

The Holy Spirit and Streams of Living Water - John 7:37-39

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Calvary Chapel Ontario

John chapter 7. We're going to, I'm going to be sharing a little bit here this morning about a particular event that took place in the life of Jesus that I think is very significant. And I'm going to talk to you a little bit about the historical significance of it. In a roundabout way we're going to talk about what it means and then finally we're going to look at how it applies to our lives.

John chapter 7, then skip down to verse 37. It says, beginning in verse 37, that, *“On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” (and) ³⁹ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. (because it tells us here that) Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.” (NIV)*

Pray with me.

Father, open our hearts to the ministry of Your grace, the wisdom of Your Word. We ask it in Jesus Name.

Once again, I want to talk a little bit about what this passage is saying and look at a little bit of the historical context and so forth. The feast that is being referred to here in this passage is, The Feast of Tabernacles and this feast would go on for an entire 7 days.

And there were things that went along with it, like all the other feasts. There were traditions and rituals that went along with the celebrating The Feast of Tabernacles.

And one of the things that would happen was every day of the feast, there would be this procession of people. They would walk from the temple courts or precincts down to a spring called, the Gihon spring. And there the priest would take a golden pitcher and he'd fill it up with water. And then the whole procession of people would walk back to the temple area where he would then, in a ritualistic way, pour out the water from that golden pitcher on the altar.

And this was done for a couple of specific reasons. First of all, it was a way of commemorating the fact that during their journey in the wilderness, God took care of them by giving them water in the desert, which as you probably might imagine is no small thing. And there were occasions where God actually, and miraculously brought water out of a rock, and watered the people.

It's interesting, this has been just the area that I've been reading in my own Bible time. It commemorated the fact that God took care of them by giving them the water of life because without water, you can't live. And they commemorated it by the pouring out of that water.

But there was a second, a reflection that they had because the priest pouring out the water, it was a prophetic looking forward to the coming of Messiah who would come and bring life and so forth, which of course, water signifies life. There were these dual reasons for this.

And if you look again in verse 37 there, it tells us that, "*On the last... day,*" which was considered by the Jews to be the greatest day "*of the Feast*" of Tabernacles, it was at that time that Jesus chose to stand among the people and declare "*in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."*" So you can see what Jesus is doing here, can't you?

I mean, there's this picture of this water being poured out, the water of life, of how God cared for them and so forth on. And Jesus uses the timing of this celebration to make, what I believe is a very clear declaration of His Messianic role. He says to them, hey, "*If... (you're) thirsty, ...come to me and (I will give you water to) drink.*" And so forth. It's really a pretty, pretty powerful picture. But remember there was also, they were looking back, they were commemorating something that happened in the wilderness. And do you remember the story?

Essentially the people came to various areas in their journey in the wilderness and they would have a hard time finding water. And that they would inevitably begin to grumble against Moses and Aaron. Grumble, grumble, grumble. Why did you bring us out in the desert just to die and so forth?

And Moses was told to take his staff at one point in the visual area of the elders, and he was told to strike the rock with his staff. And from that would then gush water. Water would flow from that rock and take care of the people of Israel. You think about that, it an interesting picture, isn't it? I mean, think about it. You got a rock in the desert and it becomes a life giving rock, but it issues forth its life giving water when it's struck. It is an interesting picture, isn't it?

Well, it's in fact the picture of Jesus as Paul tells us. Let me put a Scripture, 1 Corinthians chapter 10. It says,

1 Corinthians 10:1-4 (NIV)

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. (and it says) They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; (look at this, pay attention here, this is great) for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, (and Paul tells us) and that rock was Christ.

Isn't that interesting? Now, he's not literally telling us that rock in the desert, that was Jesus hiding there, pretending to be a rock. He's telling us that that rock signified Jesus. He's telling us that rock is a representation of Jesus and the fact that He gives us life. But notice when He gives us life? When He's struck. It is really an interesting picture, isn't it?

He's wounded for us, and by His wounds, we are healed. Through His being struck, the issues of life that flow from Him, flow to us. And the coming, the Holy Spirit is given.

But if you'll look with me again here in John chapter 7, before the Holy Spirit can come. Before the Holy Spirit can fill the life of an individual, there is a requirement that must first take place. And it's given it to us there in verse 38,

Jesus says, "*Whoever believes in me,...*" That's what He says. "*Whoever believes in me.*" That's the requirement. And then comes the promise, "*as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from... him.*"

But I want to take just a moment if I could this morning to talk about this requirement, because here's why I want to talk about it. I'll tell you ahead of time. I want to talk about it because I think that number 1, there's a lot of people who come to church who don't sense streams or actually rivers. Your Bible may say rivers if you have a different translation, which I like better.

