

## LIVING WATER FOR THIRSTY SOULS

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." John 7:37.

It was an autumn morning. The temple in Jerusalem was crowded with pilgrims, all of whom were in festive array. They had come up to the Holy City for the Feast of Tabernacles, which was one of the three great annual feasts. That feast was celebrated with such universal joy that Josephus, the historian, called it "the greatest and holiest feast of the year." It was the great holiday of the nation, at which people of all ranks and professions vied with one another in their demonstrations of gladness.

The Feast of Tabernacles was the closing and crowning festival of the year. One design of this feast was of thanksgiving for the concluded harvest. Another was to commemorate the incidents and wanderings of the Israelites in the Wilderness. The third object was to celebrate by public thanksgiving the settlement of the Israelites in the land of Canaan. This feast lasted eight days, and the last day was the greatest. It was primarily a day of rejoicing before the pilgrims returned to their homes.

On each of the seven days there was a significant and joyous ceremony. The Temple services, full of strange significance, crowded one upon another during the week. The priests served in turn, and seventy bullocks were offered in sacrifice for the seventy nations of the world. The Law was read daily, and the temple trumpets sounded forth a triumphant blast twenty-one times each day.

Each day a priest with a golden pitcher went to the Pool of Siloam followed by a throng of people. As many of the people as possible drew near to the pool and drank of the water with great joy. Filling the pitcher with water, the priest bore it down the streets amid the shouting and singing of the multitude and the sound of trumpets and cymbals. When he reached the temple and entered, the sacred trumpets breathed out a joyous blast, which continued until he reached the altar and poured the water that he had brought from the pool into a silver basin. The great Hallel -- Psalms 113-118 inclusive -- was then sung. When they sang the last verse, "O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever," every man waved the palm branch which he carried in his hand. This ceremony was attended with so much joy that the Rabbi said that he who had not seen it did not know what true joy was.

From the middle of that festival Christ had been present and openly teaching the people. Even though the festival was almost over, our Lord did not cease to proclaim His message. He continued to instruct, to invite and to entreat. Because it was the last day He manifested an increased ardour. He assumed a position more active, more pleading and more earnest than that of a teacher who was seated. He stood and plead in tones that were both loud and pathetic. He stood and cried, whereas on previous occasions He had sat and talked. He spoke with a loud voice, both to show His fervour and earnestness and in order that all might hear.

As is ever the case with Christ, when He saw the people wearied and thirsty as they rushed hither and thither, His heart was stirred within Him. He had great compassion and unbounding pity. Standing on a prominent spot, He saw the crowds going away with aching consciences and unsatisfied minds. Pitying them, He cried aloud, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink."

Having witnessed their ceremonies, which were quite impressive, the Saviour must have been struck with the futility of it all. For, although these jubilant multitudes sang and shouted and went into raptures, after it was all over they went home with their same old heartaches and cares and fears. It was a perfect picture of the fact that the law could never assuage the thirst of the human heart. Moreover, it symbolized the utter inability of the waters of earth, its pleasures and possessions and philosophies, to satisfy the weary soul.

But there stood among the throngs on that feast day One Who could satisfy the thirsty soul. He went out of the ordinary, and did the exceptional thing of standing, probably in some elevated position, and crying aloud to the multitude. Why did He do it? Because He had something exceptional and extra-ordinary to say. His soul had been moved by the vain ceremony. It was as though He had said, "Ah, you thirst for something, you know not what. These hollow ceremonies, these ecstasies of the flesh, these empty pitchers from Siloam, these waters of earth can never satisfy."

### I. The Appeal.

"If any man." This urgent invitation is presented to every person who thirsts, regardless of how great, how numerous, or how long standing his sins may be. Regardless of one's race, country, condition, character, or age this invitation is extended.

### II. The Appetite.

"If any man thirst." This word "thirst" suggests a natural need. Water is a much needed element. Nothing will take the place of water. There is no word in our language that more strongly expresses desire than the word thirst. This figure of speech is used here to express the most intense desire. Thirst is the agonized protest of the body against being deprived of its most vital need. It denotes a condition of dire need or urgent necessity. Bodily thirst is the most painful sensation to which the frame of mortal man is liable. Unsatisfied thirst is of all miseries the most severe. If it is not assuaged, it is the prelude to the most dreadful of deaths.

This is a thirsty world. There is physical thirst, mental thirst, moral thirst and spiritual thirst. There is the thirst of the artist for beauty. There is the thirst of the scientist for knowledge. There is the thirst of the toiler for ease. There is the thirst for wealth. There is the thirst for happiness. There is the thirst for peace.

Thirst is a real and intense desire which cannot be concealed or forgotten. It is a desire which asserts itself. It absorbs and dominates a person. One who is really thirsty will give almost anything to get that one great need supplied.

