

SUNDAY DEVOTIONS
31 MAY 2020 – PENTECOST

OPENING PRAYER

With many voices we praise You, O God. In different ways we serve you. As we assemble before you today we pray that you would send your Spirit upon us and that you would take our diversity and mould it into a common theme of thanksgiving. We pray that you would weave us and the gifts that we offer into a whole cloth of service that will blanket the world with your love, your true goodness and your glory through Jesus Christ, our Living Lord. Dwell, we pray, within our worship and within our hearts that we may bless you and bring everlasting praise to your name. Amen.

SONG [There is a Redeemer](#) CCLI 11483

PSALM 104:24-34, 35b

24 O Lord, how manifold are your works!
 In wisdom you have made them all;
 the earth is full of your creatures.

25 Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
 creeping things innumerable are there,
 living things both small and great.

26 There go the ships,
 and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.

27 These all look to you
 to give them their food in due season;
28 when you give to them, they gather it up;
 when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

29 When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
 when you take away their breath, they die
 and return to their dust.

30 When you send forth your spirit,[a] they are created;
 and you renew the face of the ground.

31 May the glory of the Lord endure forever;
 may the Lord rejoice in his works—

32 who looks on the earth and it trembles,
 who touches the mountains and they smoke.

33 I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;
 I will sing praise to my God while I have being.

34 May my meditation be pleasing to him,
 for I rejoice in the Lord.

35 Let sinners be consumed from the earth,
 and let the wicked be no more.
 Bless the Lord, O my soul.
 Praise the Lord!

PRAYER OF ADORATION

Give us just a spark
on this day, Imaginative God,
to kindle our smouldering apathy
until we burst into bonfires
to melt all the injustice
which threatens to consume the world.

Give us just a word
this day, Poet of Pentecost,
that we might be the voice
of those dispersed by fears,
that we might proclaim the good news
to all we would meet.

Give us a cool breeze
this day, Shattering Spirit,
stirring and shaking us
until we become a storm
of hopes to clear the despair
from all our neighbourhoods and lands.

Give us yourself this day,
God in Community, Holy in One. Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Spirit of Pentecost, would that all would tell of your wonders in our lives, your overflowing grace – but we are too busy complaining of someone’s social media post. Would that we might share the Spirit which has transformed our lives, but we bottle it up, hoping to sell it on the internet. Would that we might let go of all the envy we have about others, but we let erode our souls day by day.

Forgive us and pour your mercy into the closed rooms of our hearts. Breathe your peace upon us, that we might be healers of brokenness. Breathe your hope upon us, that we might open ourselves to the lonely. Breathe your love into us, that we might be as generous and welcoming as Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Hear the words of Christ:
“If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven them.”
Therefore know for sure
that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved.

Brothers and sisters in Christ,
Be at peace.
Your sins are forgiven.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

SONG [Holy Spirit Rain Down](#) CCLI 2405227

BIBLE READINGS

[Numbers 11:24-30](#)

[Acts 2:1-21](#)

[John 7:37-39](#)

SERMON [Being thirsty in a barren land](#) [sermon.mp3](#)

SONG [What the Lord has done in me](#) CCLI 2582803

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Spirit of God, come among us. Stir us to action. Inspire us to share the good news of God's love with others in the ways they need to hear it. Raise up willing servants so that pastors, associates in ministry, lay volunteers and congregation members might speak your words of love at all times. (Acts 2:1-21)

Creator God, you have wonderfully and marvellously made all that exists. From the greatest to the least, we depend on you for our very lives. In gratitude for your bounty, help us to share all that we have so that others may not hunger, may have shelter and adequate clothing. You have given all this and more to us, and we thank you. (Psalm 104:25-35)

Life-giving God, you have given breath and sinew to all of humanity. You have adopted us through your son, Jesus Christ, as your own children. When we don't know what to ask for, you always know what we need. Send your Spirit to bring life to those whom we choose not to see, those who live in fear, those who need to know they are welcomed and loved, those whose names we do not yet know as the names of our brothers and sisters in you. (Romans 8:14-27)

Mysterious God, you reveal your presence to us in many ways, although we sometimes choose not to recognize you. You heal the injured, comfort the lonely and bereaved, and offer hope to the desperate.

Today, we pray especially for...

Guide us to be your presence, bringing your joy to everyone we meet. (John 14:8-17)

Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

SONG [Sweet Wind](#) CCLI 1469175

WORD OF MISSION AND BLESSING

Go out into the world,
sent as Christ Jesus was sent,
gifted and empowered for the common good.
Dream dreams, pursue visions
and speak of God's goodness
in the words of those who would hear.

