

Seven Last Words Part 5

We continue our sermon series on the seven last words of Christ from the cross. The fifth word or phrase is found only in John's gospel. The King James Version of John 19:28 has only two words: **"I thirst."** **John 19:28** (The NIV reads, "I am thirsty.")

Don't overlook the importance of the obvious. We don't want to miss the importance of this simple statement. **"I thirst" reveals his humanity.** Jesus said he was thirsty because he was thirsty. During the first few centuries of the church there were serious arguments concerning the nature of Jesus. Was he God disguised as a man? Some argued whether Jesus was really God come in the flesh. If he was, did he really feel pain on the cross, was he really tempted like us? Does he really know what it is like to be a human being? The answer is found in this fifth word from the cross. "I thirst." God incarnate was thirsty. Jesus was suffering from thirst, feeling and experiencing all of the agony of crucifixion.

Why is this so important? It means we can believe what the early church councils clarified for us, that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. Neither his divinity nor his humanity are diminished by the other. Fully God, Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, knew men's thoughts, calmed the sea, walked on water, cast out devils and conquered death. Fully human, Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, obeyed his parents, asked questions, grew weary, angry, hungry, slept, rested, marveled, wept, groaned, prayed and grew thirsty. As God and man, Jesus experienced everything we experience, yet he was without sin. He understands the things we face in the real world. He understands when we are tempted or when we are suffering pain or betrayal. He knows about being tired, overwhelmed, burdened down. The bible speaks of Jesus as our High Priest when it declares, **"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin."** **Hebrews 4:15.**

His thirst on the cross assures us he knows what we are experiencing today. Because of that, the writer of Hebrews goes on to encourage us. **"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."** **Hebrews 4:16.** We go to him with confidence that he wants to help us in our time of need. He understands all we face, all we bear.

John saw it as fulfillment of another of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the

Messiah. **“Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, ‘I am thirsty.’”** Previously we mentioned the accuracy of Psalm 22 in foretelling the experience of Jesus on the cross. Psalm 22:15 says “my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.” John almost makes it sound as if Jesus, realizing the Scripture must be fulfilled, made sure he said “I thirst” whether he was thirsty or not. Understand...

“I thirst” reveals the extent of his agony. He wasn’t acting, carrying out his role and speaking his lines. Keep in mind what has happened. After eating the Passover meal with his disciples, he left the upper room and walked out of the city of Jerusalem, across the Kidron Valley to the Garden of Gethsemane where he prayed in agony until he literally began to sweat blood, the capillaries bursting under the extreme strain. He is arrested in the garden, taken to Caiaphas house, tried, condemned, taken to Pilate, then to Herod, then back to Pilate. In between he is beaten, scourged, mocked by the Romans, forced to carry a heavy cross to the place of the skull where he is nailed to that cross and crucified. It has been hours since that Passover meal. His body is exhausted and in agony. He has lost a great deal of blood by this time and he is dehydrated. He has now been hanging on the cross for six hours. His muscles are contracting, seizing up. This wasn’t some artificial cry just to fulfill an ancient prophecy. Arthur Pink wrote, **“...His whole body wracked with pain, His mouth parched, He cries, ‘I thirst.’ It was not an appeal for pity, nor a request for the alleviation of His sufferings; it gave expression to the intensity of the agonies He was undergoing.” ...Arthur Pink**

Psalm 22 gives us the picture of a man who is totally spent. **“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.” Psalm 22:14-15.** This is the description of someone who has been emptied of everything. Jesus has poured himself out for us. There is nothing left to give of himself.

In September of 2007 I had cancer surgery and a day after coming home from the hospital I began to hemorrhage from that kidney and had to go back to the hospital. I remember thinking as they took me to try to stop the bleeding, I could die and there is nothing I can do about it. It felt like they could have cut my arms and legs off and I couldn’t have lifted a finger to stop them. I had lost so much blood that I was just spent. Poured out. I understand in just a small way how Jesus felt. He had poured himself, his life, his blood, out for us. When he said “I thirst”, it was

an expression of just how emptied out he was. His strength had “dried up” the Psalmist said. He was spent. He had given everything for us.

“I thirst” reveals the universal need. All of us need water. We can’t live without it. Wars have been fought over rights to water. It is necessary for survival on this planet so we all can identify with Jesus as he thirsts on the cross. The people of Israel, both in Jesus’ time and today, understand the importance of water to sustain life. But as we identify with his need for water, we also recognize our need for what Jesus uniquely offer to us.

