

Today is World Communion Sunday when Christians from all over the world, from different communities, denominations, and cultures all gather as one to celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion. This day reminds us that no matter how different we are and despite the many different ways in which we worship, we all still worship and believe in the same God; that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Savior of us all; and that the Holy Spirit dwells in each and every one of us. Today as we receive Holy Communion, we affirm our common beliefs.

As you study the Bible, you see that throughout history, God has been calling His children to come back to Him and have a personal relationship with Him. On this special morning, let's go back to the Old Testament and listen to one of God's invitations as recorded by the great prophet Isaiah in the first nine verses of the fifty-fifth chapter.

Read Isaiah 55:1-9

Have you ever been thirsty; I mean so thirsty that your throat was so dry that it hurt? We live in an area where water is a precious commodity and most of us can relate to Isaiah's call to come to the water. Having now lived in New Mexico for 32 years, I have a greater appreciation for water than when I grew up in South Carolina where we received over 70 inches of rain each year and have lakes and fish ponds everywhere you looked. As a matter of fact, later this month, Judy and I should be sitting on a porch overlooking the five-acre pond on our farm in South Carolina. However, even in the South I still got thirsty, especially after a long hot humid day working on the farm. Once after bailing hay, we drove our pick-up onto the dam of the pond which is fed by a spring and jumped into its cool refreshing water, clothes and all. I still remember how great that felt.

You know there is nothing like a good cold drink on a hot summer day to quench your thirst. However, Isaiah is not talking about our physical thirst here, but our spiritual thirst – the longing that lies deep within each of our souls for a personal relationship with our Lord. Adam and Eve initially lived in a loving relationship with God in the Garden of Eden; however, the devil who cannot stand peace and harmony injected greed into their hearts and the relationship was broken. Over the centuries, out of love, God has tried to restore this relationship first through choosing the Israelites as His Chosen People, then leading them out of slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land, later sending His prophets like Isaiah, and then finally by sending His own Son Jesus Christ to die on a cross for our sins.

Here Isaiah is predicting that One will come who will overcome all the efforts of the devil and this world, and will offer hope and salvation to all humanity and restore the broken relationship between God and His children. Of course, Isaiah is talking about Jesus Christ. In this text Isaiah gives us a glimpse of God's plan for salvation of the world. Out of love and the desire to restore

this relationship, God sent His Son to die for our sins and to bring us the gifts of grace, hope, forgiveness and the possibility of eternal life, if we will only respond and come to the water, come back home to God.

We are created in the image of God and because of that very fact we can never be satisfied and at peace until we come back to our Lord, come back to a loving relationship; the way it was meant to be from the beginning. Let's face it, there will always be a void in our lives until God fills it. Oh, people have tried to fill this void and find satisfaction and happiness through money, power, prestige, material possessions, and other relationships, but these are just fleeting attempts and always in vain. Isaiah tells us in the second verse: "Why do you waste your time and money seeking that which does not satisfy or lasts; come to the water, the living water."

In his book *Sahara Unveiled*, William Langewieshe tells the story of an Algerian named Lag Lag and his assistant whose truck breaks down while crossing the desert. They nearly died of thirst during the three weeks they waited before being rescued. As their bodies dehydrated, they were willing to drink anything in hopes of quenching their terrible thirst. Day after day they lay under the shade of the truck waiting. They had food, but did not eat, for fear it would increase their thirst.

Dehydration, not starvation, kills wanderers in the desert, and thirst is the most terrible of all human sufferings. There are several stages of human thirst. They range from ordinary thirst through bouts of temporary intense thirst to sustained excessive thirst – the kind of thirst that drives one to drink anything. Lag Lag and his assistant reached this severe stage of thirst and started drinking the rusty radiator water. In order to survive, they were willing to drink basically poison.