And may God give hope to your dreaming;
May Christ Jesus set rivers of life flowing within you,
and may the Holy Spirit unite you as one body and set you ablaze with joy.
Amen.

Bonus Song [Eagle's Wings](#) CCLI 2478168

BEING THIRSTY IN A BARREN LAND

Pentecost Year A

Num. 11:24-30; Ps. 104:24-35b; Acts 2:1-21; Jn. 7:37-39

31/05/2020

How much water should you drink per day? ... Some have said that about eight glasses a day is what you should aim for. This advice appears to have come from a 1945 recommendation of the Food and Nutrition Board of the United States National Research Council, which stated: “A suitable allowance of water for adults is 2.5 litres daily in most instances. Most of this quantity is in prepared foods.”

However, according to the CSIRO, there is really no hard and fast rule on how much water you need to drink. How much water each one of us needs depends on a range of factors, such as our sex, bodyweight and how much physical activity we do. Another thing to consider is where you live. Those who live in warmer and more humid climates tend to sweat more and thereby lose more fluid.

On a hot day we can lose anywhere from 100 millilitres to several litres per day, depending on our activity levels and the temperature. Apparently, it's quite easy to lose between 1 to 3 per cent of our total body fluid. When that happens, it causes mild dehydration, and we can get impaired mood, low concentration levels, increased headaches, and so on.

Those who work or exercise in hot climates lose the most fluid—up to 2.5 litres of sweat in an hour in extreme circumstances. Those fluids need to be replaced pretty quickly, otherwise it's going to fairly rapidly have an effect on your subsequent performance, not to mention your overall health, if that situation continues.

So, as we all know, water is important for life. And if we forget to drink appropriate amounts of water or other appropriate fluids of some kind, we suffer physically. Fortunately, we have an inbuilt gauge to let us know when we need to drink. It's called “thirst.” Having the sensation of being thirsty is God's way of telling us that we lack in that department.

Jesus had a lot to say about water and being thirsty. While our reading from John's account of the gospel, this morning consists of only three verses, it packs a very powerful theological and spiritual punch. John writes:

37 On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, 38 and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” 39 Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39)

Now, the event that provided the context for these words of Jesus, was a celebration known as the Festival of the Tabernacles, when the religious leaders of Jerusalem would gather the people together for a cleansing ritual of the temple.

Although not mentioned often in the New Testament, the Festival of Tabernacles was one of the “big three” annual festivals (along with Passover and Pentecost) for which adult Jewish males were expected to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. It was generally the most joyous and popular of the three celebrations. Originally a harvest celebration, by the time of Jesus, it had also taken on the significance of remembering God’s provision for the people of Israel during their wilderness wanderings, following their flight from hard bondage in Egypt.

During that ancient and extraordinary journey under the leadership of Moses, God had provided water for the people of Israel, out of solid rock (as noted in Numbers 20:2-13). Celebrated since before the time of David, the psalmist also wrote of God’s marvellous deliverance...

*12 In the sight of their ancestors he worked marvels
in the land of Egypt, in the fields of Zoan.
13 He divided the sea and let them pass through it,
and made the waters stand like a heap.
14 In the daytime he led them with a cloud,
and all night long with a fiery light.
15 He split rocks open in the wilderness,
and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep.
16 He made streams come out of the rock,
and caused waters to flow down like rivers.
17 Yet they sinned still more against him,
rebelling against the Most High in the desert. (Psalm 78:12-17)*

To bring due remembrance of both God’s gift and our human failures, the festival traditionally lasted seven days. Each year, during the final observance, water was carried from the pool of Siloam to the temple. Carried in pompous circumstance within a golden pitcher, the blessed water, set apart by the priests, would be poured upon the altar in the temple. This national cleansing of the altar consequently symbolized the Hebrew’s preparation for the day when the Messianic kingdom would arrive in all its glory.

However, the dedication gathering for that year in Jerusalem was different—Jesus was in attendance. In that year, during the final purification of the temple altar, within the ritual that traditionally occurred during the last and greatest day of the celebration, Jesus stood up to speak. He spoke out loudly from the midst of those gathered. Rather than just sitting quietly in his place among high and learned rabbinical teachers, he broke in abruptly, breaking away from their customary, symbolic piety.

Though a lowly, itinerant country rabbi, Jesus stood boldly. He spoke so that all those that were present could hear. Standing in this way, in startling manner during the ceremony, Jesus consequently changed forever the nature of the water upon the altar. He spoke prophetically—that the water was soon to become more than a symbol. The water would be changed to a living river, inviting those receiving that water to participate in God’s authentic reality. The water at the altar would become “living” water. By “living” Jesus meant an “active current” or “gushing” of water, that keeps on renewing. It would be a reality which was to be poured out upon all God’s servants.

