

March 21, 2010

Texts: Psalm 42, John 19:28-30

8:30am, 9:16am, & 11:00am Worship

Title: Seven Words: I Thirst

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*Text: Psalm 42*

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long,

"Where is your God?"

These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng.

<sup>5</sup> Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and <sup>6</sup> my God. My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar. <sup>7</sup> Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. <sup>8</sup> By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me—a prayer to the God of my life.

I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?" My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, "Where is your God?" Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

*Text: John 19:28-30*

28Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "**I am thirsty.**" 29A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.

30When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

*Introduction*

**When is the last time you got really thirsty?** Last summer doing yard work or on the beach? Maybe you work out and find the need to stay continually hydrated. Most people wake up in the morning thirsty. I have heard that you and I can live weeks without food, but only a few days without water. We get thirsty. Our bodies, which are mostly made up of water, need a constant level and balance of water. We thirst.

**In John 19, Jesus hanging from the cross says, "I thirst".** These words are not recorded by the other gospel writers. Somewhere around 3pm and between saying, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" and "*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. It is finished.*" the words, "*I thirst*" occurred.

**Why did Jesus say "I thirst"?** It is obvious we say to ourselves. He was human like you and me. We know from his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well that even Jesus, the Son of God, was also the Son of man. Jesus got thirsty all the time. Now, he is nailed to a cross, losing precious bodily fluids, and hung out to die in the hot afternoon sun. Of course Jesus would be thirsty! There is more, however, happening in passage than Jesus expressing the fact that he is physically thirsty. Jesus is moments from dying. He has deeper reasons and purposes in these words. Jesus shows us here that he is both the Lamb of God and Shepherd of God.

### *1. Jesus as Lamb*

**The text gives us our clue** when it says, "*Knowing all was completed and so that scripture would be fulfilled.*" What does this mean? What scripture was reenacted brought to full bloom, in these final moments of the life of Jesus? **This statement, "I thirst", resulted** in a sponge dipped in wine vinegar being offered to Jesus on a stalk of hyssop. How fitting these two objects were used. How telling they are if we eyes to see and ears to really hear.

#### *a. Wine vinegar*

**"Wine vinegar" was a cheap wine** the Romans drank to pass the time while they watched the prisoners die. This wine would serve a more significant purpose on this occasion. When Jesus requests and then partakes of the wine he is reliving Psalm 69. <sup>3</sup> *"I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God."* Later the psalmist cries out, <sup>21</sup> *"They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst."* I think Jesus know when he said "I am thirsty" he knew what he would be offered.

#### *b. Stalk of hyssop*

**When Jesus is offered this cheap wine on a stalk of hyssop the symbolism is wonderfully rich.** The hyssop is a holy herb known for its healing properties. It was used to cleanse and purify humans, both internally and externally, and to wash and polish sacred places. **Ps 51:7** says, "*Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*"

**A healing stick is offered to the greatest healer of all time.** This same stick is used in **Exodus 12 in the Passover instructions:** *Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel*

and said to them, "Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. **Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe.** Not one of you shall go out the door of his house until morning. When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.

**In the actions of the soldier offering a drink on a hyssop stick, the gospel writer John is drawing the analogy that Jesus is the Passover Lamb, who was sacrificed to cover my sins and your sins.**

## 2. *Jesus as Shepherd (Holy Priest Leads His People)*

**Scholars like the Rev. Dr. Ken Bailey say Jesus was leading pastoral prayers from the cross.** In Middle Eastern worship it is not unusual for the worship leader to start a prayer or psalm and then everyone else picks up and finishes it at their own speed and pace. It is sort of like if I would say "Our Father..." and let you finish the rest of the prayer. We see, for example that "**My God my God**" was the beginning of Psalm 22. It starts with: "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?*" and concludes with a statement of hope: "*Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn—for he has done it.*"

**What final holy scripture was in the heart of the Jesus and the Jewish people standing at the foot of the cross that needed to hear? What jewel of God's love needed to be remembered? What truth needed to be embraced in deep faith and trust? What would the words "I am thirsty" spark in the heart of the Hebrew follower of Jesus?**

**Psalm 42 begins with** "*As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?'*" Sound familiar? Psalm 42 ends this way: "*My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, 'Where is your God?' Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.*" Jesus leads his people from these prophetic and pastoral psalms from despair to hope. Jesus declares from the cross, "**God is not done yet!**"

*Application - Where does Jesus thirst today?*

*1. Jesus the Shepherd thirst to love you and me.*

**It is reported that Mother Theresa had the words "I thirst" on the wall.** These words were “emblazoned on the wall next to the crucifix in every one of the Missionaries of Charity chapels all over the world. Mother Theresa believed Jesus' was thirsty for souls; she was thirsty for him. "She wrote in her *Spiritual Testament* that everything about the Missionaries of Charity is intended to quench the Thirst of Jesus. As Mother Theresa stated,

