

Thanks for your prayer for my parents this week. As you know, Pastor Phil tested positive last weekend for covid and my mom followed suit right after him. They had already planned to be gone on vacation this week - cause again you announce your retirement and you've gotta those vacation days used up. So they are both doing well and recouping from sickness now somewhere on a beach. Which sounds terrible to me but is my mother's dream spot. I have a weird relationship with water. I stepped on a sting ray in the ocean when I was 12. I've never been back in any ocean or any other large body of water since. I've looked at the ocean from multiple different continents and states - I've seen the Dead Sea and I lived right beside the Irish Sea - but as a rule I've never been in. Partly this is from the sting ray thing but mostly it's because I don't like to be wet. Swimming is not my thing even in a pool - I'll pass. Cause you're all wet and you're in water. Cause then I'd be wet and weird things live in water. But, I love to look at water. From a coastal vantage point I could sit and watch water crash over rocks all day long. I love to watch it rain. And I'm very happy to be on a lake of water like in a boat. I just don't want to be in the water.

And, I love to drink water. In fact, it's a fun fact that I really only ever drink water. And I never drink anything with carbonation. I hate pop and always have. The problem with not liking anything with carbonation was working in Europe for a decade where there are multiple different waters - still or sparkling, or in some places fizzy water or you might need to order water with gas or without gas - and you need to know what country you're in to know how to order. But the worst is that in central Europe they also have table water or sort of a middle water. It's between still and sparkling and it's disgusting. In my opinion. Obviously, millions of people disagree with my opinion. And, that's fine. They're wrong, of course, but we can agree to disagree. So, this one time I'm in Poland for a week - staying in a castle - as you do - and we could not drink the tap water and arguing that the water served at dinner was not in fact flat, plain, without bubbles, or no gas was pointless. The bottled water we could buy in the hotel was tiny and expensive so I was rationing sips of pure, clear water and I don't really drink anything else. By the end of that week I was so thirsty. I was desperate for water. I remember flying from there and getting to the next place and them asking me if I was hungry - I don't know I'm just so thirsty. I could drink an ocean's worth of water. I don't want to be in it but I want to drink it. I need all the water.

Water is necessary for life. And water has lots of meaning in the Scripture. At the end of Revelation 22 we read, **“The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.” Revelation 22:17**

Three different people give an invitation for someone to come. The Holy Spirit invites someone, the bride – God’s people who have now been sealed in a forever covenant with the bridegroom, the Lamb of God, the bride collectively also invites someone. And, the one who hears, which makes us think of the letters that started this entire book. John closes each of the 7 letters to each one of the churches with the phrase – **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”** It seems the individuals who make up the bride, the church, are also giving this invitation for someone. This begs the question – who are they inviting? Is the invitation for someone to come to them or for someone to come to where they are?

Bible scholars are divided on the answer. I think it’s both/and. Jesus had just declared to John in chapter 22 – Behold! I am coming soon! So it would make sense the Holy Spirit, the church, and the church people are now all seconding that – Yes, Jesus, come soon! Return and come for us and take us to be with you forever! It makes sense. And, it is most definitely our prayer and our long awaited desire. It’s one of the core doctrines of the faith – we believe in the soon coming King. It is in fact the major event in what we would call the redemptive-historical plan of God – meaning His plan to redeem and save us from the very beginning – not an emergency meeting with the godhead after Adam and Eve sinned – uh oh what do we do now – let’s get a plan. Nope. The plan for redemption and to make all things new was set in place in the Garden of Eden. So far in the plan we’ve got Jesus birth, death, resurrection, ascension, and then the giving of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. The next event is His return. So, maybe what the Holy Spirit, the church, and the people in the church are saying in verse 17 is the prayer we’ve all since prayed – Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.

Or, it could be the Holy Spirit, the church, and all God’s people are saying to all those who are still outside of the church, all those to whom the judgments John has just witnessed in this vision would indeed apply, all those who have not yet repented – maybe the invitation is for them to come to Jesus. Maybe this is a call for us as the church, and the people sitting

inside the church to take up the cry of the Holy Spirit and go into the highways, and byways, and country lanes, and public schools, and factories, and office buildings, and retail spaces, and coffee shops and announce – come to Jesus! He’s so good and so faithful and so loving. Come to Him all who are weary from life and exhausted from worry and worn out from trying to be good enough. Maybe that’s who the Holy Spirit, the church, and the people are calling out to and inviting?