These verses from John also bring to mind Jesus' earlier comment about "living water", when he spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well. He said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water" (John 4:10, 13-14). After she responded, he went on to say, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." (John 4:13-14).

Earlier in the year, during Lent, our home Group reflected its way through a book by Bishop Stephen Cotrell, Archbishop of Canterbury, titled, *I Thirst: The Cross - The Great Triumph of Love*, focussing on Jesus' words from the cross: 'After this, when Jesus knew that all now was finished, he said, "I am thirsty."' (Jn. 19:28)

I guess it's not hard to understand what made Jesus thirsty as he hung from the cross on that fateful day. Jesus is dying, he is in agony, he longs for a drink to ease his pain. It's a grisly scene, made even more humiliating by the offer of sour wine.

But all of us are thirsty in some way—and not just physically, for actual water as in H₂O. We can be thirsty for any number of things and for any number of reasons.

What is it that makes *you* thirst? Perhaps it's the need to be considered important to at least someone—the desire to be loved and be of concern to someone—the longing to be an important part of this world, not just a random nobody—the hope that we will have contributed something to this world that will last—the desire to have really lived and not just existed—or even just the innate instinctive built-in nature of our being to live and to continue to live.

If these are our thirsts, how is this Jesus who lived a couple of thousand years ago, able today to meet those thirsts? The world says that he is irrelevant for this time and age. Do we act that way in our own lives? You see, Jesus can either truly satisfy our thirsts or his claim is bogus! Which is it?

Some of us have been ignored for most of our lives. We are considered as useful but not unique. We can easily be replaced by almost anyone else. We may sometimes go to extraordinary measures to be noticed—the clothes we wear, our hairstyles, tattoos, piercings, and so on. But then along comes Jesus, whose words and actions tell us that, regardless of who we are, he cares for us and died for us. All of us are important. In fact, he says that even the hairs of your head are numbered. For some, I admit, that's easier to calculate than for others.

Some of us were never loved, as we should have been. We may even try all kinds of abnormal behaviours to get the attention and love we crave. Jesus, however, loves you, every one of you, regardless of what you have done, didn't do or should have done. His love is not dependant on you in any way at all. In fact, while we were sinners and continue to do some terrible things to others and ourselves, he still loves us completely.

Being thirsty for something is a kind of metaphor for feeling unfulfilled or empty. Sometimes we can explain it, as in the illustrations I've just given. Sometimes, however,

it's not so easy to explain. Whichever it is for you, it's this emptiness that Jesus seeks to fill with the water that he offers—not just ordinary water—not still water that goes stale, but living water—water that gushes and flows in you and through you—water that gives life and meaning to one's existence.

There are many in today's society that will offer to quench your thirst. Some will invite you to drink deeply from the well of financial security. Invest in high-yielding stocks, and set yourself up for life, and your deepest thirsts will be satisfied, they promise. But the well is poisoned. Many have drunk deeply of the spirit that flows there, and have come away crippled by anxiety and greed and with their relationships reduced to marketing opportunities.

Some will invite you to drink deeply from the well of social success. Get the right job, be seen in the right places, wearing the right clothes and driving the right car. Be beautiful and get noticed; climb the social ladder, and your deepest thirsts will be satisfied, they promise. But that well is polluted as well. Many have drunk deeply of the spirit that flows there, and have come away poisoned by superficiality and competitiveness and by the fear that it can never last.

Jesus, on the other hand, invites all who are thirsty to come and drink from the living water that is the Spirit—the Holy Spirit who will guide those who believe in him into faith and all truth and of course, abundant life.

What is it, you thirst for? Do you thirst for authentic meaning and purpose for your life? Do you thirst for acceptance and inclusion? Do you thirst for a more intimate relationship with God, and thirst for God's word? These are things we should all be thirsting after.

Jesus said, *"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'"*

Jesus has poured out His Holy Spirit. Come and drink. Let the Spirit of God well up in you. Then let it flow out of you into the world!

Today is the festival of Pentecost. It's called Pentecost because the spectacular outpouring of the Holy Spirit to the first disciples of Jesus, happened on the Jewish festival of Pentecost, as we heard in our reading from the book of Acts, today. Because of the Holy Spirit, we have hope and the joy of salvation. We can face the problems we have in life with the confidence that he is with us, lives in us, and will guide us to the source of living water at the end of time. Stay thirsty.

To him be all glory, honour, majesty and power. Amen.