

John 7:37-39  
"Stay Thirsty"  
The Day of Pentecost (Confirmation Sunday)

May 28, 2023  
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc.  
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Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Imagine yourself walking through a desert. You have been in the middle of nowhere for several days and your water supply has run out. You begin to search desperately for an oasis. As you search, you spot something, but you hope that it doesn't prove to be a mirage.

Imagine a family on a road trip. It's a long-awaited vacation to the Rocky Mountains. As they drive, they begin to realize that the water they packed was left home. And right when everyone was beginning to get thirsty. As they are in western Kansas, they begin to search intently for an exit sign with a gas station or restaurant.

Imagine yourself in school. You are needing your thirst quenched. So, between periods, you walk to the water fountain. Soon, a line forms behind you. You know you need more water to drink, but you also know that those behind you are also thirsty. Even as you walk away, you know that the water fountain would never fully quench your thirst.

Jesus says, ***"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink"*** (John 7:37). As Jesus spoke those words, He did something that was not customary of a Jewish teacher. He stood up. When rabbis taught, they taught while sitting down. Here, Jesus stands up to make a point. He stood up so His words would not be missed as He said, ***"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink."***

To us, these are comforting, friendly, and charming words. Jesus is saying that He will provide quenching to the thirsty. These words refresh and strengthen those who are thirsty.

When Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well, ***"Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of living water welling up to eternal life"*** (John 4:13-14). This intrigued this woman, since she was thirsty.

But not everyone is thirsty. How could that be? Don't we all thirst for refreshment? Well, what Jesus is referring to here on both occasions is not a physical thirst, such as felt for water, pop, or beer, but a thirst of the soul, a spiritual thirst, a heartfelt desire. A desire which longs to know on what terms they are with God. This thirst feels sin. It fears God and sees only His Law, His wrath, and His judgment. This is what Jesus means by thirst.

We all live in fear of something, and we all face temptation and distress.

Jesus says, *“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.”*

Proper thirst is desiring your sins forgiven. But what is the forgiveness of sins dependent on? Are they dependent on something you do? Like performing random tasks to merit forgiveness?

As Martin Luther says, “If man is *not* directed away from himself and *toward* God, he will never be sure of forgiveness.”

If you admit that you are, indeed, a poor, miserable sinner, you are thirsty for forgiveness. If not, you are not thirsty. And where there is no spiritual thirst, the Lord is not received.

Back during the Reformation, Luther got a little angry from time to time. When the Gospel was fully revealed again, there was much rejoicing that it was no longer necessary to plague oneself with good works to inherit salvation. The people were thirsty, and the Gospel tasted oh, so good to them. They drank it, for it was a precious teaching. But over time, many of those who thirsted for forgiveness got tired of hearing the gospel: the good news of salvation by grace through faith in Christ crucified and risen for them. They wanted something more. They lost their thirst. Don't lose your thirst.

The Law created a thirst and if that thirst is not quenched, the only destination for you is hell. The Gospel, however, satisfies the thirst and leads to heaven. The Law states what we must do and that we have fallen short of doing it, no matter how holy we may think we are. The Law produces uncertainty and produces thirst.

As the Confirmands and all of us know and understand, we fail each day in adhering to God's Ten Commandments.

God says, *“You shall have no other gods.”* But we don’t always “fear, love, and trust in God above all things.” We misuse the name of God. We don’t always hold God’s holy day and His Word sacred. We often anger our parents and despise our authorities. We don’t always support our neighbor in every physical need. Instead of protecting our neighbor, we steal his time or take his possessions in a dishonest way. Instead of defending our neighbor, we slander him and his reputation. And we scheme in getting what we don’t have.

When you examine your life, you find that you do not love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself, as you should. We confess: “Oh, dear God, I have not kept your Law. For I do not love You with all my heart today, nor will I love You with all my heart tomorrow. Day after day, I make the same confession. How can I be certain of Your divine grace?”

Where will your conscience come to rest and find a sure footing? Where will it find assurance of a good relationship to God? With the Law, there is no assurance. For the Law always remains in force. “You must love God and your neighbor with all your heart.” We all admit that we fail at this. But the Law replies, “You must do it.”

The Law terrifies us. The Law makes us thirsty for forgiveness. With fear and trembling, we ask God, “What must I do to gain Your favor? I must obtain Your grace. But how? I can’t keep Your Commandments. What must I do?”

Jesus says, *“Come to Me. Believe in Me. Hear My words. I will give you drink and refresh you.”*

But that is too easy! “I have lied to You more times than I can remember. I promised to You that I would be more pious. I promised to You that I would be a better Christian. I have never kept those promises.”

To that Jesus says, *“Come to Me. Accept this from Me. You may lack piety, but I have kept the Law for you. Your sins are forgiven.”*

You see, the Law serves no other purpose than to create a thirst and to frighten the heart. The Gospel alone satisfies this thirst, makes us cheerful, and revives and consoles the conscience.

You are likely familiar with this ad slogan, “Stay Thirsty, My Friends.” After declining sales, Dos Equis launched a new ad campaign dubbed “the most interesting man in the world.” Unlike other beer ads, these ads featured a man that customers could aspire to be. Each commercial concluded with “Stay Thirsty, My Friends.”

So, for Luke, Lily, and Gabe, Jesus says to you today: stay thirsty. Thirst for righteousness. Thirst for peace. Thirst for God’s forgiveness. Satan, the prince of this fallen world, would rather you not be concerned for your soul. Satan would rather you follow his fallen world by removing the triune God from your life. Satan wants you to focus on your wants and your desires, rather than caring for your neighbor. He desires that you despise Jesus and His Word. His goal is to remove any desire for what you really need, which is Christ’s forgiveness for your sins.

Every one of us here today is a sinner. We thirst. Christ says to us all, ***“Come to Me! I will not let you die of thirst, but I will give you drink.”***

It is only here in the Divine Service that our quench is fully satisfied. This is the place where our thirst is quenched.

Jesus quenches our thirst first through the waters of Holy Baptism. He quenches our thirst as we confess our sins to Him and receive His absolution.

For the confirmands, today you will receive your first communion of Christ’s body and blood under the bread and the wine. Christ’s words, “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,” show us that in the Sacrament of the Altar forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation are given to us through those words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also eternal life and salvation.

We all thirst for our sins forgiven. This thirst for forgiveness ought not ever go away.

For everyone here today, stay thirsty, my friends. Stay thirsty in receiving Christ’s forgiveness that He won for you and that He freely gives to all who thirst in His Means of Grace – His Word and Sacraments. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

**+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +**