

Filled to Overflowing

John 7:37-39

The Day of Pentecost, June 4, 2017

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

In order to understand what your Lord is talking about you need to understand what is going on around Him in the feast. If you read all of John 7 you will find that Jesus makes this declaration of His on the last day of the Feast of Booths.

God commanded Israel to celebrate the Feast of Booths beginning on the fourteenth day of the seventh month. God commanded all Israel to live in booths for seven days. A booth was a three sided temporary structure used by ancient farmers during planting and harvest season.

You fellas know how planting and harvest season are. You barely have room to do anything else, but work in the field for as long as possible. The ancient farmers faced a similar situation except that they did not have headlights on their tractors. Because they lacked headlights in order to get as much work done during the daylight hours as possible, they built three sided huts out of sticks and branches that they found in the field and they stayed in them during planting and harvest. That way they would already be at the field when the sun came up and they would not have to quit work early in daylight to go home. They could stay in the field for as long as possible and then go to their booth to stay the night.

When God commands the people of Israel to live in booths for seven days in the seventh month, He is not commanding them to live in telephone booths or something like that. He is not talking about voting booths. He is talking about the three sided structure that farmers used to stay in the fields during planting and harvest.

The purpose of this command was to keep Israel mindful of how God cared for them in the wilderness. When Israel left Egypt they spent forty years in the wilderness before entering into the promised land. While they were in the wilderness God led them from one campsite to another. Israel camped in tents while moving around in the wilderness.

While a booth is not the same thing as a tent the use of a booth is identical to the use of a tent as a temporary dwelling. The purpose of both tent as temporary dwelling and booth was to camp out. God commanded this so that Israel would reexperience His redemption action in leading them out of slavery in Egypt to the promised land through the wilderness.

Every seven years God commanded that all slaves be released from their slavery during the Feast of Booths. Also on the seventh year that the slaves were released God commanded them to read the law. Every seven years during the Feast of Booths the priests would read the law to all of Israel who had gathered in Jerusalem where God had caused His name to dwell. They would read all of the books of Moses. They read Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy to the people.

When John's Gospel tells us that Jesus made His announcement on the last day of the feast and then tells us it was the great day, that indicates that it was the great day when the Law of Moses was read to the people.

On the day when the Law is read, Jesus talks about those who are thirsty.

Thirst is a lack of water. When one is thirsty one does not have a virus or a disease. One lacks water. Thirst is not a thing. Thirst is the lack of something. One goes into the house to get a drink of water to slake one's thirst. And if one has a one year old with him, the one year old will realize that he is thirsty also and will want to slake his thirst also.

Thirst does not go away unless one is filled with water. If one is thirsty, that means that one lacks water.

On the day when the Law is read, Jesus talks about thirst.

The only thirst that He could possibly mean is a thirst for righteousness.

The Law is all about righteousness. It is all about choosing God. When all of the narrative and all of the commandments of God had been read to the people Deuteronomy summed up everything in one of its final chapters by commanding the people to choose life. Moses dramatically places before the people the blessing and the curses, life and death, and He commands the people on behalf of God to choose life. Life will be chosen by keeping the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that the Lord their God had commanded them. If you do not choose, life you choose death. There is no third option.

But like the people who refused to stone the woman caught in adultery because Jesus had allowed the one without sin to cast the first stone so also anyone listening to the Law of Moses has to come to the conclusion that they have not chosen life. To choose life is to obey the commandments. To choose death is to disobey the commandments.

How are you doing with your free will? Have you used it to worship the Lord your God and serve Him only or have you served other gods and relied upon them for salvation and to fix all of your problems. Have you used the name of the Lord your God in prayer, praise, and the giving of thanks as you ought or have you used it to vain purpose or not used it at all? Have you honored preaching and His word that they that you should and gladly heard and learned it? Have you honored your father and your mother? Or have you gone your own way and paid for it? Have you harmed anyone, murdered anyone, or even hated anyone? Is there someone to whom you still will not speak because of something that happened between the two of you in the past? Is such lack of communication a lack of trust in the Lord your God and the righteousness that He provides? Have you committed adultery? Lusted? Fornicated? Have you given evidence of fornication to others by staying with the one to whom you are not married? Have you stolen, or been greedy? Has your heart rejoiced in all of your possessions? Have you lied to anyone or withheld a truth that their vocation required you to tell them? Are you discontent with what God has given to you?

In short, have you kept the Law? If you have then you have chosen life. If you have not then you have chosen death. So much for free will. So much for choosing life. We all have gone astray. We all have altogether become worthless.

We lack original righteousness. And since Moses casts the keeping of the law and the choosing of righteousness together, we lack life. We thirst.

We thirst.

And so our Lord invites. "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink."

And you wait for the other shoe to drop and it never drops. It never will drop.

