

Rivers of Living Water

John 7:37-52

February 1st, 2026

1. The great _____: “If anyone is thirsty, come to Me!” (7:37-39)

2. The great _____: “Who is Jesus?” (7:40-52)

3. Who is Jesus?

a. Jesus is fully _____.

b. Jesus is fully _____.

c. Jesus is fully _____.

d. Jesus is fully _____ to save.

e. Jesus is fully _____.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on John 7:37-52

1. Compare Jesus’ interaction with the woman at the well in John 4:13-26 with Jesus’ great invitation in John 7:37-38. What similarities do you notice? How does that help to explain the meaning of the metaphor?
2. What connection does v. 39 make between the Holy Spirit and the promise of vv. 37-38?
3. In Luke 12:51-53 and Matthew 10:33-37, how did Jesus prepare His disciples to experience the same type of response to Him that we see in John 7:43-44? How do we see that today also?
4. What do you think the officers observed in Jesus that led to the declaration about Him in v. 46?
5. Review the five “fully” statements about Jesus from the final point of the message – fully God, fully man, fully good, fully sufficient to save, fully satisfying.
 - a. Are there any you don’t understand?
 - b. Can you think of ways in which each point is denied by people?
 - c. What evidence might there be in our lives that shows that we don’t really believe Jesus is fully sufficient to save or is fully satisfying?

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Big idea: Those who believe in Jesus find their deep thirst satisfied and their hearts filled with the living waters of the Spirit.

Intro

In a 2017 interview after receiving some mild criticism for his play, Lebron James said, “I think people have just grown accustomed of what I do, and it gets taken for granted at times.” Basically, I’m so good people don’t even see it or notice it anymore! He may not be totally wrong, but people didn’t like it very much. I would put that in the category of things we shouldn’t say out loud.

20 centuries after Jesus, we take for granted His influence, His greatness. When officials are sent to arrest Jesus in John 7, they come back empty handed because they say, “We’ve never heard anyone speak like this before.” It was mesmerizing, transformative, shocking, authoritative, perceptive, timeless. But we take it for granted today, at least in western civilization.

Turn the other cheek

Love your neighbor as yourself

Love your enemy, pray for those who mistreat you

What God has joined together, let no man separate

The compelling message of Christ and the influence of Christianity has so reshaped the western world that most people cannot even see it. It’s like the joke where an old goldfish swims past some young goldfish and says, “how’s the water?” and they say, “What water?” They don’t notice it because it is an assumed part of their environment.

Likewise, Glen Scrivener in his book, *The Air We Breathe*, makes the case that values that we assume to be self-evident – compassion, equality of people, kindness, freedom – are not self-evident at all. They have permeated our culture because of the teachings and influence of Jesus.

So even when a controversial event dominates the news, like the protests in Minneapolis and the enforcement actions of ICE agents, neither side can get away from language that reflects Christian virtues. Some argue for the inherent dignity and vulnerability of immigrants while others don’t deny that but they point to the necessity of laws that protect other vulnerable people, laws that should be upheld because we aren’t ruled by force and power but by laws because of the equality of all people. People may disagree on policies and the best ways to enforce them, but they are in basic agreement that vulnerable people shouldn’t be harmed simply because they can’t defend themselves. That idea would not have been obvious in the ancient, pre-Christian world. But it is now in the Western world because of the influence of the teachings of Jesus.

This could really be part 2 of last week’s message. It’s one incident, unit, that covers chapters 7 and 8 that swirls around questions about Jesus’ identity – who is He?

1. The great **invitation**: “If anyone is thirsty, come to Me!” (7:37-39)

- a. John sets the stage – it’s the last day, the great day, Jesus stood, Jesus cried out – here’s the big moment.
- b. Remember that as part of the feast of tabernacles/shelters/booths there had developed a daily ritual in Jerusalem. The priest would hold out a golden pitcher and would march with the crowd to the pool of Siloam where he would dip the pitcher in the water and quote from Isaiah 12:3, “with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” Then the crowd would follow him back to the temple through the water gate where there would be a blast from a trumpet. The priest would circle the altar and then pour out the water.