It is so appropriate that John is the one that tells us Jesus was thirsty, because it is John’s gospel that has given us this image of Jesus as “Living Water”. It is in John 4 that Jesus has the encounter with a woman at the well of Samaria. He asks her for a drink from the well and she questions him as to why he, a Jew, would ask her, a Samaritan for a drink since they did not associate with each other. Jesus said, **“If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” John 4:10.**

Living water! The Samaritan woman represents all of us when she asks of Jesus, **“Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty...”** Our need, our thirst for water is universal. All of us will perish without water. But there is something deeper, something more for which we all thirst. Our need goes beyond water to that need in our soul – a need for forgiveness, for love, for meaning and purpose for our life. All of us are searching, desiring to quench the universal thirst. It was St. Augustine who wrote, **“You have made us for yourself O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” St. Augustine** We are universally thirsty and our thirst can only be satisfied when we come to Christ. We perish without the Living Water that only Jesus provides. The water he offers is salvation, cleansing, eternal life, the life of His Holy Spirit flowing within us. The water he offers provides peace and hope and rest.

It was in John 7 at the Feast of Tabernacles that Jesus proclaimed, **“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” John 7:37-38**

The irony of this is not lost on us. From the cross Jesus, the one who says if we are thirsty to come to him and drink, cries out “I thirst.” Jesus, the Light of the world now he hangs on a cross in darkness in the middle of the day. Jesus, the source of living water now cries out in

desperate thirst. How can this be? And what we realize as we hear this cry is Jesus thirsts in our place. His thirst is for us, in our behalf. He emptied himself so we could be filled up with his life. He thirsts so we won't ever have to thirst again.

Jesus told the Samaritan woman, **“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”** John 4:13-14 Every other source we tap will leave us thirsty again. Every thing with which we fill our lives other than Christ will leave us disappointed, thirsty, dissatisfied. As Augustine said, we will be restless until we find our rest in him. We will be thirsty until we quench our thirst in Christ.

“I thirst” reveals our eternal source. Jesus was forsaken on the cross so we would never be forsaken. He bore our sins so we could be forgiven of our sins. He died on the cross so we could have eternal life. He thirsted in order that the thirst of our soul could be forever satisfied. His “I thirst” points us to our eternal source. It's not just a cool sip of spiritual water to help us through a bad day or a rough spot in life. It is a spring of living water that provides life and hope and peace now and forever. From the thirsting Christ on the cross comes the Living Water that forever satisfies.

John will never forget what he saw and heard as he watched his Savior thirsting and dying on that cross. Fast forward several decades and John is now an old man, exiled to a tiny island in the Aegean Sea. God gives John a revelation of the final things in the book we call the Revelation. John saw the saints of God assembled before the throne and said, **“Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”** Revelation 7:16-17

John never forgot what he heard as Jesus cried out “I thirst.” Jesus never forgot either. He who thirsted in our place provides for us so we will never thirst again. He leads us to springs of living water and satisfies us with himself!. He is our Living Water.

The invitation stands for us today. For all who are restless, the invitation is “come and find rest in Jesus.” For all who are thirsty, seeking for something to satisfy, the invitation is come to him and drink freely. In the very last chapter of Revelation we read, **“Come! Whoever**

is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.”

Revelation 22:17

That is the invitation the Lord offers to you today. It is the invitation I offer on his behalf. Come to him and drink. He drank the cup of sorrow and sin and judgment so you could drink that living water from the cup of salvation.

We are going to pray and then we are going to worship together. The pastors will be here at the front to pray with you. During the Sundays of Lent we have been offering communion as part of our worship. For all who have placed your faith in Christ we invite you to feel free to come to the table of the Lord this morning and receive communion.

If you don't know Christ as the Savior and Lord of your life, I encourage you to accept his invitation to come and receive that gift of salvation, the free gift of the water of life. Turn to him in repentance and faith and He will save you and change you forever by his grace. As others are coming forward to receive the elements of communion, why don't you come forward and allow us the privilege of praying for you to receive Christ as your Savior and Lord. We will be here at the front to pray with you and help you. Let's stand together as we pray.

“Lord, we are thirsty and we realize our thirst can only be satisfied in you. You alone have the water of life. You alone provide the living water we need. We are thirsty for your mercy and grace. Thirsty for the salvation you provide for us through your death on the cross. Thank you Lord that you bore our sins, that you thirsted in our place so we would never thirst again. We come to you in faith, so thankful for your invitation to come and drink freely from the water of life so we will never thirst again. May our hearts always be satisfied in you and you alone, today and always. In Jesus name. Amen.”

Come for communion, come for prayer and let's worship the Lord together!