I like the idea of rivers. Cause it's like, there's a little more force to that than maybe just a stream. You think of a stream as, oh, it's a little stream, but a river is like a roaring... I mean, it's like, yeah, I like that idea. Anyway.

I think there's a lot of Christians who don't see rivers of living water flowing from their lives. And notice its rivers of river of living water flowing from, not to.

We were so much of a bless me club sometimes in here in the United States of America, in the body of Christ. But we're told that when the Holy Spirit does this work in our lives, that rivers of living water flow from us. And some people don't really have that going on in their lives. There's many reasons for that.

But I want to talk first about this requirement because before all that happens, Jesus says that a person must believe in Me. And I think that there are a lot of people, no, I know there's a lot of people who comfort themselves with the idea that they believe in Jesus. You hear people say it all the time.

You hear people say, that they, I believe, I believe in Jesus. Or they'll start out the first level, which, I believe in God and then we start talking about Jesus and they say, yeah, I believe in Jesus. And sometimes we even talk about what it means to become a Christian. And we tuck it in words like it sounds like, well, all you got to do is just believe in Jesus and we don't really ever go around to explain what that means.

People, I think, embrace a false sense of understanding related to that and they believe in Jesus like they believe there's a day in the middle of the week called Wednesday. You know what I mean? Or they believe in Jesus like they believe that the earth travels around the sun or something like that. Yeah, I believe in Jesus.

But there's more to it than that and we've talked about this a lot. And I wanted you, I felt led of the Lord to underscore this again today. Wonderful, wonderful verse that is given to us in the first chapter of John. Let me put it on the screen for you. John chapter 1, verse 12. We've talked about it many times, but it says,

John 1:12 (NIV)

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

Yet to all who received him, (and I like adding that word to the whole mix, and then it says) to those who believed in his name, (and that takes belief a little

further than just saying, I believe in Jesus as if I believe there was a historical figure named Jesus, but it says, *who believed in his name*, which is a biblical way of saying you believe everything He said about Himself, because the name of a person represents who He is and all of His claims about Himself) (*to all who received him, to those who believed in his name,*) *he* (what?) *gave the right to become children of God—*

And share— when I'm sharing the Lord with people I almost always use the same word picture. After I share this verse, I talk about what it means to receive something. And this word in the Greek literally means, to take, to possess. And it's an active word. I want to show you a quote. I actually shared this on Facebook this last week, but it's a quote from A.W. Tozer. One of my favorite Christian authors who's with the Lord now, but he says,

“...receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord must be an aggressive act of the total personality and not a passive [belief]...” —A.W. Tozer

“...receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord must be an aggressive act of the total personality and not a passive [belief]...”

A.W. Tozer was very much against the idea of even using the term, except Jesus. He don't like it, and he, during his life on earth, he wouldn't have come up to you and probably said, have you accepted Jesus Christ? He didn't like that phraseology because he felt like it put Jesus in the same light as a door to door salesman. It made it just, it was like too easy. And not easy in the sense that we have to work for it.

But he said it didn't really give the full understanding of what it means to embrace or to take Christ, to have Him. And Tozier probably would have said something like, have you received Christ with an aggressive act of your total personality? It takes a little bit longer to say, but it's a little bit more accurate. You got to admit. I mean, it's a little bit more accurate in terms of trying to get out of the person, what you're trying to get out of them.

And maybe that's what we should start asking people. Have you taken Christ into your life aggressively? I mean, your whole personality being involved. Have you consumed Jesus Christ? Or do you just believe in Him? And that's what people will do.

You ask questions like that; have you taken Him in? They'll say, well, I believe in God. Well, that's not what I asked you. I said, have you taken Jesus in aggressively to your entire personality? Well, I believe in Jesus. That's not what

I asked. I didn't ask if you believe in Jesus. I asked if you have received Him with all that you are? Have you taken Him in aggressively?

Why am I stressing all of this? Because I believe that this is what it means to be a Christian, and I think that this is the requirement before we can have rivers of living water flowing from us.

I think there's a lot of people in the body of Christ who believe in Jesus, but His life really isn't in them, because belief is more or less an intellectual assent. I believe in Jesus. I mean, all the facts just, they all line up. You've got prophecy, you've got the historicity of the Bible, you've got archeological developments that have happened over the years. It's all very convincing.

And so intellectually they come to the conclusion, yeah, yeah. But there's something about the person of Jesus that they have yet to uncover and receive the fullness of who He is. What He accomplished for them on the cross. Recognizing their personal need for Him and embracing Him with all their lives. And that's really what it means. And Jesus said that when that happens, there's a promise that come to us. And that is that rivers of living water will flow from within.

