

John 7: 37-39

<sup>37</sup> On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, <sup>38</sup> 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.’ ” <sup>39</sup> Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

## Trinity Presbyterian Church February 5, 2017

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### “Navigating the Waters of Discipleship: Thirsty”

A pastor once stood in the narthex waiting for worship to begin. She took in the scenery staring at the back of her parishioner’s heads as they listened to the prelude music. She noticed the Murphy’s who have sat faithfully in the same pew seat for 40 years. Across the aisle was Mrs. Thompson, who was at church for the first time since her husband died. Up a few rows sat a newer family—the elder son who looked bored because his parents forced him to go to church; and the teenage daughter who decided to dye her hair purple that week. Next to them was a young couple whose first newborn was recently baptized—it is safe to bet that they cannot imagine their child ever having purple hair. As the pastor began processing down the aisle, she realized every person in the church was there to receive something they needed. They all shared a common thirst for something.

Isn’t it remarkable? We all share a common thirst. Our longings might be different, but the thirst is the same. So what are you thirsty for on this day? [*Ask congregation and repeat their responses*] You know, today when we watch the Super Bowl some of us aren’t watching for the game. Instead we are watching for the commercials. We will watch the condensation running down the slick glass bottle. The sound of the beer can snapping opening. Or the fizz of the Coca Cola commercial. The idea is for a thirst to come over us with the desire to quench it. Advertisement agencies drop bigtime bucks trying to tap into the nature of our human desire. Can you guess who they also study to figure out what we thirst for? Answer: churches. Because wired into our human condition is an insatiable thirst for a transcendent experience—like belonging, peace, joy, love. So every human being we interact with on an ordinary day, or drive past on the highway. Doesn’t matter their race, gender, political affiliation. We all have it: The universal thirst for something more.

When we listen to Jesus, he has his own advertisement: “All who are thirsty come to me for a drink. All you have to do is believe.” John’s gospel is always trying to get us to believe. Believe Jesus is who he says. Believe in his signs. “Believe and drink” says Jesus, “and from *your* heart will flow living waters.” From your heart. Now here is where things get intriguing. In the Greek the word for heart is normally *kardia*—as in cardio or cardiac. But here the Greek word is *Koilia*. It is the only time the word is used in our entire bibles. *Koilia* doesn’t mean “heart” as in the muscle that pumps blood throughout the body. It doesn’t even mean being heartfelt or loving. *Koilia* literally means: *the hollow place within*. The hollow

hole in the soul as our friends in A.A. say. Have you ever noticed the hollow place within yourself before? It is the ache in our inner bellies. The place inside from which we long. It is our thirst. Now for most of us the hollow place is the place we want to avoid. Maybe we even condemn it. But Jesus says, “No.” Come all who are thirsty—which is all of us. Believe in me and drink. And not only will God use it, but the thirsty hollow place *is the place from which the waters of life will flow.*

Of course Living Water is a metaphor for the Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit is flowing through you—in this very moment. Living Water is a powerful image for the Spirit because it not only flows through us, but it forms us as well. Have you ever stood over the expanse of the Grand Canyon? It is one of the Seven Wonders of the World—formed by millions of years of living waters flowing through it. The Spirit has been flowing through the church, forming us over thousands of years. Just look at Trinity’s history: From the beginning—in 60’s and 70’s—Trinity reached out to its neighbors. We began with an open door policy. In the 80’s we began working toward racial reconciliation—started meeting with Dellabrook PC for a worship picnic in June. In the 90’s the Spirit carved out a way for us to welcome the LGBT community with open arms. Here we are in 2017 and the Living waters are still flowing through us today—forming a way for us to be the church in today’s world. You see, it is the Spirit’s job is to give us the courage, strength and freedom we need to be the church—it’s not up to “my” courage, strength or even faith. But *our courage, strength and faith which has been flowing down from the ages to us.* It is no secret we live in a fragile time: a divided country. People are afraid. A lot is on the line. It seems every day something else happens to remind us of the strong current running against the values of the gospel. But we must remember that the Spirit has been sculpting her church to continue living into the kingdom Christ has stretched out before us. The Holy Spirit is flowing through *you—through Trinity—like living water has done to form the church ever since the beginning.* Even in this very moment.

So in a world becoming more closed and exclusive, we will keep opening our hearts, minds and doors, being more affirming to the vulnerable. In a time of busyness and distraction, we will commit to being more intentional with prayer. And in an age of fear, death and violence, we will join around the table like the thirsty church has done ever since the beginning to be filled by the bread of life and the cup of peace. “Come all who are thirsty and drink. For from your hollow place shall flow rivers of living water.” The only thing we can do is believe it.