

Rivers of Living Water – *John 7:37-39*

Introduction – While we reject the false teachings associated with Pentecostalism, we must be careful to act and not react. Pentecost is a Christian celebration, one of the five evangelical feast days, loved by the church from the beginning, and affirmed in the Reformation as a critical event to be celebrated and understood. Fifty days after the resurrection, and ten days after His ascension, Jesus, as promised, sent the Holy Spirit with power upon the new church. We ought not lose sight of the Scripture’s teaching of the wonderful and powerful gift of the Person of the Holy Spirit.

It is *essential* that we worship the living and true God. Let us not err and worship less than the Triune God. There is a ransom paid by the death of our Savior, but it is only through the Spirit that we ever come to know and receive that redemption. And with that knowledge comes life that Jesus describes as “*rivers of living water*” flowing out of the heart of the one who believes.

Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles – While in Galilee, His brothers told Jesus He should go up to Judea and present Himself at the Feast of Tabernacles (an 8-day celebration!). Jesus did not want to reveal Himself in the way His brothers were thinking and so did not depart to go with them (7:1-9). But some time after, possible days into the feast, He went up in secret, and overheard many asking about Him (vv10-13). In the middle of the feast, He began teaching in the temple (vv14-24). Some thought He had a demon (v20) and others were amazed at His boldness, wondering if He was the Messiah (v25). Jesus made more declarations which caused the rulers to try and take Him, “*but no one could lay a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. And many of the people believed in Him...*” (vv26-36)

“That Great Day of the Feast” – A bit of historical context will help us here. One commentator writes, “*John is careful to tell us that Jesus is making this invitation on the last day of the festival of Tabernacles, which had among its celebratory rituals a moment when the priests would pour out water and wine around the altar. Among the prayers that were regularly prayed at the festival were prayers for rain and for the resurrection of the dead; so the theme not only of water but also of new life were spot on for the subjects that would be in people’s minds.*” This ritual was probably developed out of the prophet Zechariah’s writing about that feast (Zech 14:16-19). And it is in Zechariah 14:8 where we find the promise of “*living waters*” – “*And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem...*” This is the promise of a pure river of water of life (Rev 22:1-2), a River promised where “*...every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live*” (Ezek 47:9). Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that He was the source of that “*living water*” (John 4:10). Jesus teaches us that all of this refers to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit Who would bring life and healing and quench the spiritual thirst of the world. At Pentecost, it began, the fulness of the Spirit’s power.

Rivers of Living Water (vv37-39) – Consider the powerful operations of the Holy Spirit. The work is an inward work, for “*out of his heart*” the waters come forth. It is a life-giving work, for these are living waters. They are life for the man and life from the man to the world as the Spirit comes forth from us to the world. Consider the plentitude – not “*a river*” but “*rivers*” of living waters. And consider how spontaneous it is, for it simply “*flows out.*” Because the rivers are right there, there is no pumping required. The operations of the Holy Spirit are powerful, life-giving, life-changing, inward generating, and outward flowing. It is a work that floods the soul and pours out into and over the world.

The Testimony of the Holy Spirit – The outpouring of the Holy Spirit not only testified to the faithful prophecies of Jesus that the “*Promise of the Father*” (Acts 1:4) would come, the “*Helper*” Whom Jesus would send (John 16:7). The Holy Spirit’s coming was Himself a testimony that Jesus had ascended to the throne of Grace, the throne at the Father’s right hand. They had seen Jesus ascend into the clouds, and the Spirit’s coming testified that He had made it to His destination.

The First Gift from the Reigning Son – “*But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore He says, ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men’*” (Eph 4:7-8). This is the nature of the Throne of Grace. This was Jesus’ first act following His coronation. He gives His Spirit to men so that they may come to Him. For the Spirit convinces us of our sin and reveals to us the sacrifice given for our sin. He comes to convince us of the righteousness of Another that we might see His righteousness and receive Him, and of judgment, that we might be prepared to meet Him when He comes to judge the quick and the dead. He sets our hearts and minds on the eternal, life-giving, grace-filled works of God for us and to the world. We begin to see anew the work of God in us and in the world.

Spirit-filled Word – *“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God”* (Rom 10:17). Spirit-gifted preachers, teachers and evangelists are used by the Spirit to impress on the minds of hearers the truth of God’s Word, the importance of God’s Word, and the need for God’s Word. That Spirit-Word convinces, convicts, consoles, and conforms the hearer into the likeness of Christ – and He continues that work in us till Christ is formed in us the hope of glory (Rom 8:29, Col 1:27).

All Glory to Christ – The Spirit works for the glory of Christ. He does not work for His own glory, nor for the honor of a man, nor the glory of the church. *“He will glorify Me”* says Christ of the Holy Spirit (John 16:14). He seals us and He is our guarantee, and all to the praise of the gracious glory of God the Father Who has done this work through Jesus Christ (Eph 1:13-14). The Spirit is the glorifying work of the Son to the Father and the Father to the Son. He is the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son. He is the eternal love between the Father and the Son. And He brings us into that communal family that we might be covenantally bound into that eternal love.

Inward/Outward – Meditate, then, upon the powerful work of the Spirit in your heart and in the body of the church. If He is at work, we will hunger and thirst for more – and He will fill. And if He is kind, out of you, out of us, will flow rivers of living water to saturate this earth and the hard-hearted people all around us who, just like us, need the work of the Spirit to bring them to life. All of these operations of the Spirit are obtained by one thing: faith. *“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”*

Dave Hatcher – Pentecost Sunday, May 31, 2020