not have to overcome. For

example, on my calendar, I have 12 appointments to make today. There isn't enough travel time in between them, so I'm rushed throughout the day and always running late. Then a driver cuts me off. Oh, baby, do I ever get anxious! It's not road rage, by any measure of the imagination, but it certainly is a barrier to the work of the Spirit already in my heart. For example, at times I lose patience with my family- like teaching Nicholas to drive. My short temper can be a barrier to our relationship, and a barrier to the Holy Spirit that is in my heart.

**“Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water,”** Jesus tells the crowd (John 7:38). His words trickle into our lives today.

The world is in need of this living water. It thirsts continually. Its thirst causes it to look in all kinds of outrageous directions. It needs the power, passion, and direction of the Holy Spirit; the same Spirit that has been given to you and resides in your heart. Don't change it. Don't divert it. It has been given to you. Simply let it flow.

The Word of the Lord, as it has come to me. Thanks be to God. Amen.