

The St. John's Pulpit

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STAYING THIRSTY

Gospel of John 19:28-29

Sermon 4 of 7 in Lenten Series

"Seven Words for Everyday: Jesus' Words from the Cross Empower Us for Everyday Living"

Sunday, March 26, 2017 – Fourth Sunday during Lent

The Rev. Dennis W. Foust, PhD, Senior Minister



A suffering man used some of his limited energy to say, *"I thirst."* Those who heard his parched request responded by extending a sponge soaked in wine vinegar on the end of a hyssop branch. They offered a dehydrated dying man a cheap response from a safe distance.

This thirsty man, of course, was Jesus. Most certainly, he was physically dehydrated. Yet, there is a tremendous difference between knowing you are thirsty and knowing what will quench your thirst. Jesus was thirsty for the cup he had committed himself to drink the night before his death. Jesus knelt in the Garden of Gethsemane praying, *"Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not my will but Your will be done."* In his final hours, Jesus was spiritually thirsty to drink the cup of his commitment to live in God's will.

Jesus began each day in prayer and time alone with The Living God; so should we. There is a danger that we will live by two religions; one on Sunday and one on days between Sundays. As a deer is refreshed every day by the quiet stream, we must be refreshed every day by The Living God. As water refreshes the human body, drinking in God's Presence refreshes the spirit.

One day, I became so physically dehydrated that I almost passed out. I was hiking in the ravine below Victoria Falls at the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe. In that humidity, I walked up the mountain trail and my head started spinning. My breathing became shallow and my consciousness was increasingly dim. I realized there was a bottle of water in my backpack. Once my body received 24 ounces of fresh water, I started feeling much better.

The American Medical Association says the human body is 60% water; your brain and muscles are 75% water; your blood is 82% water. Yet, 75% of American citizens are dehydrated most of the time. Drinking 64 ounces of water each day decreases the risk of various cancers, speeds up your metabolism and keeps your heart functioning more effectively. However, we have convinced ourselves that all beverages are equal; this is untrue. Drinking a caffeinated beverage dehydrates you. It takes 300 ounces of water to neutralize a twelve ounce caffeinated beverage.

Beloved, guard yourself against spiritual dehydration. Some spiritual experiences dehydrate you. Jesus taught that you are the light of the world and the salt of the earth. You are also the water carriers for a thirsty world. You are living among people who are spiritually dehydrated. They need you to stay spiritually thirsty. For, as you serve them, you offer them Living Water.

It is our inclination to focus on persons often described as ‘down and out,’ But, I ask you to consider your family members and friends who are ‘up and out.’ In the stories of Jesus, he served the poor and wealthy alike. You are aware of people trying to satiate their thirst with big gulps of materialism, hedonism, positional influence, socialization and accomplishments. These pursuits do not quench the core thirsts of life. These pursuits can dehydrate the spiritual life. You know people who are spiritually dehydrated although they are swimming in overflowing pools of financial capacity. Some voices in our society propose that success is synonymous with faithfulness. Many people only call out for God when they are in distress – like a dehydrated hiker. You may know people who are overcome with delusions of self-righteousness. In our fast-paced society, even the most successful in our social tribe are inclined to convince themselves that a quick sip from the cup of spiritual life is enough. Sunday worship is not supposed to satisfy your spiritual thirst; it is supposed to whet or stimulate your thirst.

Some of your friends are spiritually dehydrated. They need you to offer them more than a cheap response from a safe distance. They need you to thirst for the Presence of God and drink from the fountain that is the will of God. As you drink from the cup of the will of The Living God, you offer your family and friends more than yourself; you offer them the spirit of The Living God at work refreshing and sustaining your spirit.

Although Jesus was physically dehydrated on the cross, he was spiritually thirsty to drink the cup of his commitment to the will of God. In Matthew 25, we find Jesus’ words, “*I was thirsty and you gave me drink.*” Listen for Jesus’ voice in this spiritually thirsty and dehydrated world. Stay thirsty for the living water that flows into your life. Drink in the Presence of The Living God. This is essential for your spiritual health and for the spiritual health of your friends.

Medical researchers say that when you drink 64 ounces of water each day, your body begins to desire that daily refreshment. You begin to feel your thirst more keenly.

May this also be true in your spiritual living! May your daily prayer be, “Lord, I thirst for Your Presence and Your will in my life!” Amen and AMEN!