

“Outside or Inside?” – Pastor Jim Sprengle, Pentecost Day

- I. **John 7:37-39** – “³⁷ If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” ³⁹ Now this He said about the Spirit...”
- II. **We’ve all seen it in the movies...**
 - a. You know, the one where a guy is stranded way out in the desert.
 - i. He starts out with a little water, but goes through it in no time.
 - ii. Pretty soon he takes his shirt off and wraps it around his head.
 - iii. Next, he is shown slowly trudging along with dry lips.
 - iv. Finally, he’s crawling... so tired and thirsty he’s barely alive.
 - v. Maybe he sees a mirage in the desert ahead... only to get there and dive into a sand dune and he starts choking on sand that he thought was water.
 - b. Have you ever been thirsty like that?
 - i. Without water, heat exhaustion and dehydration are killers.
 - ii. On my day off last week, I took on a drain project in my yard that I’ve been putting off for years... It was HOT on Thursday!
 1. I joked with my family that I was doing hot Yoga – the kind where you go into a super-heated room and do yoga for an hour and sweat buckets.
 2. About 2 hours into the project, I realized I was getting overheated and dehydrated... fortunately I was near plenty of water and air conditioning!
 3. I drank about a gallon and half of water over a couple of hours and then finally came in and sat by a fan to cool off
 - c. What if I had no water... no cooling off... nowhere to go with all that thirst?
 - i. Imagine for a moment feeling that thirsty and desperate while you are hiking up in the Columbia River Gorge...you are way too far to hike out... and you’re concerned you might pass out from dehydration.
 - ii. When off in the distance, you hear a dull roar.
 - iii. As you trudge along, the noise is louder and louder, and you realize it’s a waterfall!
 1. Wow – cold water... clear mountain run off...
 2. You dive into the pool at base of the waterfall, swim into the cascading water... and breathe a huge sigh of relief... I’m saved!
 - iv. Now that I have you in that beautiful waterfall, cooling off and swimming around... what’s missing?
 - d. What if, in all that swimming around and sitting under a waterfall, you never bothered to drink any water?
 - i. No one in their right mind would simply swim around and then walk away when they cooled off... it makes no sense because we become hydrated from the inside!
 - ii. We can swim all day in refreshing water, but if it stays on the outside, we are dead.

- e. We are spiritually dead without God's intervention, and even believers in Jesus can be dry... can sort of enjoy the beauty and good work of God and the Holy Spirit, and yet never drink deeply.
 - i. Some of us love the idea of God, and yet rarely speak to Him in prayer, are never engaged by the power of His Holy Scripture, and spend more time on selfish things than living a life for Him and others
- f. The blessing and power of God is not "out there" it resides inside us.

III. **Today is Pentecost** – the day the Church of God was started... a birthday.

- a. Pentecost was one of three feasts that required Jewish people to travel to Jerusalem no matter where they lived.
 - i. Many people traveled long distances and were from countries that spoke different languages.
 - ii. "Pente", means 50, or 50 days after the Passover, and it was a way for people to recognize the harvest and bless it to the Lord.
 - iii. So, Passover and Jesus death and resurrection happens... then 40 days later Jesus ascends into heaven, and now, at 50 days, people have again gathered in Jerusalem from all over.
- b. But here is the interesting part – Jesus in our reading today is not at Pentecost!
 - i. He is actually at the third celebration required by God... the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles (tents)
 - 1. This feast commemorated the 40 years the Hebrews spent wandering in the wilderness and living in tents.
 - ii. However, what Jesus does is stand up in front of the whole crowd of people – just as diverse and large as those who were at Pentecost... and says an amazing thing:
 - 1. If you are thirsty come to Me... whoever believes in Me will have more than just their thirst quenched but will overflow with rivers of living water!
 - a. It sounds just like earlier in the Gospel of John and woman at the well, "...Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life," John 4:14.
 - 2. Now, I could go on and on about how Jesus already had a target on His back because the religious leaders wanted Him dead... and right in the temple area on the big day of the feast – He doesn't say, "whoever believes in God the Father..." He says, "Whoever believes in ME..."
 - 3. Jesus, our Savior, is God – He is the one who gives us life in the driest and thirstiest days of our lives.
 - 4. In our celebration today, many will say that we should focus on the Holy Spirit, and rightly so... but the Holy Spirit is eternally focusing us on Jesus!

5. Jesus is the source of our saving grace...through His death, resurrection, and ascension He allows for a new era of Holy Spirit power and life sustaining...even overflowing “water”.

- IV. **The Third Article** of the Apostles’ Creed and explanation are so important.
- a. We say, “I believe in the Holy Spirit...” and the explanation that Martin Luther clarifies, “I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel...”
 - i. In other words – by our own power and thinking, I’m just an empty cup... upside down and powerless to receive anything.
 - ii. Imagine if I took an empty cup, and put it under water... does it fill up? No, it remains empty... even with water all around it!
 - iii. But the power of the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, through Baptism – turns the cup over and in flows God... Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God and all His promises and grace flow into us.
 - b. By His grace, we are saved from eternal death and separation from God – as Revelation 7 talks about the saints in glory - “¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (Revelation 7:16-17).
 - c. But not only will we be in paradise forever, we have benefits right now!
 - i. The Holy Spirit is our unending source of power...like a waterfall
 1. We don’t have to walk through life in a dry, spiritual desert
 2. He fills us and reminds us about Jesus – He reminds us that we are forgiven by the work of Jesus on the cross and empty tomb
 3. He points us to the Word, to the Lord’s Supper, to our Baptism as the promises and power of God that are ours as His children
 - ii. We don’t just swim around in the water, He fills us on the inside.
 - d. So, the power of God flows from the outside to the inside... but then overflows back outside as an endless source for others.
 - e. That first Pentecost Day became the way God opened the hearts and minds of billions of people to the life-giving water which comes from believing in Jesus.
 - i. Without the Holy Spirit overflowing into the lives of others... we could not sit here today and give thanks to God – we would be dead of spiritual thirst
 - ii. But each believer overflowed because they could not contain the Good News – it overflowed in their loving actions... and especially in their words of sharing the Good News of life in Jesus forever.
 - f. Our great God resides inside you... He works from the inside to the outside...
 - g. Jesus has quenched our spiritual thirst forever – and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we ourselves can now be rivers of living water. Amen.