**The Gift of the Holy Spirit**

Based on [John 7:37-39](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn7.37)

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The Day of Pentecost

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In today’s Gospel lesson, Jesus promises the gift of the Holy Spirit to believers. In this short section he teaches two things: First, Jesus invites those who thirst to come to him and drink, that is believe. Second, those who believe in him will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

First, Jesus invites those who thirst to come to him and drink, that is believe. In the broad sense, the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ is for all people. When the angel proclaimed his birth to lowly shepherds, it said, “Fear not, for I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.” John famously says, **God so loved the world that he gave his son.** And elsewhere, “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” This is called the doctrine of “Universal Atonement”, Jesus came, suffered and died, not only for his sheep, but for the sins of the whole world.

Jesus died for all, but he does not invite all people to him. Instead he invites the thirsty. “**On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘*If anyone thirsts,* let him come to me and drink.” “*If anyone thirsts,* let *him* come to me.”** Jesus only invites the thirsty.

Elsewhere he says, “**Come to me all who labour and our heavy laden and I will give you rest…for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”** Jesus does not invite the idle who have a life of ease. They don’t need him. He invites those who labour and are heavy laden because it is only they who need rest, and only He can provide.

Who is the one who is thirsty? Jesus says, “**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied**.” Who is the one who labours and is heavy laden? Peter says to those who would seek righteousness through the law, ‘**Now therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear**.”

The one who thirsts is the one who desires to be righteous, right with God and his neighbor, but who also knows of his sin and impoverished spirit. The one who bears heavy burdens is the one who seeks righteousness from the law, from external rules for righteousness, without any power to keep it.

A reading from Luke, the fifteenth chapter…Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. **2**And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying,  “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

**3**So he told them this parable: **4**“What man of you, having a hundred sheep,  if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? **5**And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. **6**And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ **7**Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Jesus has a hundred sheep, in the immediate context the whole nation of Israel, but by extension the whole world. He bought the world, redeemed the whole world, and the whole world is His. But not everyone in the world thirsts for righteousness. In fact, the great majority of the world, in keeping with the parable, lets say 99% of the world has no use for righteousness from God. They either believe their life is as it should be without God, or else they thirst for things other that the righteousness that God provides. To preach the gospel to them is to offer a drink to a man who is not thirsty; or to offer to carry the load of a man who bears no burden.

Now make no mistake brothers, everyone thirsts. But to hunger and thirst for anything other than righteousness…is covetousness. To thirst for a job, or a spouse, or a bigger house, greater possessions or anything that God has not given you is to covetousness, and that leads to all manner of fleshly works, sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

And it is astounding that churches today, when faced with the fact that many are called and few are chosen, repourpose the church to feed the felt needs of goats. It is becoming more and more apparent every day, that in our culture, godliness is no longer a means of gain--attracting both sheep and goats into the congregation--like it was in former generations. Once you had to be the member of a christian church to hold civic office, or to be considered an honest businessman. Now such membership or church attendance is becoming not only a not worth the trouble for covetous hearts, but even a liability to the new virtues of “tolerance” and “open-mindedness”, which are simply new buzzwords for old-fashioned idolatry.

So in order to get the goats back in the pews, many churches give up on offering the pure spiritual milk of the gospel, and instead inquire what the goats thirst for in their covetousness, and then provide it to them…worldly music, empty psychobabble, pop culture references and sermon series based on Hollywood movies. What a scam. And what’s worse, is that in feeding the covetousness of Goats, they starve the sheep of the pure spiritual milk they thirst for, and that Christ wishes for them to imbibe freely and often. Such wolves will not escape the judgment of God.

But Jesus is not confined in building made by men; but is present for all who thirst for him, that they may drink him by faith in his promises. Those who thirst for righteousness, come to him, imbibe his words and teachings, his commands and his promises, and ye will be satisfied, because to you he promises the comforter, the helper, His own Holy Spirit.

And so here’s the second teaching of Jesus’s words today, those who drink, that is who believe in Him will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. Now this [Jesus] said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive…”

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness find their righteousness in the body and blood of the righteous one, Jesus Christ. Who shed his blood as a sacrifice to the Father for our sins, and as a sacrifice for us to drink and be satisfied. And we are satisfied for two reasons, first, because by the drinking of faith we have the forgiveness of sins and stand blameless before God. But that alone does not satisfy true hunger for righteousness, which is ultimately satisfied in this life by living holy lives consecrated to God. We cannot produce righteousness, but the Holy Spirit who is given us through faith can and does.

Jesus promises that whoever believes out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. Once our hearts knew only covetousness hunger and thirst for the flesh, money, popularity, greed and vice, and to produce any other works was artificial. But Christ has given the Holy Spirit, and he produced in you the fruit of the Spirit which lead to righteousness: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. The Holy Spirit is a river of living water who produces the fruits of righteousness in the one who believes in Jesus Christ.

In this life, even having the Holy Spirit we cannot attain perfection. We daily sin much and the old flesh still asserts itself.We cannot keep God’s Law perfectly, but we can now keep God’s Law by the Spirit who is given us. We resonate with Paul who writes: **“Not that I have already obtained [the Resurrection from the Dead] or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.** (Phil 3:12).

In today’s Gospel lesson, Jesus promises the gift of the Holy Spirit to believers. Jesus invites those who thirst to come to him and drink, that is believe. And to those who believe in him He gives the gift of the Holy Spirit.

*Come Holy Ghost, Creator blest,*

*And make our hearts Your place of rest;*

*Come with your grace and heavenly aid,*

*and fill the hearts which you have made.* LSB 498