Or, maybe it’s both. Maybe we cry Come, Lord Jesus but because we know you’re coming soon we also go out into our world and issue the cry to everyone we meet – come to Jesus – it’s not too late – come to Jesus! Who should we send this invitation to? Well, verse 17 said we send it to all those who are thirsty. All who are thirsty should come to Jesus and all those who are needing a free drink from the water of life.

Given my weirdness with water this should make me uneasy – I like the drinking of water bit – especially when I’m thirsty – but the water of life part sounds like I’m going to get wet! But, this water is the one exception I’m willing to make. **What’s so special about this water?**

This water is for anyone and everyone

John wrote – “Whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.” This isn’t secret water that you have to break the code to get – is it still or sparkling, or that weird middle water. If you want to partake you can. If you want to experience the water of life you can.

One time Jesus was at a festival and was teaching. On the last day He stood up and said, **“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.” By this he meant the Spirit.” John 7:37-39** Again, this water is made available to anyone and whoever will believe.

What is this water that is available? It seems like waters of life – waters of true living water – are waters of salvation. Whoever believes in Jesus as the Scripture says – believing that He was truly the Son of God born to set us free, to die for us, the One who rose again, the One John saw seated on a throne – if we believe in Him we’ll have life that begins in us as the Holy Spirit takes up residence inside of us and begins to cleanse us, wash us, and free us

with living water. This water begins as salvation and continues to spring up inside of us as a constant source of Holy Spirit fueled life.

This water is free of charge

Unlike the smallest most expensive glass bottle of plain, still water available in a Polish castle – I mean seriously how pretentious does that sound? But, the water the Holy Spirit is inviting us to come take and drink is free to anyone and everyone who wishes to take it. The prophet Isaiah – who really is in the top tier of best prophets ever – wrote about this as well hundreds of years before. Isaiah said, **“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a ruler and commander of the peoples. Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations you do not know will come running to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor.”** Isaiah 55:1-5

Everyone knows wine and milk are not free – they don’t just come out of the air – someone owns the cow or the vineyard, someone spent time and needs payment for their labor. Everyone also knows you cannot buy something without money. It’s implied in the word buy that you will need something with which to purchase it. But, the invitation, Isaiah sees, is for those lacking resources to come and buy. People could spend what they did not have. Take what they didn’t purchase. Have what they did not earn. Furthermore, Isaiah is saying that they won’t need literal food when they can have spiritual food that will truly satisfy and that their souls will delight in. If they’ll listen to what Isaiah is saying he’s trying to tell them something better is on the horizon – a new covenant will be made between God and His people. A new king will come – in the line of David but a different kind of king and leader. This one will be over not just Israel but all nations. And all of this will be made possible because of the chapters just before this where Isaiah had described the work of what he called the Suffering Servant.

Jesus' death on the cross makes it possible for us to have salvation free of charge. We don't have to pay anything to drink of this water – Jesus already paid it when He hung upon the cross. Drink as much as you want from the river of life – because you don't need any money to partake, you won't be billed later for it either, and there's nothing you can do to earn a chance to drink - it's just free to all those who will come and drink from the water of salvation and true life.

Then see how it all gets fulfilled. Jesus makes a new covenant with us, His people, when He marries the brides. That's what that marriage picture in Revelation 19 is all about – covenant. It's a promise to forever be faithful to us and to care for us. Then in chapter 21, God announces His dwelling will forever be with us – and **“To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.” Revelation 21:6-7** It's reminiscent of the covenant God made with King David – when He said His love would never be taken from David's family and he would never cease to have a son on the throne. God promised then that He would be a father to David's son and His son would be like His own. Now, God is saying the same thing to those who would come to Him and drink of the water of life.

Jesus becomes that final son of David but in a whole new way. It's why Jesus announces in 22:16 - He is both the Offspring of David – in the line or lineage of King David – a descendant and also the Root of David – meaning He goes back before David even came to be and He'll be a new branch – a new kind of King.

The water of life is salvation and it costs us nothing because Jesus paid the price and it's available to anyone and everyone who wishes to come and drink of it. Salvation is on offer because the King desires it should be so. And this water will be good, it will last forever, we will delight in it, it will satisfy us, and it will bring life.

But, that's not all we learn about this water.

This water is also deep and deeply satisfying

This means it won't run dry. There's another water story in the book of John where Jesus is talking to a woman at a well. I love this story for a million reasons and not the least of them is because Jesus has no problem standing alone speaking to a woman and having a deep theological conversation with her too. Where He knew His disciples were not yet ready to

understand who exactly He was He instead goes ahead and announces to this intelligent, dynamic, seeker-of-truth woman that He is in fact the Messiah. But I digress – because I had a head cold while writing this. But, in that conversation Jesus tells her He has living water available. When she asks where she can get it Jesus responds – **“Everyone who drinks this water [from Jacob’s well] 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** This water was deeper than a well – it had no end. Because when we drink of the water of life – the water of salvation – we’re drinking in Jesus Himself who has no beginning or end. There’s plenty of water.