*As long as you do not know in a very intimate way  
that Jesus is thirsty for you, it will be impossible for you  
to know who He wants to be for you,  
nor who He wants you to be for Him.”*

(from I THIRST: SAINT THERESE OF LISIEUX AND MOTHER TERESA OF CALCUTTA by Jacques Gauthier. Staten Island, New York: Society of St. Paul, 21878 Victory Blvd, Staten Island, NY 10314-6603)

**Jesus is thirsty for you and me** to relate and follow him in very deep and personal ways. Jesus wants to live in us and through us each moment of our lives. How does this happen? Prayer. We have looked at many ways to pray in this series. Let me suggest one more: Prayer Walking. I invite you to pray as you walk.

- Decide where you want to go...maybe around the block, in a park, maybe downtown, or even in a mall.
- Invite God to join you on this walk. Ask Jesus to communicate something to you.
- Look around as you walk. Notice the sights, sounds, and smells around you. Notice your breathing and your heartbeat.
- Is there a question on your heart and mind? Offer that to Jesus. Is there something catching your attention? A thought or image that keeps coming back to you? Ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and understanding.
- Is there a thanks or request that bubbles up in you? Quietly give that to God. As you complete you walk, thank God for joining you and invite him to stay with you for the rest of the day.
- Before the day is over, you might want to write down you experience and any thoughts you feel God wants you to remember. These kinds of prayer walks can be deeply satisfying for they can connect us to the heart of God.

*2. Jesus the Lamb thirst in each lost and hurting person.*

**Prayer walking can open our eyes to the needs of the world** as well. As we walk we can begin to notice a world that is hurting, damaged, and in need of real help and hope.

A question to ask ourselves is: “**How do you want to use me? What do you want me to do, Lord?**” Help the hurting neighbor? Call a lonely friend? Forgive a harm done long ago? Go where I am afraid to go, but where I am needed? May my feet and your feet take us to those places where Jesus is thirsty today.

Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for loving us, for yearning for us. Walk with us now as we learn to love you more dearly and serve the world with imagination and hope.

### **Parallel passages:**

#### **Matthew 27:45-56**

47When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." 48Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. 49The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

#### **Mark 15:33-41**

36One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said.

#### **Luke 23:44-49**

44It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

#### **Psalm 69**

1 Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.

2 I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold.

I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me.

3 I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched.

My eyes fail, looking for my God.

4 Those who hate me without reason  
outnumber the hairs of my head;  
many are my enemies without cause,  
those who seek to destroy me.

I am forced to restore  
what I did not steal.

5 You know my folly, O God;  
my guilt is not hidden from you.

6 May those who hope in you  
not be disgraced because of me,  
O Lord, the LORD Almighty;  
may those who seek you  
not be put to shame because of me,  
O God of Israel.

7 For I endure scorn for your sake,  
and shame covers my face.

8 I am a stranger to my brothers,  
an alien to my own mother's sons;

9 for zeal for your house consumes me,  
and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.

10 When I weep and fast,  
I must endure scorn;

11 when I put on sackcloth,  
people make sport of me.

12 Those who sit at the gate mock me,  
and I am the song of the drunkards.

13 But I pray to you, O LORD,  
in the time of your favor;  
in your great love, O God,  
answer me with your sure salvation.

14 Rescue me from the mire,  
do not let me sink;  
deliver me from those who hate me,  
from the deep waters.

15 Do not let the floodwaters engulf me  
or the depths swallow me up  
or the pit close its mouth over me.

16 Answer me, O LORD, out of the goodness of your love;  
in your great mercy turn to me.

17 Do not hide your face from your servant;  
answer me quickly, for I am in trouble.

18 Come near and rescue me;  
redeem me because of my foes.

19 You know how I am scorned, disgraced and shamed;  
all my enemies are before you.

- 20 Scorn has broken my heart  
and has left me helpless;  
I looked for sympathy, but there was none,  
for comforters, but I found none.
- 21 They put gall in my food  
and gave me vinegar for my thirst.

## **Psalm 42**

- 1 As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.
- 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?
- 3 My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"
- 4 These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude,  
leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving  
among the festive throng.
- 5 Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and 6 my God.  
My <sup>[c]</sup> soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you  
from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.
- 7 Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls;  
all your waves and breakers have swept over me.
- 8 By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me—  
a prayer to the God of my life.
- 9 I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me?  
Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?"
- 10 My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me,  
saying to me all day long, "Where is your God?"
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