In other words, if I have just sat through a reading of the entire law of Moses and this Jesus stands up and says to me that if anyone thirsty let him come to Jesus and drink, I expect Jesus to tell me to do something in order to slake my thirst just as Moses told Israel what to do in order to obtain their righteousness before God. If Moses commanded the keeping of the statutes, the rules, and the commandments of the Lord in order to obtain righteousness, then when Jesus offers that we should come to Him and drink and obtain the righteousness that we lack, surely He must have a list of commandments that we need to obey in order to choose life. And Jesus says nothing of the kind. He simply says, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink." You wait for His list of commandments. You wait for His list of requirements. You wait for Him to tell you the list of things that you must do in

order to slake your thirst for righteousness. And He doesn't say anything of the kind. You can wait for that shoe to drop for all of eternity and it never will. He has no requirements. He only has what He offers.

And once your thirst is slaked, you begin to provide water for others.

Once the Lord has given you righteousness, you have more righteousness than you know what to do with. You have the Lord's righteousness. What more righteousness is there? With the Lord's righteousness in your possession, you now have sufficient righteousness for others.

This is what our Lord means when He says, "The one who believes in Me, rivers of living water will flow from His heart."

The word that the ESV translates "heart" is the word for "womb." If our Lord were talking only about women, I bet the translators would have said "womb." But since our Lord is referring to all who believe in Him and lo and behold there are men who believe in Jesus too, not just women, the translators do not know what to do with the word "womb" when applied to a man. It could be rendered "belly" but that raises a whole host of other problems in a fitness and dietary driven marketplace.

It simply means that the one who believes in Jesus becomes a life giver. Slaking one's thirst for righteousness with the righteousness that Jesus gives gives life. Without addressing one's thirst one dies. Addressing one's thirst makes one live.

Therefore with righteousness one lives. Without righteousness one dies. Jesus has given you His righteousness without any commandments and requirements because we would not have kept them anyway. Now we have more than enough righteousness for others. When we give our righteousness away, it gives life to the one to whom we give it. Since we are giving life to the one to whom we give our righteousness, we have wombs, even if we are men.

In fact streams of living water will flow from within you. You will have enough righteousness for anyone who comes and asks you.

And then the surprise of all surprises. John informs us that Jesus was talking about the Spirit when He said these things.

Here is what that means. The Spirit and righteousness come together. One does not come without the other. If the righteousness of Christ has come to you, then the Spirit has come to you. If the Spirit has come to you, then the righteousness of Christ comes to you. If the thirst for righteousness is slaked by the righteousness that Christ brings and yet Christ insists that when He slakes your thirst, He is giving you the Spirit, then one must conclude that the Spirit and the righteousness of Christ go together!

And the Spirit had not yet been given according to John's Gospel because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Now as I said last Sunday, so now I say again, Jesus is glorified when He is crucified. When the hour of His crucifixion comes, Jesus prays to the Father and asks the Father to glorify Him. Therefore the glorification of the Son takes place when the Son is crucified. Therefore the Spirit does not come until the Jesus is crucified.

This is why the manifestation of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost does not take place until after Jesus is crucified, resurrected, and ascended. That is the glorification of the Son, Jesus Christ. Then the Spirit comes.

In fact when our Lord rose from the dead according to John's Gospel, He showed His disciples His hands and His feet so that they could see the marks of His glorification and then He breathes on them and tells them to receive the Holy Spirit. Then He sends them out to forgive sins. And what is the

forgiveness of sins if not the dispensation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ which He won for us on the cross which marks He had just shown His disciples.

They have righteousness for all. They have righteousness for you. You have righteousness enough for others. Rivers of living water will flow from within you.

He breathes on them and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit." And so the Holy Spirit is the breath of God and the breath of God brings life as it always has.

Now, some of you are smart enough to know that the Holy Spirit has been around and active for some time. The Holy Spirit was in the beginning when the earth was formless and void. He was hovering over the waters. The Holy Spirit spoke to Moses and gave Him the revelation of the Levitical sacrifices according to the book of Hebrews. The Holy Spirit gave us the Psalms according to the book of Hebrews. If the Holy Spirit is active in the Old Testament how can John's Gospel say that the Holy Spirit was not given until Jesus was glorified?

The answer to that has to do with the glorification of the Son. The book of Revelation states that Jesus was crucified from the foundation of the world. The book of John says that Jesus showed His disciples His hands and His side.

The reality of the new creation that Jesus brings with His crucifixion goes backwards in time and goes forward in time. It goes backward all the way to the creation. It goes forward all the way to the consummation.

Many of you have questions about the divine foreknowledge. Many of you have wondered how it is that if God knew what would happen when He put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden how He could have done that. Well, not only did God have knowledge that Adam would eat of the forbidden fruit God also had foreknowledge that His Son, the new Adam, would die for Adam's sin. And in that foreknowledge the crucifixion of Jesus brings life to Adam in the coverings that God made for them and in the promise that God gave to them in His divine foreknowledge that the serpent's head would be crushed.

He was crucified from the foundation of the world. He had to be in order to cover even Adam's sin. Adam is beholden to Jesus for His salvation even though the crucifixion did not take place in time until thousands of years after Adam. Thus the Spirit is not given until the glorification of Jesus, but since the glorification of Jesus is for all time the Spirit is active in the Old Testament.

All of this is a fancy way of saying that the new creation springs from the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, and if the new creation springs from it the old creation does also.

Everything therefore depends on the glorification of Jesus. Our existence and our righteousness are all there. They are there because the Spirit comes from there.

In the Name of Jesus. Happy Pentecost.