

Jesus is Fulfillment
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John 7:37-39
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We're in John 7. We're moving to a new section this morning of John 7. We're going to look at Verses 37-39. I mentioned earlier when we looked at Ezekiel 47, that one of the themes that God weaves throughout the Bible, and basically what you have in the Bible, is God progressively revealing Himself and progressively revealing the way of salvation, that is, that it's progressive in the sense that it's building. There's an accumulation of truth. A good analogy is the idea of how we learn anything. You don't learn the most complex parts of something at the beginning. You learn simple things. Like math, you start off with two apples plus two apples equals four apples. Three cookies minus two cookies equals one cookie. It's this kind of thing, right? You learn addition and subtraction before you deal with algebra, and you learn algebra before you deal with trigonometry, and you learn trigonometry (if you're blessed to be able to proceed on), before you learn calculus. Each of these things builds upon one another.

Well, in the Bible, what you have is man in the dark. When Adam and Eve fell, how far did they fall? They fell a great distance. God drove them out of the Garden, which is a picture of how blind they are. You see really how blind they are right away. Remember after they sin, the Lord comes down as always to walk with them in the cool of the day, and where are Adam and Eve? They're hiding from Him. They're totally misunderstanding who He is. They should have been going to Him asking for mercy and forgiveness, saying, "Lord, look what we've done." And then they blame shift and they try to continue hiding. Adam says, "It's that woman you gave me." She says it's the serpent. Remember how they pass the buck? They don't know who God is and they don't know how bad their sin has wrecked them. So the Lord begins to lay out for them the way back, and that's the unfolding of the word of God: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and all the way through the Old Testament, until the lights come on fully when Jesus Christ is on the scene.

One of the themes that weaves its way through the Bible, one of the essential themes, is really the presence of God, and in fact, if you think about the overarching picture, what you have in Genesis 1 and 2, the first two chapters of the Bible, is God creates everything, and remember how good it is? Six times it says that the Lord saw what He had made, and behold, it was good. Then after He completes making man on the sixth day, he looks at all that he has made, and

behold, it was very good. Seven times He pronounces, “It was good.” The seventh time, He said emphatically, ‘It was very good.’”

In Chapter 2, man’s naming the animals. Everything’s in harmony. Everything’s in beauty. The man and the woman have a perfect relationship, complete ability to share with one another, and no sense of vulnerability. That’s what it means when it says they were naked and not ashamed. There was no fear in their relationship. There was perfect love between them and God, and between them and one another, and between them and nature. Everything worked perfectly. Sometimes it’s good to remember that and think about that when you’re dealing with something that’s not working perfectly. Things don’t work perfectly in this world.

I usually get up early on Sunday mornings, and so this morning I was reviewing my message and praying before everybody else was up, and I was listening to one of the reminders that the world is not as it ought to be. We’ve got an infestation of squirrels in our attic, and it is trying me. I’m wanting to apply Genesis 1:26 and following, and I want to take dominion over my attic in my house. We’re to rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and everything that creeps on the ground. The squirrels creep on the ground and they’re under us, right? But something has happened, because they’re in my house. At different places I hear them in the attic. I’ve put traps up there trying to catch them. I’ve put live traps. I’ve tried the nice way. I put before them life and death. Come this way and I will relocate you at least past the interstate, and make it hard for you to get back alive and in one piece. But they haven’t cooperated with my live squirrel trap, and so I’ve put up some other traps. So really, live and death are in my attic right now. The rat trap or the live trap?

But the Lord has made this world, and it’s supposed to all be in harmony. And not just things like that, like the animals, but our relationships. There’s supposed to be perfect harmony among us. We look around us and we see so many reminders that things are not as they ought to be. What’s wrong with this world that people die, that people become ill, that accidents happen and take people from us suddenly? What’s wrong with this world? All of these things are symptomatic to the fact that sin has marred everything. Sin has brought death. So the Lord, in His grace and kindness, really has allowed things to become messed up. When we sinned, He basically cursed the ground and He cursed us. *Return, oh man to dust.* Why? Because He wanted us to see that in the things around us and in our own lives, something’s very wrong, because we would be so dumb otherwise. If He hadn’t have done this, we would have lived on happily without Him, and the tragedy would be for us, not for Him. We add nothing to His glory. There’s no need in

God. He doesn't need us, but He knows that He created us for Him. That is, for us to enjoy anything is to enjoy Him first. The great yearning of the heart is for God. That's what the Psalmist is saying in Psalm 42, Psalm 63, and Psalm 73:

Psalm 42:1 ~ As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?

