

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas  
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If Anyone Thirsts

John 7:37-39

7:37 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.

7:38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”

7:39 Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

### **1. Thirst of Body**

For the last couple of decades, damages from drought were expanding in America. They say there will be 10% reduction in crop production this year. When we say drought, we think of Africa or India, but in fact, America has a higher decline in crop production compared to these countries. Scholars point out that desertification is progressing on earth. It is a serious problem worldwide, but crop shortage directly affects prices, thus it is also an immediate problem to all of us.

Water is necessary for all animals and plants on this earth. It is the most important for our body. Human body consists of 80% of water in case of babies and 60% of water in adults. If we squeeze ourselves, we feel we will be slim in an instant, but it does not work that way. If we lose water from the body, we immediately feel thirsty, have fever, and dehydration occurs. They say you may get stroke or heart attack.

However, human bodies are so well-designed that if you cannot replenish water from outside, a protein called Aquaporin in the kidney kicks in and returns water to blood vessels. Kidney functions to excrete wastes together with water, but if you are dehydrated, Aquaporin facilitates excretion of wastes but reabsorb water and put it back into circulation. Aquaporin has a small hole through which only water molecules can pass and filter the waste products. A researcher called Peter Agre at Johns Hopkins University discovered this mechanism and he was awarded a Nobel Prize in 2003. In human body, many mechanisms are in place to protect its life. It is hard to believe that these mechanisms are made by chance. Every time scientific discoveries are made, we cannot but be surprised how God created human body in such an accurate manner.

Usually, adults excrete more than 2 liters of water every day. Two liters are equivalent of 4 pet bottles or 8 glasses of water. When you get older, the number of Aquaporin decreases, so you have to drink adequate amounts of water. My physician told me not to drink water all at once but in a couple of times to avoid water intoxication. Many of us are in short of water and our bodies are actually thirstier than we think.

## **2. Thirst of Spirit**

Likewise our body thirsts, our heart and spirit also thirst. However, we would not notice our thirst of spirit and soul right away just like the thirst of our body, since we can distract ourselves and focus on other things, or refuse the fact that our soul and spirit are actually thirsty. When our body thirsts, we can control it without drinking water by

wetting lips or eating candies, or, physically pegging lips – it might be useful if we are too much talkative. So, these things just stimulate and paralyze the sense of thirst, and we're not hydrated enough. As same as this example, our soul and spirit will keep being thirsty if we deny or distract from it.

People recognize their thirst of spirit, which needs the actual comfort and fulfillment of their souls, when having the serious sickness or encountering the crisis of their life; they don't normally need help since they could enjoy their work, hobbies and human relationships. In this generation people scale the value of man according productivity; so if they have sick or became elderly and cannot do anything by themselves, they feel they are useless and valueless. They're afraid of being unwelcome and suffer from their situation that cannot help their family and friends. They might feel great guilty, complain of their circumstance, or even doubt their values. People want to know why they are living, and who they are. Furthermore, they thirst for the answer of them after all. This is the spiritual thirst that only human beings have.

This thirst is called "Spiritual Pain" in medical world. The doctor who has opened the hospice system, Cicely Mary Strode Saunders, talks about the purpose of hospice reducing physical, mental, social, and spiritual pain. Medical studies have been focusing on curing until now, but medical treatment sometimes cannot cure people properly. So she proposed that we have to care the patients instead of just letting it be when doctors have to quit curing. Hospice needs more concrete and effective approaches in Japan. In the US, doctors have to prepare the chaplain for spiritual caring when receiving the

accreditation; on the other hand, European countries send pastors or priests. In Japan, it has been a long time while we ignore the importance of spiritual caring, even though people now can recognize the need of it.

Many of young people in Japan cannot produce the secured life, deny the movement of society and close their doors to stay inside of their minds; this is because they don't have the answer toward their thirst of spirit. In Japan, there are no answers for the meaning and purpose of life. No one in the society would know and they might say back, "It's so useless to think of, just letting it be" or "You have no time to stop to think, you study hard for keeping up your classmates." After all, young souls finally stop seeking the truth enriching, or hydrating your thirst of spirit.

In present society people gradually notice the thirst of spirit at last, but the Holy Bible has been teaching about the thirst for God deep inside of people's souls, from thousands of years ago. Psalm 42:1 says, "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God." Literally, everyone wants to know God, meet the Creator, and go home where our Father of soul is, deeply inside of their heart. It is the first step to notice the thirst of spirit, for being healed and fulfilled by God.

### **3. Thirst Healed by Christ**

Then, this thirst of spirit will be healed by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the only one who can heal the thirst of spirit. That's why Jesus said "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." In the preaching of Lord Jesus, he has emphasized "I or Me" very often. Lord expresses

“Not others, I ...” Lord does not explain the ordinary truth or how to or what to do in order to be healed here. Lord Jesus said clearly “I am going to heal your thirst”.

Jesus screamed “On the last day of the feast”. This “feast” was “Sukkot”, which was held around October. During this feast, there were many ceremonies had done, and one of them was the ceremony that pouring the water to the alter. For the sacrifice of morning and evening, the priest went to the pool of Siloam and fulfilled the water in a pot, and take it to the temple. With the trumpet, he poured the water to the alter, singing “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” (Isaiah 12:3) This was done in order to remember God who gave water to Israelite while they were traveling in the wilds. And it prophesized that the Savior would give us the water of eternal life.

However, the water poured into the alter will dry eventually. So the religious ceremony in the shrine and also the law and ceremony that Jewish people had established, can not heal the thirst of people.

Those ceremonies were commanded in the Scripture; therefore, it does not mean they were not useless. However, the law and ceremony shows the savior and testify it so that they begin to have the meaning. The law and ceremony themselves can not heal the thirst of spirit. The people did not realize it and became enthusiastic about them. Consequently, they throw the Savior away from them, which was contradiction action. The Scripture pointed out this mistake in Jeremiah 2:13, “For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”

This is not mistake of only Jewish. Like the Jewish likes the festival, we like the festival as well. Every country has festivals in various fields. Olympic is the festival of sports. For the events, activities, and fellowships of church, if there is no faith in Jesus Christ, they end up with being “festival”. They could be the substitution for Christ, and the people might stay away from the true fulfilling.

There is a story. A king of a country, which was not civilized yet, was invited to a civilized country with his minister. They were surprised at everything they saw especially a faucet because water comes out when they turned the tap on. People of his kingdom needed to go far away in order to get water. The king asked the minister, “Why don’t we buy the faucet? And install the faucets everywhere in our country so that our people don’t need to go far away to get water”. When they come back to their country and turned the tap on, the water did not come out. The faucet was not connected to the water tube, and the water tube was not connected to the water source. This seems like a joke but it tells us important thing. We also shall be connected to Jesus Christ who is the source of life of water firmly.

In the Lord’s Supper, the bread is Jesus himself. The cup is also Jesus himself. Lord Jesus is the bread of life which gives us life. Lord Jesus is the water of life which heal the thirst of our spirit. In the Lord’s Supper, Lord Jesus gives us the bread and cup, and invite us to him saying, “Come to me.” Let’s go to the Lord. Then, he is going to heal the thirst of our spirit.

## **(Prayer)**

Dear Father God, the earth, our body and spirit thirst. However, we do not come back to you, the source of the water of life, and we try to heal our thirst by other things. By doing this, we try not to listen to the voice of our spirit and try to distract our attention. However, you had mercy on us and gave us Jesus Christ who is the water of life. Make go to Lord Jesus, stay with the Lord, and be healed by him all the time. In the holy name of Lord, Amen.