Many people do something similar in their spiritual life. They depend on things like money, sex, drugs, and power to quench their spiritual thirst – the longing of their soul. Unfortunately, such "thirst-quenchers" are in reality spiritual poisons, a dangerous substitute for the "living water" Jesus promises to all who will believe.

During the days of sailing merchant ships, one vessel got stranded off the coast of South America. Weeks went by without the slightest movement of the wind. The ship was helpless and couldn't move. The sailors were dying of thirst, when another ship drifted close to them and told them to lower their buckets. When they did, they found that the water right around their ship was suitable for drinking. Although adrift at sea, they were surrounded by the fresh water current that came from the mighty Amazon River. All they had to do was reach for it. In the same way, we don't need to thirst for real life because we are surrounded by Jesus' offer of living water.

The theme of living water flows throughout the Bible like a life-giving river in a parched desert. In Psalm 42:1, the psalmist longs for God as a deer longs for a flowing stream of water. In John 4:13-14, Jesus tells the Samaritan woman at the well that everyone who drinks the water from that particular well will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water that He offers will never thirst again. Jesus goes on to state that the water He gives will become like a spring welling up in you to eternal life. Jesus promised living water – not for the dry throat, but for the dry soul; the soul that longs for its God and Creator.

In John 7:37-38, Jesus says: “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scriptures has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” It is as if, Jesus is saying: “Come to me and accept me, and through my Spirit, I will put into you a new life which will give you purity and satisfaction, and give you the kind of life you have always longed for and never had.” In Psalm 36:9, David wrote: “For with you is the fountain of life.” Visualize a fountain; it is a source of water; water that is necessary for life. In the same way, Jesus is the source living water. In other words, God through Jesus Christ is the true source of life, living life to the fullest and the best.

Jesus tells the woman at the well and us today that whoever accepts the water He offers will never thirst again and that there will be a spring of living water within them. Jesus is not offering us a bottle of water and then a short time later we are thirsty again. He is talking about an endless, inexhaustible spring right in our own hearts that will never cease to satisfy the thirst of our soul. This spring is not dependent on outward circumstances, but flows from our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It flows throughout all the seasons of life; in good times and bad times, in health and sickness, in life and death; this water continually refreshes and cleanses our soul. The closer you walk with the Lord, the sweeter this water tastes.

Water is still the most natural and vital source for human life. Without water, the earth would dry up and die. The Samaritan woman went to the well to get that kind of water, but she came back with the water that quenches the thirst of the human soul, the good news of Jesus Christ.

A missionary in India was teaching on the subject of “Jesus, the Water of Life” near a fountain. A Muslim interrupted saying: “Your religion is like this little stream of water; Islam is like a great ocean.” “Yes,” replied the missionary, “but there is a big difference; when men drink ocean water they die of thirst. But when they drink the water of life which Jesus Christ gives, they live forever!” The stream may be small, but it can satisfy the thirst of any soul. Jesus came into the world as a little baby so that He might show that no one is too little or too insignificant that God will not come to dwell within them. This living water is available to all who will drink from the fountain of Jesus.

As we read this passage from Isaiah, the question for each of us this morning is are we wasting our time and resources on things that do not last; that do not satisfy that deep longing within us? Are you truly satisfied with your life or are you thirsty for that living water that only Jesus Christ can offer? Once a person tastes this living water that Jesus offers, nothing else can satisfy. Once a person drinks from the fountain and experiences Jesus' quenching of one's deepest thirst, nothing else can satisfy. Have you tasted this living water?

Quench your thirst; come home to the water of life and drink up. God invites you to be refreshed, and He provides that opportunity on this World Communion Sunday. I don't know if you have ever thought of the communion table as being a fountain, but you know, in a way it is. Communion is a means of experiencing God's grace; it is a channel through which we experience God's love and presence in our lives. As we receive the elements of bread and juice, Jesus is also offering us and all Christians this morning the same living water He promised to the Samaritan woman. Come to the water, drink up and be renewed for life and service to the Lord! Amen