Psalm 73:25 ~ Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.

The Psalmist sees their hunger and their thirst is ultimately aimed at God to be in His presence. Everything that we enjoy in this world, all the things that we love, every unbeliever and the good things that they love in this world are just tokens of God's goodness. It's really great irony that we would love the blessings and not love the Blessor, but that's the nature of man. We love this glorious world that He's made, and yet forget that it's His fingerprints that are all over it. So if this world is this beautiful, how much more beautiful must be the Artist that made it?

If we can be stunned in silent awe as we stare at the grand canyon, or a glorious sunrise or sunset, how much more will we be filled with joy and awe as we behold the One who paints the sunset? So our great need is God, and the Lord has allowed things to get messed up, because He decreed that as a way to remind us that the great need of our hearts is Him.

So this is the message He's unfolding, and so the theme that weaves through the whole Bible is that what man needs is the presence of God. What we lost in the fall was not just the fact that there was harmony – the Tree of Life was there, all the trees of the garden were producing – but what we lost there was the Lord, and so the Lord in continuing as He unveils His word, He uses in such perfect wisdom of a perfect Teacher, as John Calvin said, He baby talks with us in Scripture and He teaches us profound truths in very simple ways. One of the profound truths He's teaching us is that more than anything else, we need to be in His presence, and He does this with coupling these two themes: *The Presence of God and The Provision of God*. Of all of the yearnings we feel, what are the most basic yearnings that we feel? We have a number of things that we need. We need sleep. We need exercise, but we don't always feel that need as much, do we? We need water and we need food. We need oxygen. We need light. What the Lord does is He begins to show us how all of these things are really pictures of our need of Him.

This is what John is doing in his Gospel. He is painting a beautiful portrait, capturing all of these Old Testament themes and showing us how Jesus Christ in revealing Himself the way He did is everything that you and I need, that when you come into the presence of God, you will find that all of your needs are met. Until then, until you come into the presence of God, none of your real needs will ever be met. There's no way. It's only an illusion. You're drinking from a mirage, putting sand in your mouth, thinking it's water, but it's not.

So this passage presents to us the glory of how Jesus is fulfillment. That's the title of the message this morning: *Jesus is Fulfillment*. Look with me at John 7:37-39.

John 7:37 ~ Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" 39 But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

In this decisive moment at the Feast, Jesus invites all of those thirsty people that are dying of thirst, the thousands that have thronged Jerusalem, He invites them to come to Him and to have their needs met. It's a glorious invitation where He basically is saying, "I am the fulfillment that you are looking for." Jesus is everything that we need.

Now, as we look at this passage, I want to organize our thoughts around three points, and I think we're going to get through most of the first two today, and then we'll complete that in a couple of weeks. I'm out of town next week for a wedding, and then on the 28th, we'll resume, Lord willing.

The three points are:

- 1) The Setting of Jesus' Words.
- 2) The Substance of Jesus' Words.
- 3) The Significance of Jesus' Words.

1) The Setting of Jesus' Words:

We're going to start looking at the setting of Jesus' words, what He says here. The words that He says are: ... ***If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He***

who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.

Why does He say that here? Let's think about the setting, this unique moment in Jesus' life and ministry. John tells us: *Now on the last day, the great day of the feast...* The first thing I want us to notice is the last day of the feast. The last day is the great day. That's significant because as we've been looking at John 7, we've seen that this whole chapter takes place, and we'll see that chapter 8 also takes place on this same day, after we cover in a few weeks how Jesus in John 8:12 is saying the same thing. He's fulfilling the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Booths, as it said in this passage. But it's really the same. The Feast of Booths equals the Feast of Tabernacles, because booths were these little makeshift shelters that the people made to celebrate this feast. You can call it a tabernacle or a booth, and we've chosen to call it a tabernacle.

So the Feast of Tabernacles is the setting for John 7 and John 8. He wants us to see all that Jesus says in light of the setting. That's why he bothered to tell us. We always need to observe every word of Scripture. He didn't have to tell us again the day of this setting, did he? He could have just said, "Jesus said..." or he could have said, "After these things, Jesus said..." A lot of times, that's how he does transition. "After these things, Jesus said..." Well, maybe it's some time afterwards, but here he tells us *...on the last day, the great day of the feast...* He reminds us that it's the feast again, and he also reminds us it's the last day.