And then you'll notice if you're looking back at John 7 with me, that in verse 39, John gives us a running commentary of what Jesus just said by saying that, "*By this he meant the Spirit, ...*" And the idea here is that this living water is flowing from the believer and this should be part of what's happening in the life of a Christian.

This is what should be happening in our lives. How do you like that? This is the kind of stuff that should be happening. Rivers of living water should be flowing from our lives. So here's the question. Are they, or aren't they? And we all have to personally take inventory.

Now I shared one reason why rivers of living water may not be flowing from an individual. And that is that they've embraced an easy believism that really doesn't have a biblical sort of a correlation to what it means to really receive Christ.

But I believe also that it is possible to be an honest to goodness, born-again, washed in the blood believer, and still not have the rivers of living water flowing from your life. There can be a lot of reasons. There can be a lot of things that could be standing in the way of that power of the Spirit, that work of the Spirit flowing through us.

And I could probably sit here and try to share some of them, but you need to take your own personal inventory. And if you're not seeing rivers of living water, then you need to ask the Lord, why? Why? Why is it, Lord, that I'm not seeing that? Because I should be. In some cases, we just need to step out in faith. We just need to start trusting God and start going with it.

I got a note. Some, most of you, several of you, our families know the Simmerleys. I don't think they're here in this service. But Bob heads up our broken chains ministry and Bob and Joe are wonderful people. They've got a son by the name of Ken who married a girl from Minnesota and they're back in Minnesota.

I just got an email from Ken just the other day and he was telling me how the Lord had been speaking to him for some time about an area of ministry that he wanted him to get involved in. And Ken was just waiting. Oh, we're so good at waiting. We are very good at waiting. We're not nearly as good at doing, but we're great at waiting.

But anyway, and he was admitting to me, he was saying, I was just waiting. But he said, the Lord has been teaching me lately about what it means to just step out in obedience and just go for it. And the Lord has opened up a door for him to work with a pregnancy resource center in his area. And to do abstinence training, and speech, and talks to schools and so forth. Similar to what our own Hope Pregnancy Center does and so forth.

But he was really excited, but he was expressing to me in this note that he just, he hadn't really gotten off the dime, so to speak. And the Lord had been really challenging him to just get busy.

And there's a lot of reasons again, why we don't get busy. I was reading a story that was shared by the late author, theologian A.B. Simpson. Some of you know who A.B. Simpson is. He actually was the founder of the Christian Missionary Alliance churches or group of churches. You might've heard of Simpson College in Reading, California and so forth.

And interestingly enough, and I don't know why there's the correlation, but A.W. Tozer pastored at a Christian Missionary Alliance church too. So there's a connection there, although I was just reading from both of these guys. But anyway, he tells a story that I thought I would share with you this morning.

He writes it, he's a little old fashioned in the way he tells things, so I updated the language a little bit for you, but I think it's a very interesting story, so let me just share it with you. He writes,

It is not necessary that we should always be serving or giving in some huge or spectacular way. Indeed, sometimes we are looking too far off for the service that God expects of us. Right where we are may very well find us the opening and the channel which would bring blessing to some heart that God has brought into our life to prepare us for future blessing to a wider circle.

Now, what A.B. Simpson is going to be talking about here is, why sometimes living waters don't flow through us like they should is because we don't recognize the ministries when they come. He writes and says that,

There was once an anxious, earnest Christian woman who was crying out to God, wondering why it seemed she was never being given a chance to move beyond the confines of her home in terms of ministry. She wanted, like other women, to go out and reach a broader audience, to do a bigger work. And while she was concerned about these things, her bright little girl was playing beside her, and asking her preoccupied mother to help her with her little doll, which was broken and needed to be fixed. And which, in fact, was the object of her life. And again she came to her mother with her little trouble. And the mother anxious and worried with her own spiritual needs pushed her daughter away and even rather harshly sent her away. Told her not to bother her as she was busy with more important things.

Wearied and disappointed the little girl went off alone to a corner and sat down with her little broken doll and cried herself to sleep. A little while afterward the mother turned around and saw her little girl had been crying with the broken doll lying in her lap, and God spoke to the woman and said, my child, in seeking what you considered some more important service for Me, you have broken a little heart. You wanted to do something for me, and your little child was the messenger I sent. And that service to her was the test I gave you.

And then He added, he that is faithful in that which is small will be faithful also in more. And he that is unfaithful in the small things is unfit for the greater. And the mother learned her lesson. She picked up her little girl and kissed her awake, and then she asked God and her daughter to forgive her. And from that hour she began to pour out the love of Jesus on any and every object that came in her way. And as she became faithful to do the things that were right there in front of her, God widened her opportunities. The day finally came when she was able to tell her story, her experience, to hundreds and even thousands of her fellow

servants in Christ. She learned that God does not need our great service, but simply that we should meet Him in the things that He brings to us. And that we should be channels for blessing and love.