- c. The water portion was not part of the original feast of tabernacles, but it had developed at least a few hundred years before the time of Christ.
 - i. It was a plea to God for water in a desert region
 - ii. It was an appropriate source of symbolism because it reminded them of when God brought water from the rock during their desert wanderings.
 - 1. **Nehemiah 9:15, 20** "You provided bread from heaven for them for their hunger, You brought forth water from a rock for them for their thirst, And You told them to enter in order to possess The land which You swore to give them.... ²⁰ "You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, Your manna You did not withhold from their mouth, And You gave them water for their thirst.
 - iii. It anticipated the Messianic kingdom when rivers of living water would flow from Jerusalem.
 - 1. **Zechariah 14:8-9** And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. ⁹ And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be *the only* one, and His name *the only* one.
- d. Jesus took that imagery and applied it to Himself.
 - i. To come and drink is to come and believe just like to come and eat was to come and believe.
 - ii. The physical language gets at the spiritual need and the spiritual satisfaction. Without water, we die. Without Christ, we have no spiritual life.
- e. What passage does he have in mind when he says, "From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water."?
 - i. Perhaps not one specific quote but the anticipation of the OT what the kingdom that the Messiah will bring.
 - ii. After 39 chapters of judgment, Isaiah turns to comfort and that comfort is rooted in the suffering servant of the Lord who will come.
 - iii. **Isaiah 55:1** Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost.
 - iv. Carson – Jesus' pronouncement is clear: he is the fulfillment of all that the Feast of Tabernacles anticipated. If Isaiah could invite the thirsty to drink from the waters, Jesus announces that He is the one who can provide the waters.
- f. John comments on the reality that the metaphor is about – What are the living waters that will flow from our innermost being?
 - i. The promised Holy Spirit
 - ii. The Holy Spirit is eternally existing, just as the Father and Son, and He was active in the OT, but His ministry in the New Covenant is different.
 - iii. His work was limited to certain people instead of all believers.
 - 1. Came upon people at certain times for certain purposes, but isn't a blanket filling and empowering of all believers.
 - 2. **Romans 8:9** However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him
 - 3. Common to say the Spirit was not "in" people in the OT

- 4. **John 14:17** . . . He abides with you and will be in you
- 5. However, HS said to be “in” Joshua
- 6. He also “filled” Joshua (Deut 34:9), “entered in” Ezekiel (Ezek 2:2; 3:24)
- 7. In the OT it appears to be a much more limited experience of the HS - not characteristic of all the people of God and not permanent.
- iv. His work was limited to certain kinds of **ministry**.
 - 1. Empowered for service, leadership, gave skills – same as NT
 - 2. But no mention of general conviction, sealing, baptizing, regeneration (probably)
- v. His indwelling and empowering was limited in **duration**.
 - 1. **1 Samuel 16:14** Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul,
 - 2. **Psalm 51:11** Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
 - 3. Now the dwelling of the HS is permanent
 - 4. **John 14:16** "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you **forever**;
 - 5. Don’t need to pray as David did that God would not take His Holy Spirit from us because He has promised He won’t. To be a believer is to have the HS. He is a down payment on our lives that will not be taken away.
- vi. The promised Spirit indwells, fills, empowers for service, imparts gifts, seals the believer, and much more.
- vii. He would be given after Jesus was glorified – after His death, resurrection, and ascension.

2. The great **division**: “Who is Jesus?” (7:40-52)

- a. What effect did this great invitation have? This great declaration of the satisfying work of Christ? Division. Argument. Hostility.
 - i. Continuation of what we saw last week.
- b. The crowd divided over His identity (7:40-44)
 - i. The prophet promised by Moses
 - ii. The Christ – the Messiah
 - 1. But He’s from Galilee?! Isn’t He supposed to be from Bethlehem?
 - a. Irony in John’s writings – we know that He is from Bethlehem. We know the unusual circumstances of the census that took them to Bethlehem, but the crowd doesn’t know that at this point.
 - b. It’s as if John winks at us while he writes this.
 - iii. So there was division because of Him.
- c. The officers had never heard anyone like Jesus. (7:45-47)
 - i. Officers had been sent from the religious leaders to seize Him but they did not.