It's interesting to note first of all that he had told us earlier in Verse 14, when Jesus was teaching, that's when He first teaches at the feast. Look at John 7:14.

John 7:14 ~ But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach.

From Verse 14 to Verse 36, is in that particular day, the midst of the feast. Now, the feast lasted 8 days. It was a 7-day feast that was bracketed by the Sabbath, so it was technically 8 days or 7 days, depending on how you define it. It was 7 days of celebration of the feast proper, and an 8th day of reflection, an additional Sabbath to reflect on this feast and what it meant. So in the middle means it was like the 3rd, 4th, or 5th day when He's teaching from Verse 14 to Verse 36. All that we've been looking at was on the third or fourth day of the feast. Now it's the eighth day, so three or four days have passed.

One of the things we want to think about right off the bat is why has He waited? Has there been any other teaching going on? I think in the context, it begs the question and helps us understand that in the face of widespread rejection. Remember what the circumstances were on the fourth day when we were looking at this in the last few weeks. How were people receiving Jesus? They weren't receiving Him well at all, were they? Remember He had considered that He needed to go up quietly to the feast, because the people were already wanting to kill Him, and then as He teaches more, He convinces more people to want to kill Him. I mean, I say that because He reveals His glory. He beckons them to salvation, but they in their wickedness hate Him, and opposition grows.

So the last three or four days have apparently been spent out of the center of the festivities. It seems likely He's not been teaching, in the face of the widespread rejection and even mockery that He was receiving earlier, and the hatred and murderous rage that we saw. Remember they want to rush on Him, and grab Him, and kill Him? But the verse says no one laid a hand on Him, that the Father tells Him to withdraw from the center of Jerusalem and from the center of the teaching for a few days, to let what He's already taught the people percolate a little bit, and to await the right moment.

His withdrawal is brief and purposeful. It's not to save Himself. It's just to come at the right time, because He's come to die, but at the right time. So He comes back on the eighth day, and that tells us that what the Lord wants us to see about this needed to happen on the eighth and final day of the feast. In fact, it's interesting the wording of the text. *Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out,...* Remember I mentioned last time there are four times in John's Gospel where this particular verb *cried out* is used. We saw it previously in Verse 28. He cried out in the temple three or four days ago, and we'll see it again in John 12. It was also spoken of John the Baptist in John 1. Only four times does it describe Jesus as crying out. We noted it was an onomatopoeic word that was actually rooted in the cry of a raven. It was a loud, attention-getting device. He was crying out for attention and for people to listen to what He had to say, and it communicates anguish of soul, concern, but also earnestness in the highest degree. "You need to hear this," is kind of the idea. "You need to hear what I'm saying right now."

So think about then in the face of this opposition, this murderous crowd, the growing number of people who want to do Him away, it says Jesus cried out. He doesn't shrink back. He comes into the center again and cries out. It's the right time now, and He beckons people to listen.

It's interesting also the word *stood* here doesn't come up as much in the English. The Greek verb here is a particular kind of a rare tense, the pluperfect tense, which pictures a decisive moment. Greek tenses have the kind of action at their focus more than English tenses. In our tenses – past, present, future – time is the tense, right? We have past time, present time, future time. In the Greek, like many other languages, the *kind* of action is in view, and the pluperfect tense is like the perfect tense in that it emphasizes this kind of action, something that happens at a moment in time, but then has ongoing effects or continues on for a period of time. That's the idea here.

The idea is that against all of this opposition, Jesus stood up, or I really think a better translation of this word in this tense would be *...took His stand...* Jesus took His stand and cried out. In fact, this particular verb is often used in military context in the pluperfect tense, as in *to stand against opposition, to take your stand and continue to stand against opposition in a battle, to hold your post*. That's the idea here. He took His stand and kept standing, and He cried out with earnestness for people to hear what He had to say.

So in that, you see His courage. You see His love. He comes knowing that people have murderous intent towards Him, and yet He comes to offer to those same people the gift of salvation. It's amazing the love and grace of God, that He could pray on the cross as He hung in agony, "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do. That same heart is evident in this movement, and His mercy and tenderness are on display. Look at the kind of God that has created the heavens. Look at the kind of God that we have become distant from, that we have become separated from, but look at the kind of God that beckons salvation and offers us salvation.

