

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, Pentecost (A) – John 7:37-39

Tips of Discipleship: *Be Open to the Spirit*

Focus Question: *How has the Spirit been at work in your life during the last week?*

word of life

“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink.” John 7:37 (NRSV)

Read John 7:37-38

Jesus is participating in the annual Festival of Booths. (John 7:2) This seven-day autumn event is sometimes referred to as the “Festival of Tabernacles”. People gather at this agricultural festival to pray and celebrate the autumn rains needed for a healthy crop during the following year.

Each morning people join a procession to the fountain of Gihon near Jerusalem to watch the priest take water from the fountain. The crowd moves from the fountain back to Jerusalem carrying symbols of the fruits of the harvest and singing songs. The final day is the most solemn.

In the middle of the festival Jesus teaches at the temple and stirs up the Jews. They are baffled by his authority and his identity. Tension mounts. The Pharisees and chief priests send the temple police to arrest Jesus. (See John 7:10-36)

On the final and climatic day of the festival Jesus stands and cries out, “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.’” (John 7:37-38 NRSV)

1. *What do the words of Jesus mean to you?*
2. *When do people get thirsty for things other than water?*
3. *How does the speech of Jesus about water connect with the Festival of Booths?*

Jesus quotes scripture in these verses, but his reference is unclear. Bible scholars attribute this quote to either Psalm 78:16, “He made streams come out of the rock, and caused waters to flow down like rivers” (NRSV) or Zechariah 14:8, “On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter.” (NRSV)

These images of water flowing freely from rocks and out of the desert are powerful. Most of Israel is a dry, barren land with minimal sources of water. Thus, when Jesus claims to be the source of water and invites those who are thirsty to come to him, people listen. Jesus realizes everyone in his crowd is a person who gets thirsty. Consequently, his words have the potential of touching a chord with each person who hears. He invites each person to come to him to be satisfied. Yet, Jesus is addressing more than water. He is promising living water, the same water described to the woman at the well in John 4. Jesus promises not just a drop or two, but flowing water to every believer through the Holy Spirit.

4. *What does “out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water” mean to you?*
5. *How do those rivers of living water flow today in your life?*

word *among us*

The red geraniums surrounded the chancel in the sanctuary and red streamers hung from every corner of the church. This congregation had been planning for some weeks to celebrate the Festival of Pentecost with red banners, paraments, and wonderful music. It had been a particularly tough six months for the small close-knit group of believers as they attended heart-wrenching funerals for four active members of their congregation. Each died under different circumstances, but each death was sudden and premature.

This congregation wanted the Holy Spirit to pick them up, console them, give them hope, and bring them to new life. And so, they hoped Pentecost might be a celebration as large as Christmas or Easter. Each person was encouraged to wear bright red clothing. And sure enough, red filled that sanctuary. Young girls had red ribbons woven into their flowing hair. Men wore red shirts and ties with splashes of red. The oldest man of the church came through on his promise and borrowed his neighbor's red pants. He admitted those pants were the ugliest thing he had ever worn in his life. All that red helped, but it could not compare to the renewing and soothing presence of God's Spirit on that day.

1. *What is your understanding of Pentecost?*
2. *Take time to read the story in Acts 2:1-21 of the Holy Spirit coming to the disciples on Pentecost. What would that have been like for the disciples?*

When the disciples gathered in Galilee, they were filled with fear and for good reason. Their rabbi and leader had been arrested, beaten, mocked and crucified. Yet, it was the Holy Spirit who transformed them from frightened followers of Jesus to those empowered by the Spirit to openly proclaim a risen Christ as they were launched into mission work. Pentecost is often considered the birthday of the church because of the gift of the Holy Spirit given to the disciples.

3. *Where in your life do you need transformed by the Holy Spirit?*
4. *Where do you need courage?*

Just because the Holy Spirit is given to disciples, it does not necessarily mean life will become easy. Instead some days can feel like a parched desert. We get thirsty for meaning and substance. Jesus says to each of us, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living waters." (John 7:38 NRSV)

5. *What does it feel like to get thirsty?*
6. *How does Jesus provide living waters to you?*
7. *How might you invite someone else to know about Jesus and his living waters?*
8. *How might the Holy Spirit empower and guide you in that conversation?*

Prayer

Holy Spirit, come into my life and fill me with courage and joy to follow Jesus every day of my life. Amen

Dig Deeper

Acts 2:1-21

last word

Each day this week,
take a moment
to breathe deeply and
pray for God's Spirit to fill your heart.



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