It's a nice little story, but it underscores an important point and a mistake that I think some Christians make from time to time as it relates to ministry. They're waiting for their ministry to reveal itself. I've had people say to me, pastor Paul, I'm just waiting on the Lord to see what my spiritual gift is.

Well, technically, I suppose there's really nothing wrong with that. The question though, needs to be asked, what are you doing while you're waiting? Because I think that, I really think that while we're serving the Lord, those things become revealed.

Because once again, we see this principle in the Word of God, that as we are faithful in the small things, God will open doors and opportunities for larger areas of ministry. But we don't really want to mess with the small things. We don't feel like we've really got the time and energy to really put our effort into the small things, and therefore, we're just waiting for the big thing.

I think we've done ourselves a disservice in the body of Christ by using certain terms; names titles even. I've never liked the word, Minister to describe somebody who works full time as a pastor like myself. Never liked that term because it seems to place the idea of ministry on the full time person.

And we look at that as our understanding of what ministry is and I'm waiting for my ministry. And what that means is I'm waiting for the ability to quit my job and just go full time into the ministry. What? That is the dumbest thing. I mean, it really is.

Listen, you are right now in full time ministry. I don't care what you do or don't do as it relates to a job, or your tent making, or money making service. Whatever that is, that's what God gave you. But that was never meant to get in the way of ministry. That was never meant to be an excuse why you couldn't be in the ministry or do the work of the ministry. You are a full time minister. That's one of the reasons I never liked that term for pastors.

In fact, it really isn't used that way in the Bible. In fact, what it says in the Book of Ephesians is that, pastors and teachers are to do their work to train up the people to do the work of the ministry. (Ephesians 4:12) My job is to equip you to do the work of the ministry. You're the ministers. How you like that? I'm going to start greeting you that way when you come in. Hey minister, aren't you

that minister over there at Calvary Chapel? People say that to me from time to time.

I say, well, I'm about 1 of about 700. That's the way it ought to be, right? We're all ministers, we're all ministering doing the work of the ministry, so I think it's time to get busy.

Christians miss out on a tremendous amount of blessing because they're not doing the work of the ministry. They're not letting those rivers of living water flow out of their lives, from them. And we come week after week and we hear the Word of God. And we take it in and then we go home. And turn on the TV and just exist.

Have you ever wondered why people who go on short term missions trips come back so excited for the things of the Lord? It's because they've gotten off their chair and begun to exercise their spiritual muscles. It's thrilling. It's exciting.

And anybody who thinks serving the Lord or being a Christian is boring, isn't serving the Lord. Because if they were, they would know that it's anything but boring. It is exciting. It is thrilling. It is one of the most full fit, well, I won't even say one of, I'll even go further than that. I'll say it's the most fulfilling thing that you can do.

So how about all of us begin to start our day, each and every morning with a very simple prayer. Lord, let me be a blessing to someone today and may the rivers of living water, which You have placed in me through Your Holy Spirit, come gushing out. And that doesn't,... There's all kinds of ways for that to happen.

Let me close with one final Scripture from Colossians. It's from the third chapter of Colossians up on the screen here for you so we can see it together. Paul writes and says,

Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV)

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

And I want you to notice it is the Lord Christ you are serving whatever you do. Do you know that one of the most fulfilling things that can happen in a person's life is when they begin to look at the little things they do in a day. The little things.

And for you moms who have young kids, sometimes you just get overwhelmed with the mundane of traipsing around the house, picking up after your children, changing dirty diapers, getting another meal prepared. And by the time you get cleaned up from that one, you got to start another. And all these things can just become overwhelming. It's and you men, same thing, just the mundane, the everyday, and so forth.

It is one of the most exciting things in the world when we begin to do those things as unto the Lord and we begin to do them with all of our heart. And we begin to mix a desire to allow those things to become anointed and blessed of the Lord by allowing the living waters, those rivers of living waters to flow out of us, even in those small things.

Whatever, and that's what the passage said in Colossians, "*Whatever you do,*" do it with all of your heart, do it in the name of the Lord. Do it with a whole heart.

Just lately, that's something God has been really laying on my heart in my own prayer time. Just Lord, I want to serve You with a whole heart. I don't want to serve you with halfhearted devotion. I want to give all of my heart to You. And I want to let the waters, the life that You've given me, begin to flow out and touch other people.

It starts guys by just being available. Lord, I'm yours today. I'm yours today. I just want to do what You want me to do. I'm here. I'm open. I'm available. I'm Yours. I love You and bring it on, because there's some life in me that needs to come bursting forth.

Guys, this is a promise. This is a promise in the Word of God. You have that life in you if you are in Christ. Now, let's let it out, amen?

Let's stand together.