1. Don't think of training guards or mercenaries. They were from the Levites and were religiously trained in the service of the temple.
2. Kent Hughes – They could feel themselves torn apart at the deepest level of their being by the same deeds and words of Jesus that were tearing apart the population at large. In other words, they came to arrest him, but he arrested them!

ii. What did they say? Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks.

1. **Mark 1:22** They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes.
2. **Mark 12:17** And Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were amazed at Him.
3. **Mark 12:37** "David himself calls Him 'Lord'; so in what sense is He his son?" And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him.

iii. We may be so accustomed to the words of Jesus that we fail to notice the power, the uniqueness, and the influence of them:

1. Turn the other cheek
2. Parable of the prodigal son or the parable of the good Samaritan
3. Two men building their homes on different foundations
4. The eye of the needle
5. Judge not lest you be judged
6. What God has joined together let no man separate
7. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's

d. Nicodemus defended Jesus. (7:48-52)

- i. More irony – v. 48 – none of the rulers or Pharisees have believed in Him, has he?
- ii. Who speaks up next? Nicodemus!

1. **John 3:1** Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;
2. When we left him, Jesus had impressed upon him the need to be born again, not to trust in his religious credentials or rituals, but the Spirit of God must do a work in heart to give new life in a way that paralleled physical birth.
3. Now he doesn't necessarily say "I believe!" but he does point out their hypocrisy of not following the law.
 - a. They curse the crowd for not knowing the Law
 - i. It's sad, then and now, when religious leaders shun and despise the people they are supposed to love and serve.
 - b. But they are violating the law by seeking to kill him without due process.
4. The next and final time we see Nicodemus is in chapter 19 when he joined Joseph of Arimathea, who is described as a secret disciple of Jesus, in wrapping the crucified body of Christ in burial herbs.

3. Who is Jesus?

a. Jesus is fully **God**.

- i. **John 1:1-3** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.
- ii. **Hebrews 1:3a** And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.
- iii. He is not a created being. He is not an angel. He is not an exalted man. He is not a mere prophet or teacher. He is the eternal God who flung the cosmos into being with a word.

b. Jesus is fully **man**.

- i. **Colossians 2:9** For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,
- ii. **Hebrews 2:14a** Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same,
- iii. **Philippians 2:6-7** who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.
- iv. In coming to earth He did not cease to be God but He added on to true humanity. He was born as an infant. He developed, grew, and learned. He became hungry and tired. And when He died, He really died.

c. Jesus is fully **good**.

- i. **Hebrews 4:15** For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.
- ii. **2 Corinthians 5:21** He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
- iii. **1 John 3:5** You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.
- iv. I encourage you to regularly read the whole Bible. Whether it's a one year plan, two year plan, or just working through it at your own pace. What you will find is the undeniable difference between Jesus and every other character in the Bible. Their sins and flaws are not hidden on the pages of scripture. Even the "heroes" like Abraham, Moses, David, and Peter lie, act cowardly, betray their friends, commit adultery. But Jesus stands out as without sin.

d. Jesus is fully **sufficient** to save.

- i. **John 3:16** "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.
- ii. **1 John 4:9-10** By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
- iii. It's not Jesus + ... Jesus + your best efforts.

e. Jesus is fully **satisfying**.

- i. Answers the dilemma raised in Ecclesiastes – what can satisfy? Wealth, sex, comfort, power, work, physical health? All is vanity and chasing after the wind.
- ii. But Jesus satisfies like living water
- iii. Is there evidence in your life that shows that you don't really believe this?



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