

## Is Anyone Thirsty?

John 7:37-44

Jesus cried out to the crowds at the feast, it was the last day of the feast and the tension had been building throughout the week. This was an especially well attended Feast of Tabernacles since everyone was expecting Jesus to be there and everyone also knew of the resentments the religious leaders were directing toward Jesus. The cry, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink..." seemed fated to fall on deaf ears. Think of who was there...

Jesus' brothers were there. The chapter begins with the brothers goading Jesus to show up and make a splash at the feast. They were well aware of the miracles that Jesus had done. They would no doubt have been present when Jesus turned the water into wine since it had been a family wedding of some sort. And, they lived in Galilee where the majority of Jesus' works took place. They had not thought out the meaning of these miracles nor had they given consideration to the meaning of what they had seen and experienced from the vantage point of being the siblings who grew up with Jesus. They had been blind to the miracle of Jesus' sinless life that had been lived out right in front of them. Instead of feeling respect and awe they were cynical and derisive in the face of their older brother. All of their thinking should have begun with Jesus knows better than I, but instead they felt obliged to share with Jesus how they knew better than He. Whatever else you might say about His brother, we can definitively say that at this time they were not spiritually thirsty.

The crowds were constrained by enmity of the Temple hierarchy against Jesus. Whether their impressions were complimentary or critical of Jesus, they were afraid to say anything too loudly for fear of being drawn into the

conflict. In any case, the undercurrent remained speculative. Arguments were made on Jesus' behalf or against Him but the people had assumed their right to sit in judgment as if they were deciding whether to cast their vote for or against Jesus as Messiah. These speculations left out the implications of the vote, and failed to ask, if Jesus

is the Messiah, what does this mean to me? They were drawn in by the raging controversy and they were curious about the possible outcomes. They may have even felt an admiration for Jesus' courage and a respect for His teaching but they remained by standers and they were not spiritually thirsty.

The temple authorities were threatened by Jesus and by His brand of law interpretation. They resented His popularity and the speculation that He might be the Messiah had them raging whenever they heard it repeated. They ran the temple. They possessed the reins of power associated with their authority. They were determined to hold on to what they had. It never actually occurred to them that the Messianic possibility was real. They failed entirely to have any self-awareness of their own deficiencies. They viewed themselves as the supreme authority and assumed that God was just like themselves. The only Messiah they could have accepted would have been a Messiah who was subject to them. They were experts in the law and they were the official administrators of the faith but they had no spiritual thirst.

There were the temple guards who had been sent to take Jesus into custody. They returned empty-handed and when questioned by their bosses they answered, "No man ever spoke like this man!" Jesus' words had moved them but they kept their jobs. They accepted the argument of the authorities who cited their own resistance to Jesus as proof that He could not be the Messiah.

It is reality that the claims of Christ will challenge the status quo of our lives. If you follow Jesus will you have to give up your boyfriend? If you follow Jesus will you have to change the way you do business? Remember that Jesus told the Rich Young Ruler that to follow Him he would have to give all of his money to the poor and leave everything behind in order to be with Jesus. Breaking that down we know that Jesus will always call us to change our values and to change our lifestyle. The guards were moved by Jesus teaching but they were still even more attached to their jobs. They were not yet thirsty enough to come in response to Jesus' cry.

John tells stories of spiritual thirst and so we are aware of what it looks like. The disciples who traveled from Galilee to see John and who found instead that Jesus

was the Messiah. These men immediately committed to Jesus. They are among the spiritually thirsty. Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night and who unlike his contemporaries readily admitted the obvious, Nicodemus was spiritually thirsty. The woman at the well was spiritually thirsty. She gave Jesus water to drink but when He told her of a different kind of water, living water that if you drank of it you would never thirst again, she wanted to drink of the living water. In spite of her apparently literal hearing of Jesus' words she knew that Jesus was speaking metaphorically. She had searched for satisfaction through 5 marriages and then took a boyfriend all to no avail. She bore her unhappiness as an obvious burden but then Jesus offered her something else, something better. It was the living water that was enjoyed by those who believed. She ran into her village and told everyone there about what Jesus had spoken. They came out to see if it was true and within 2 days they were as convinced as the woman. It had turned out that there was a

whole village of Samaritans who were thirsty and who answered Jesus invitation come and drink with enthusiasm. The man who was ill at the pool of Bethesda was thirsty. Jesus asked him if he wanted to be well and he cited the efforts that he had been making to do so. He kept waiting for the stirring of the water but others who had someone to help them always beat him into the pool but he kept trying. He was ready when Jesus told him to stand up, take up his bed and walk. He had the kind of spiritual thirst that Jesus called for at the feast.

But at the Feast when, Jesus cried out to the spiritually thirsty, there was no immediate response. Some would come later but they were not yet ready.

There are two halves of a genuine spiritual thirst that answers the cry of Jesus and finds the satisfaction that He promised. The first half is the admission that there is something missing, something unacceptable about your experience of life. This admission is difficult for our pride does not want to admit that we are lacking, that we are unable to find a suitable answer for our problems from within ourselves. Some are deceived by the props that make it appear as if they have it all together. Some stubbornly refuse to admit their needs even when all the props are gone.

The second half of what it takes to answer the call of Christ is the conviction that He is the only one who can help and who can provide the thirst quenching water of life that we so long for. Jesus not only exposed the self deceit of the woman at the well, He also offered Himself as the alternative to that self deceit. Do you want to drink of living water? Then, believe in Me.

The opening line of Augustine's Confession is, "Thou hast made us for Thyself O God and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee." He

rejected the Christian faith of his mother as a young man and started a journey that brought him back to that faith but only after he had tried every means to find another answer, another way to be satisfied. His journey took him from one misery to another. He did not intend to be unhappy but his every effort to create his own path to fulfillment simply failed. He tried sex, gangs, education, career, wealth, religion... Nothing worked until he was desperate enough to surrender his life to God. Then he found the peace, the rest, that he had always longed for.

To have your thirst quenched by the living water - once you drink it you never thirst again, you must admit that you are bankrupt and that you have no answers within yourself. Then you must be ready to acknowledge that Jesus is the Way. Turn from your old life and give yourself to God. Surrender completely to Him. Relinquish everything that is between you and commitment to Christ. Come to the Lord Jesus and drink deeply of Him.