So we looked at the setting of Jesus words, and we saw: *...on the last day...* I mentioned earlier the feast. I want to think about that for a moment, the setting of Jesus words, the last day of the feast. This is the sixth time in the passage that he has referred to the feast or that the word feast occurs. It occurs once in Verse 2, Verse 8, Verse 10, Verse 11, Verse 14, and now Verse 37. John wants to make sure we understand when this is happening. It's the feast. It's the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles.

Remember we talked about who he's writing to initially. John has written this Gospel for Jews and Jewish Proselytes, that is, Gentiles who are now practicing the Jewish faith spread throughout the Mediterranean world, but most of whom he's writing as an evangelistic treatise to them. "You've heard some things about Jesus.

You may have seen the Gospels of the other apostles, and I'm writing now to appeal to you again to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God." But he's writing to people who are steeped in Old Testament imagery. So when he mentions 'feast', they know about the feast. Every Jew knows about particularly the three great pilgrimage feasts. There are three great feasts that Jewish men were required by the Word of God to attend in Jerusalem. Three times a year these three feasts happened. These happened once a year, but a total of three times a year, and the feasts are: The Feast of Passover, which is also called Unleavened Bread. Kind of make a mental note of that. When you see the Feast of Unleavened Bread, it's the same thing. Passover inaugurates that feast, but it's one entity, basically. It happens in March-April. The Feast of Passover is when Jesus is going to be crucified six months later than this.

The second pilgrimage feast is the Feast of Pentecost, or the Feast of Harvest. They're the same thing. The Feast of Pentecost equals the Feast of Harvest. The third feast is the Feast of Booths, which we're calling Tabernacles, which also has another name in the Scripture. It's the Feast of Ingathering. In fact, we're going to look at this in a minute. I'm going to take you through some verses in the Scripture to show you how these feasts, particularly this feast, is named, and the significance of it. But these three feasts they're aware of, and so when he reminds us again of the feast, Jesus is at the Feast of Tabernacles. It's the last great day, that is, it's the eighth day. It's the day of reflection.

In fact, let me remind you of some of the things we talked about last week, and then we'll do a Bible study on the Feast of Tabernacles which is the Feast of Ingathering. Have I confused everybody enough by giving you about six different names for everything? I'll continue to work on that. Okay, the significance of the Feast of Tabernacles we've said is that God gave all of these three feasts, actually, these three pilgrimage feasts to celebrate what He did in the exodus and the bringing of the people of Israel from Egypt into the Promised Land. He delivers them from Egypt. That's Passover and Unleavened Bread. That celebrates the great deliverance that He brought about when He brought them out.

Then the Feast of Pentecost is really the giving of the Law and the giving of the wheat and grain harvest associated with that. That's what happens. Remember, they go to Sinai and they get the Law, and so Pentecost is a yearly feast to remember that part of it. Then the Feast of Ingathering or the Feast of Booths happens in October. You have Passover in March-April, and Pentecost in May-June. It tends to be in May and June, because the Jewish calendar is different from our calendar. The Feast of Ingathering or the Feast of Tabernacles which we're

talking about happens in September-October. This year, we mentioned it started on October 1st, and they just finished it up last week. In fact, I saw an aerial shot of Jerusalem on the computer this week that showed some of the sukkots or tents or tabernacles that were out where people are celebrating it in Jerusalem as the Scripture tells them to, not understanding that the full significance of this has already been realized. Jesus is here. But remember, the third feast, the Feast of Tabernacles commemorated this part of God's great work of salvation from Egypt to the Promised Land.

It was that the Lord had His people dwell in tents because they were on their way from Egypt to Canaan. The journey ended up lasting 40 years because of their unbelief, but for that 40-year period, they dwelt in what we would call tents or booths, little shelters. They lived in make-shift shelters for 40 years. But during that time, they also had in the center of that, the tabernacle which was God's tent that He had to make. Remember the glory of that tabernacle: richly put together fabric, gold and ornate decorations, and there the presence of God dwelt with them. In the center of all of their tents, God pitched His tent, and for 40 years, they had the presence of God visibly manifest. They could see the presence of God visibly in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. That is, it was a raging fire, and in the daytime, they could see the smoke, and in the night time, they could see the flames because of the difference between night and day. It's the same thing, God's glory, a fire, a pillar of fire. The pillar of fire and cloud would rest right over the tabernacle. Think about how wonderful that is to be in the presence of God, to see His presence manifest. That is what is at the heart of the Feast of Tabernacles. God has chosen us out of all the nations on the face of the earth to dwell among us, and for 40 years, He visibly dwelt among us to show and to seal that we are His people. That's the idea.