And, this water is so deeply satisfying. The Psalmist said, **“Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and His wonderful deeds, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.” Psalm 107:8-9** Have you ever been there? A time when you thought you were dying of thirst? Mouth was on fire or lungs were on fire or no one would sell you plain water? Now take that physical feeling and make it spiritual. Have you been there? Nothing would fix the problem, nothing would take away the fear, nothing would end the battle, nothing would make you feel whole, nothing would satisfy? Nothing except Jesus. Nothing eases pain, comforts grief, heals wounds, cares for your heart, loves you like Jesus. This is what is on offer. Whatever else you’ve tried to satisfy the longing in your heart – the deepest desires. Whatever you’ve tried to self-medicate or self-soothe or self-fix – I’m guessing it didn’t truly satisfy. I mean maybe it did for a minute until the regret or the guilt or the intrusive thoughts began and the feelings you were trying to get rid of all came crashing back pushing you deeper into a never ending cycle of destruction. Have you tried coming to Jesus and drinking deeply of the water of life – because Jesus will truly and deeply satisfy.

He satisfies us and fills us with good things. Jesus is so good. We can come to Him feeling as if we are dying and He fills us with life. When we think we’ve run out of steam – no – there’s more to drink. The depths of Jesus and His mercy go deeper than your sorrow or fear or shame. The depths of Jesus goodness go deeper than you’ve been willing to explore. The depths of Jesus forgiveness go deeper and further than you could run. The depths of His love go deeper than you dared to dream. The depths of His strength and power go deeper than the ache in your weary bones. It’s okay – even for me – to get all wet – to plunge in

head first into all Jesus has – this water is deep and it alone will truly satisfy all you’re longing for.

This water is also restorative

Isaiah wrote, **“This is what the Lord says – he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, [my beloved one] whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.”** **Isaiah 44:2-3** The one who made us, formed us, helped us in the past, the one who loves us, and has chosen us promises to also pour out water – to pour out His Holy Spirit – His living water – on us when we are dry and thirsty and weary. What’s more He’ll keep pouring so that it covers our children and theirs and the generation after that.

This is good news. Maybe it’s just good news to me because I’m weary today, but I hope it’s good news for you too. This spring of living water restores us. I don’t like to get wet but if it’s the restorative water of the Holy Spirit I’m in line – I’d like it poured out on me. Into the dry spots, the cracked places, the desert places, the places you’ve tried to keep hidden from everyone including the Lord – He longs to pour the water of His Holy Spirit over you to reach every place and to restore you. Don’t be afraid to go all in with Jesus. Don’t be afraid to let Him come and restore you to a place of health and wholeness and a place where you can rest in His peace and goodness.

This is the invitation Revelation ends with – The Holy Spirit and the church and the people in the church inviting Jesus to come and inviting all those who need salvation to come to Jesus. And all of us – the ones in the church and the ones just making their way to Jesus find that the invitation is actually for all of us who are thirsty for more of Jesus – to come and take the free gift of the water of life which is so deep and so deeply satisfying and it restores us so completely.

And, then we hear once more, **“He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.”** **Revelation 22:20-21** He’s coming soon – the invitation is for now and then. We continue to announce to those around us and to ourselves – Jesus is coming soon and He’s inviting me to come to Him. And the last line of the Bible reminds us that it’s all grace between now and then. Grace is what brings us to the waters. Grace is how we are saved.

Grace is what will keep us. Grace will see us home. Grace covers us. Grace is poured out over us. Grace will be with us.

Will you stand as we close this service. If you need to drink from the water of life today you can slip out of your row and come to the altar or you can turn and make your seat an altar. If you need for today to be a day of salvation there's good news – it can be! We would love to pray with you as you come to Jesus to begin a new life with Him.

If you feel like your spirit is just thirsty and in need of a fresh drink of living water – if you've been trying to satisfy the longing of your heart someplace else or somewhere else or in some other way – and you just need to spend some time with Jesus – again these altars are open –

Or maybe you just feel a bit weary and dry today and need Him to restore strength to you or the power of the Holy Spirit in you. There's a place here to pray for that too

Or maybe you just need to feel God's grace cover you

Can we just spend some time in prayer this morning as the worship team sings?