"If any man thirst." There is no distinction here. The blessing is for all irrespective of class or age. There are no distinctions with God. A well-known minister, some years ago, received three people into the membership of his church on one Sunday morning. One was a nobleman; the second was a Chinese; and the third was a poor washervoman. The three people stood before him, and as he extended to them the hand of fellowship, he said to the congregation, "My friends, I will have you to notice that at the cross of Christ the ground is level." God is no respecter of persons. His message is for all -- the humblest dweller in a lowly cottage, or those who live in palaces. We meet where the ground is level because we meet at the cross. We are drawn there by the consciousness of our need.

### III. The Approach.

"If any man thirst, let him come unto me," "If any man thirst" -- that is the only condition. "If any man thirst, let him come" -- that is the simple step.

"Let not conscience make you linger,  
Nor of fitness fondly dream,  
All the fitness Christ requireth,  
Is to feel your need of Him."

Some are thirsting for the forgiveness of their sins. Christ is the One to Whom they must come if their thirst is to be quenched. He alone has power on earth to forgive sins. Those of us who are Christians will never forget the peace and joy and satisfaction which came into our hearts when we came to Christ and He forgave our sins. Those who are thirsting for salvation must not be content with coming to a man, to an ordinance or to a church, but they must come to Christ. It is not enough to think, to talk, to wish, to intend, to resolve or to hope, but you must come to Christ in trust and surrender.

Another legitimate thirst is for happiness. Christ alone can satisfy this thirst. He wants us to be filled with joy. If you are thirsting for happiness, come to Christ and He will satisfy your need.

Others are thirsting for holiness. They long to be delivered from the power and domination of sin. Christ is the only one who can satisfy this thirst. He is able to deliver you from your besetting sin.

### IV. The Appropriation.

"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." This means that if he has a desire for salvation from sin he is to come to Christ and receive it. "Come unto me, and drink." That means to appropriate. Here is the secret of blessing -- the Lord gives and we receive.

Christ does not mean just to read about coming to Him, or to think about it, or to talk about it, but actually to come to Him. Coming to Christ is the result of an act of the will. The words "and drink" indicate an appropriation and the resting of the heart in Christ. Never forget that this is always a personal act. If your thirst is to be assuaged, you must come to the Lord Jesus Christ and trust Him. You are not to bring anything to Him, but to take everything from Him, as the thirsty ground drinks in the showers. If any man thirst, let him receive Christ in Whom there is salvation, satisfaction and sufficiency.

Your coming to Christ to drink means that you will receive from Him all the spiritual blessings and mercies that He has to bestow on you. If you permit anything to keep you from this act of appropriation, whether it be pride, doubt or procrastination, you will die from spiritual thirst.

An invaluable blessing which results from coming to Christ and drinking is the pardon of all your sins. You will never have peace of mind, joy of heart or satisfaction of soul until you know that your sins are forgiven. The forgiveness of your sins is your greatest need, and it is only through Christ that you can obtain this great blessing. He

purchased it for you by His death and offers it to you as a gift. Another great blessing which results from coming to Christ is that of eternal happiness. Of what use or value is all else if you miss eternal bliss? Of what benefit are the positions, the possessions and the plaudits of the world, if the price of them is that you miss heaven and descend into hell?

This gracious invitation is extended to all kinds of sinners, regardless of how great, numerous or longstanding their sins may be. Every sinner needs the Saviour, and will perish without Him. If you long to taste the sweetness of His pardon, the depths of His love, the warmth of His grace, the breadth of His comfort and the length of His salvation, come to Christ and drink.

You should accept this invitation because of the One Who invites you; also, because of your own personal needs. How desperately bad is your condition out of Christ? You are a servant of Satan. You are in bondage to sin. You are without Christ, God and hope in the world. In your spiritual thirst, if you will come to Christ and drink, all will be well with you both here and hereafter. Many have received a most cordial welcome from Him. He has forgiven their sins and saved their souls. He has brought them into the family of God and showered them with the super-abundance of His mercies. I have never seen a Christian who has ever regretted the fact that he had accepted Christ as his or her personal Saviour. Moreover, the most needed blessings cannot be obtained from any other source in all the world. Therefore, come to Christ now and be saved. In relating his Christian experience Horatius Bonar said:

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
"Come unto Me and rest;  
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down  
Thy head upon My breast."  
I came to Jesus as I was,  
Weary and worn and sad,  
I found in Him a resting place,  
And He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
"Behold, I freely give  
The living water; thirsty one,  
Stoop down and drink, and live."  
I came to Jesus and I drank  
Of that life-giving stream;  
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
And now I live in Him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
"I am this dark world's Light;  
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,  
And all thy day be bright."  
I looked to Jesus and I found  
In Him my Star, my Sun;  
And in that light of life I'll walk,  
Till traveling days are done."