Now, it also had a secondary element, and that is Ingathering. I mentioned that these feasts have different names, because they have different elements. What's interesting is that when God gives the Law, Pentecost, that's the May-June feast that celebrates the giving of the Law, they also celebrate the giving of bread. It's called the Feast of Harvest, because in May-June is when they harvested their grain. So they celebrate the receiving of God's bread at the same time they celebrate the receiving of God's Law. Do you see the imagery there? *Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.* Ingathering, though, is another name for harvesting, but a different name, ingathering which is also the Feast of Tabernacles in September-October.

They also celebrate the fact that in that climate, the olive harvest, the pomegranate harvest, the citrus fruit harvest, the grape harvest, and I may be missing one or two things, but anyway, key products of the land came to fruition at that time, and still do come to fruition at that time of the year in Israel. Now, think about that. I mean, living in an agrarian society, we get used to having olive oil any time we want. We can get anything. Isn't it wonderful how the Lord has given us transportation so we can eat oranges in the summertime? Remember how it used to be? You got oranges at Christmas and January, and then you were done with them for the year. Orange juice was a great thing, because you could still get it all year. But now we get it because we get it from the southern hemisphere brought up here, right? Well, in that day, they celebrated the gift of these wonderful fruits, olives, the grape harvest, the gift of God in giving them wine, and grapes, all of these things were associated with that Feast of Booths or Tabernacles. Let me show you.

Look at Exodus 23. Turn with me in your Bibles to Exodus 23:14-17. This is at Sinai. This is the giving of the Law right here. As He gives the Law, He tells them about these three feasts. Look at Verse 14:

Exodus 23:14-17 ~ “Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to Me. 15 You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread (That’s the Feast of Passover); for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. And none shall appear before Me empty-handed. 16 Also you shall observe the Feast of the Harvest of the first fruits (That’s Pentecost, the harvest of the fruits, the first grain) of your labors from what you sow in the field; also the Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in the fruit of your labors from the field. 17 Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord God.

Now turn over to Leviticus. The Lord continues to expand our understanding of it in Leviticus 23. Watch how the Lord fills in their understanding of what this feast is and what these feasts are, okay?

Leviticus 23:33 ~ Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 34 “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘On the fifteenth of this seventh month is the Feast of Booths (the Feast of Tabernacles) for seven days to the Lord. 35 On the first day is a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work of any kind. 36 For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the Lord. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the Lord; it is an assembly. You shall do no laborious work.

See the eighth day? This is the day Jesus is appearing to speak in the temple, that we're going to get back to. Look on down to Verse 39. He's going to elaborate some more:

Leviticus 23:39 ~ 'On exactly the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the crops of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the Lord for seven days, with a rest on the first day and a rest on the eighth day. 40 Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. 41 You shall thus celebrate it as a feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. 42 You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths, 43 so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.'

Now He continues in Deuteronomy. Before they go into the land, He reminds them about the significance of this feast and adds a little more to our understanding.

Deuteronomy 16:13 ~ "You shall celebrate the Feast of Booths seven days after you have gathered in from your threshing floor and your wine vat; 14 and you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your towns. 15 Seven days you shall celebrate a feast to the Lord your God in the place which the Lord chooses, because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful.

Do you hear that joy? Rejoice. Celebrate. Be joyful. God's going to give you the produce of your lands. He's going to make your hearts satisfied. You see, when you're in the presence of God, when you dwell around the presence of God, He satisfies your needs. That's the picture. So you have this blending together of the presence and provision of God.

What's interesting is that in the history of Israel, they were to have these three feasts that they were to celebrate regularly. God built it into their calendar. Look at how wise a Teacher He is. Three times a year, they were to think about the Passover lamb that delivers them from darkness, to think about the giving of God's Word as they celebrate the gift of bread, to think about dwelling in the presence of

God in the tabernacles for a week. These things were teaching them and preparing them for Jesus Christ like three rivers flowing together, and they come together in the Person and work of Jesus of Nazareth in a glorious way.

