

## **Famous Last Words: Thirst**

John 19:28-29

### **Famous Last Words**

Today we hear the fifth of Christ's *Famous Last Words*.

Already we have heard Jesus say, "*Father, forgive them for they don't know what they do.*" Jesus is all about forgiveness.

Christ's second word heartens us about the hope and promise of eternal life. "*Today, you will be with me in paradise,*" says Jesus to one of the criminals crucified next to him.

"*Behold your mother,*" he tells John in his third word. Jesus really does want us to look out for one another.

Last week we heard Christ crying out, "*My God, my God why have you forsaken me?*" In his hour of desolation Jesus reached out to the His Heavenly Father. In the end, he knew God would be with him.

Today, we hear Christ's fifth word. It is a word that is very simple and to the point. "*I am thirsty.*" It's a very personal word, a very human word, and because of that has the real potential to speak to you and me.

**(Show John 19:28-29)**

### **Water Is Absolutely Essential**

Water is absolutely essential for life.

Clean, pure water is something we take for granted here in this country, but is something not as nearly plentiful around the world.

Many of you know Mark Hogg who some years ago started a ministry that brings clean water to those who don't have it. WaterStep is a ministry we support.

With a little bit of PVC pipe, a car battery, and a good deal of ingenuity clean water is now a reality in many places around the world where it wasn't before.

In our own country, states are battling it out to have access to water.

The states of California, Nevada, and Arizona are in a contentious legal battle over water that comes from the Missouri River.

The same sort of thing is true for Alabama, Georgia, and Florida with water basins serving those states.

On a geopolitical scale, water is at a premium and the lack of it threatens a country's standard of living.

We all need water to survive. In fact, 60% of our bodies are made up of water. No wonder hydration is all the rage these days.

It's said that we can go without food for up to 3-4 weeks. When it comes to water we can only make for about 3-4 days.

### ***I am Thirsty***

In our passage for today, we find Jesus having gone without water for a long time.

He was enduring exceedingly tough circumstances. By the time we catch up with him in John 19:28-29 Jesus had already suffered on the cross for some six hours.

Earlier he had refused the offer of wine mixed with myrrh.

That concoction was intended not so much to quench one's thirst, but to deaden the pain of crucifixion. Christ refused it because he wanted to bear the full brunt of the pain, which has everything to do with him paving the way for forgiveness.

Later though Christ cries out, "*I am thirsty.*" In Greek it is just one word. In English it's three. "*I am thirsty,*" he cries.

Jesus did this so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. "*They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst,*" says Psalm 69:21.

The spotlight is not only on Christ's suffering, which as we have already said was intense, but on his humanity. In this regard, Jesus was no different than you and me.

As we know Jesus was born. He ate and drank. He related to others. He slept. He wept. He was even angry from time to time.

In regard to the cross he suffered terribly. He was betrayed, brought up on false charges, came before a prejudiced and angry mob, and convicted by a cowardly judge. He was beaten, derided, nailed to a tree, and left to die.

The fact that Christ was human in every way like you and me only serves to highlight just how intense his suffering really was. We can only begin to imagine.

That's a good thing to contemplate during Lent.

### **One Who Identifies with Us**

Just as you and I get thirsty, Jesus did as well.

Hear the good news. It comes through loud and clear on what was the darkest of days. In Jesus we have someone who identifies with us.

Sitting in prison near the close of World War II and facing death himself, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote the following in contemplating the cross,

*“God allows himself to be edged out of the world and on to a cross. God is weak and powerless in the world, and that is exactly the way, the only way, in which he can be with us and help us. Only a suffering God can help.”* Dietrich Bonhoeffer

By crying out, *“I thirst,”* we know we have one who knows exactly how we feel.

### **Sympathy and Empathy Compared**

There is a big difference between sympathy and empathy. When we offer sympathy we offer compassion. When we offer empathy we offer compassion borne out of experience.

Years ago, President Bill Clinton was given a lot of grief for the statement, *“I feel your pain,”* when it was thought that he had not really experienced that pain, that he had not really faced what regular people were experiencing.

Jesus knows how we feel, sometimes even better than we know ourselves. His is not just sympathy, but empathy.

The great thing about Jesus is that he not only empathizes with us, but seeks to meet our every need.

### ***Living Water***

He is the One who in talking with the woman at the well in John 4 offers *“living water.”*

In referencing the water she drew out of the well Jesus said, *“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again.”* (John 4:13)

In referencing the *“living water”* he offered, Jesus had this to say, *“But to whoever drinks the water I give will never thirst. Indeed the water I give will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”* (John 4:14)

Later in John 7:37-38, Jesus said, *“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture says, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’”* (John 7:37-38)

### **How Thirsty Are You?**

And the question comes, *“How thirsty are you?”* *“How parched is your soul?”*

Much of the Bible was written against the backdrop of a dry and arid land. Water was refreshment indeed. Without it, life just wasn't possible.

Isaiah 43:19 states, *"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a new way in the desert, and streams in the desert."* (Isaiah 43:19)

*"Streams in the desert"* are just what we need.

## **Water for a Parched and Weary Soul**

You don't need me to tell you that we live in a thirsty world and I'm not so much talking about water here.

Far too many are dry ground when it comes to their souls. They are parched in every way. You may even feel that way today.

Many try to quench the dryness by all sorts of means. Drugs and alcohol, power and position, and the accumulation of money and the things money can buy top the list.

All of these things and so much more are nothing more than salt water in comparison to the *"living water"* of our Lord.

The things of this world only make us thirstier, while the things of God satisfy us to know end.

The things of God assure us that we are loved. They bring peace and fulfillment. They offer joy and satisfaction. And in them we are truly blessed.

And all of this made possible by one whose thirst on the cross assures us that he identifies with the dryness of our lives, and not just identifies with it, but helps us overcome it as well.

The power of the cross is just that, power for today's life as challenging as it might be.

Hear these words from Revelation 7:16-17, *"Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."* (Revelation 7:16-17)

That's good news for a parched and weary soul.

## **Again, How Thirsty Are You?**

So, I will ask it again, *"How thirsty are you?"*

Jesus the very one who suffered on your behalf seeks to bring sweet refreshment to your soul.

It won't be long now, even though today is a bit cooler, but summer is on its way and with it hot, dry days.

Imagine yourself having worked in the yard on one of those hot, dry days and you find yourself thirsty beyond description. You take a break from your labor and get a cold drink of water.

Depending on how thirsty you are, you can almost feel the water running through your body bringing the refreshment it needs.

That's the way it is when we drink in the things of our Lord. He is able to refresh, rejuvenate, restore, and renew like no one else.

His is not like the vinegar offered to him on the cross, but true refreshment that brings abundant life.

So the promise is this, "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*" (Matthew 5:6)