

## ***Thirsty for Christ***

Have you noticed that free tickets to a Husker volleyball game get snatched up pretty quick – and when the radio station is giving away free concert tickets, the texts come flooding in. And, have you noticed, that it seems to be a chore for Christians to come to church – to hear God’s Word, to receive His free gifts?

Memorial Day is the unofficial start of summer which is such a busy time – but then, so is May – and really, every other month of the year. You hear the constant cry of – “we’re so busy!” If the Christian is too busy for church, for God – then there is an issue of a false idol - another god whom they fear, love and trust above the one true God.

Our actions confess what we really believe. And when other things take priority over church – we’re saying that there is something more important than God – more important than His forgiveness – more important that our life together in Christ.

I’ve said this before – that if all you want is a church full of people – then pay people to attend. Give \$100 to everyone who comes, and stays, for the Divine Service – and we will not have enough pews. But in time, you’ll have to increase the amount to \$150, then \$200.

But that’s just crazy – paying Christians to worship – having to offer something of value in order to attract people to church. Think about that – does the Church have anything of value to offer?

Don’t we have something more precious than money – something that all the money in the world cannot buy? Something that cannot be devalued – or affected by inflation or interest rates – or whether the Strait of Hormuz is open, or closed?

Don’t we, as the Church, have the ONE thing that ALL people need – the Gospel – the precious gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ?

If we have the most precious gift in the whole world – why aren’t people rushing to get in the doors? Why isn’t there a run on the church like there is for lottery tickets when the payout gets to an all-time high?

The problem isn't that we don't HAVE the greatest of all treasures – and the problem isn't that people don't NEED what the Church freely offers --- the problem is that people don't want it, they don't have a desire for it. To use the language of John's Gospel – they don't have a THIRST for Jesus Christ.

We have all kinds of needs – food, water, oxygen, companionship, and so on. Some we can go without for a long time – and others, only for a short time. But our greatest need is the forgiveness of our sin. Without forgiveness – we have no life, no salvation. It's truly a matter of life and death – eternal life and eternal death. So, why is there no thirst?

One reason is that, overall, we lead pretty comfortable lives – plenty to eat, clothes to wear, a roof over our heads. Sure, there are struggles and turmoil – but our lives are pretty good.

And that's how we see ourselves – as basically pretty good and decent people – not as good as some, but definitely better than others. And yes, we have needs from time to time – but for the most part, we can handle them on our own. Our greatest need – for Jesus and His forgiveness – goes largely, unnoticed.

But all of that changes when our sin gets the upper hand – when we fall into great shame and vice – when we are tormented by what we have done. Or, even when the sin in the world creates chaos in our lives – our house is destroyed, illness strikes, our livelihood is taken away.

Then we realize our NEED. Then, we fall to our knees – run to the pastor – or show up in church. When the world cannot quench our thirst – we settle for God, as if He is a last-ditch effort.

The truth is that daily we sin much, and deserve nothing but God's temporal and eternal punishment – our NEED is GREAT each day. We need Christ and His gracious forgiveness. Our sin cuts us off from God, and we have no life in us.

That is why, when Jesus was glorified – He poured out the Holy Spirit upon His Church – so that we might have life. The Lord and Giver of Life is poured out on the Church, so that – in, and through, the Church – He might do His work --- making sinners realize their thirst, and quenching that thirst in Jesus Christ.

“**IF** ..... anyone is thirsty,” Jesus says. As the saying goes – “you can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink.” The Holy Spirit not only leads you to the water, He makes you crave that water. He preaches the truth – that you have been too busy for God – that you love other things more than Him – that you think your sin is no big deal – that forgiveness is yours, and so you can live however you want.

On the great day of the Feast, Jesus cried out – “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.” The Feast in our text, is the Feast of Tabernacles, commemorating the 40 years of Israel living in tents in the wilderness (a place without food or water), as they journeyed to the Promised Land. Each year, God’s people would flock to Jerusalem for the feast – living in tents for the week – even as the Lord tented in the midst of them, in the Temple.

Each day a priest would draw a flagon full of water from the Pool of Siloam – carry it to the Temple – where it, and wine, were poured out on the altar – a reminder of how the Lord had poured out water from the rock for His people in the wilderness.

And that Rock was Christ – and the pouring out of the water and wine on the altar of sacrifice also directed them in faith to the Crucified Christ – who poured out water and blood from His side, on the altar of the cross.

For the guilty conscience, the shamed spirit, the broken and contrite heart – for the thirsty sinner – Jesus says to you this day, “come to me and drink.” Flowing from Christ this day is the “living water” of the Holy Spirit – that you may receive the greatest of all treasures – the forgiveness of all your sin.

Dearly beloved, come, let us drink deeply of Christ and His forgiveness. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.