What's interesting in the history of Israel, though, is that they quickly fall away from celebrating these feasts as they're supposed to. It's really staggering when you look at it. They struggle in a lot of ways, but one of the things is they struggle to keep these feasts. A couple times you'll read in 1 and 2 Kings that the king repents and leaves the people to re-celebrate and reinstitute the Passover. Hezekiah and Josiah, remember they have great Passovers hundreds of years apart? Why? Because the people have abandoned the Passover.

We're going to read a passage now in Nehemiah 8, one of the last books in the historical book section. Before you get to Job and the Psalms, there's Nehemiah. Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther – the last three historical books. Look at Nehemiah 8. I'm giving you a lot of history here, but it does lay the foundation. I want you to follow with me for a moment here. The Lord brings in the exodus – in the three feasts that we have – the celebration of how God delivers His people from darkness and brings them and plants them in the land of Canaan, which is a type of Heaven. “This is what it means to dwell in My presence. This is what has to happen. You have to have a Passover Lamb. You have to have Me come dwell among you, live among you. You have to receive My Word.” These are things that are being taught.

Well, they go into the land, and they struggle, and they're continually unfaithful. They don't keep the feasts, they don't keep the Law, and eventually God becomes angry with them, and they're cast out of the land. That's the exile, remember? They're exiled from the land. They're taken away from the land of Canaan. It's a type even again of what happened to Adam and Eve. They were cast away from the presence of God. Remember when you read Daniel? Remember when Daniel prays when he's told not to pray? It's the Bible story we heard when we were little kids. Daniel prays. He opens his window and he prays toward Jerusalem. Remember that? Do you know why? It's because at that point in time, the presence of God was seen to be in Jerusalem, and so he's praying towards the presence.

Well, think about how significant it was to be cast away from the presence of God and then to be sent back. After the exile, they come back into the land. They're exiled in 606 BC. They come back to the land in 536 BC, 70 years later, and they begin to build the temple. It takes them 20 years. They break off the building and finally complete the temple, the place of God's presence, but they're struggling. They're not having God's blessing.

So then 60 some-odd years later, Ezra leads another group of people, another group of Jews, from Babylon to come back home to Israel. Remember then, Nehemiah, a few years later brings back another group and he rebuilds the walls. Remember Nehemiah rebuilding the walls? After he rebuilds the walls and now Jerusalem is back intact, you have a revival that starts in Nehemiah 8 when they began to read the Law. They read the Word of God. Look with me at Nehemiah 8:1.

Nehemiah 8:1 ~ And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had given to Israel. 2 Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who could listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. 3 He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law. 4 Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam on his left hand. 5 Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.

They stand up and listen to the book of the Law being read for hour, after hour, after hour. I'm going to just summarize what happens. As the people hear the book of the Law being read, they begin to weep. Tears are running down their faces, because they realize they've abandoned God in so many ways, and Ezra and Nehemiah tell them, "No, today's the day of joy. God has given you His Word. Don't weep anymore." They go home that night, and they come back the next day for Bible reading again, and preaching. It's Bible reading and preaching, and they hear the Word of God preached. Look with me at Verse 13:

Nehemiah 8:13 ~ Then on the second day the heads of fathers' households of all the people, the priests and the Levites were gathered to Ezra the scribe that they might gain insight into the words of the law. 14 They found written in the law how the Lord had commanded through Moses that the sons of Israel should live in booths during the feast of the seventh month. 15 So they proclaimed and circulated a proclamation in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go out to the hills, and bring olive branches and wild olive branches, myrtle branches, palm branches and

branches of other leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written.” 16 So the people went out and brought them and made booths for themselves, each on his roof, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim. 17 The entire assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in them...

Listen to this what I was talking about earlier about how they didn't keep the feast:

... The sons of Israel had indeed not done so from the days of Joshua the son of Nun to that day.

For hundreds of years they had not celebrated the Feast of Booths. God cast them out of the land, they come back, they're there for a period of time, and finally the walls are rebuilt. They hear the Word of God, and now they say, "Oh, we understand," and they begin to worship God with the Feast of Booths, and it became a regular thing after that. In fact, it's neat to see how after the Passover, the Jews never went into idolatry the same way, and they never failed to keep the festivals after they were exiled. They come back to God, not fully, but in a measure that shows the purifying power of God. So they keep the festivals year, after year, after year. Every Jew now goes regularly, and the Feast of Booths was a feast of great joy. They celebrate the presence and provision of God.

Now, there are a couple of traditions that developed in the intertestamental period between Nehemiah and Jesus, and one of them was that on the seventh day of the feast, before the eighth day, the last great day, in the first seven days, they had offerings that were prescribed, and the priests with a morning offering would march out in procession, where the high priest and the other priests would make a joyful procession out of the gate of the temple to the pool of Siloam, and they would take a golden pitcher. Get the picture here. The priests are in their regal robes, their high priestly, holy garments, and they're moving toward out of the temple. Remember, it's a time of celebration and it's the most popular feast of all the three feasts. People loved to go to this feast. I mean, think about it. Remember I was talking about oranges and stuff like that? They had olives, grapes, and it was a time of a lot of joy.

I mean, isn't it wonderful when you get a great piece of fruit? When you buy fruit, you just don't know what you're getting until you actually bite it. Sometimes you're like, "Oh boy, that was a waste. That whole bag of apples is no good." Well, all year you don't have any apples, and then suddenly you have apples.

That's the kind of joy that was going on here. So all of this is about joy and it's about remembering their identity as God's people. So part of this is they go out and they get this golden pitcher and they fill it up in the pool of Siloam. Then they process back with great joy and singing and praising God. In fact, when he's drawing the water out, they read Isaiah 12:3. *From the wells of salvation you will draw water.* So he draws water and they process back into the temple, and there with the morning drink offering, the priest pours the water out on the altar, and for seven days they do that in the morning. The people would want to be there. It's like you want to be there for the procession. "Get up, Honey. We've got to get over to the temple. It's time for the procession. I don't want to miss it today."

So they go and they watch it happen day after day after day, and there's great joy and celebration. And in an environment where agriculture is everything, part of what it means is we need God to give us water. The significance had kind of a three-fold effect. One, they needed water to live. They needed rain. In Israel, they had a really clear dry season and rainy season. It's interesting that in mid-October to April starts the rainy season. That's when it rains. It almost does not rain the other part of the year. Almost never. Every day it's sunny and bright in Israel from May to the beginning of October. Here they are right before the middle of October, and God gives them this feast, and part of what they're remembering is the Lord is the One who gives us water.

In fact, in Nehemiah, if you read on in that passage we were looking at earlier, they understood that when they were celebrating the presence of God, they were also celebrating the fact that when they were in the tents and God dwelt among them, remember they were out in the desert. They had no water and they had no food, and two different times in the desert, God makes water come out of a rock. In Exodus 17 and Numbers 20, the beginning and the end of their time in the wandering, God gives them water out of a rock. So part of this celebration was God gave us water out of the rock, and it was also an expectation of the future.

Remember in Ezekiel when we read about the rivers that will flow from the temple? Water is a picture of the abundance of life that's going to come. When God has saved us, fully saved us, we will have abundant provision. Everything we need will flow from the presence of God. So it's all of this expectation, all of this story wrapped up in this joyful procession. For seven days they do it, and when the priests come back into the temple, before they pour it out, they process around the altar in a joyful procession. On the seventh day, they process seven times around the altar and then they pour out the offering. On the eighth day, there is no procession. On the eighth day is a day for solemn assembly. It is a day to reflect on

the significance of what has happened. It's a day to take down your tent. You take down your tent. When did they take down their tents originally? They took them down when they were in the land. "I don't need a tent anymore. God gave us cities full of houses that we didn't build. God gave us all of this. He gave us trees that we didn't plant. He made us dwell in a land of plenty, the land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey."

On the eighth day, they're to stop and have a Sabbath to the Lord and reflect on all that this means. There is no water procession, but the people gather at the temple for prayer and reflection, and in that moment, after having seven days of this procession of water, one man stands up, takes his stand in the center of the temple, and says, "If any man thirsts, let him come to me." You see all of that water procession fulfilled now as Jesus Christ takes His stand and says, "All of that, all of the hope of this festival, is fulfilled now. I am here. If you are thirsty, come to Me." That's the setting of these words.

2) The Substance of Jesus' Words:

So we're going to quickly just touch on the beginning of the substance of these words, and we'll pick up the rest, Lord willing, next time. Jesus is the fulfillment of the feast. Centuries of anticipation are realized in a moment as He stands and cries out the words of John 7:37-38:

John 7:37-38 ~ Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

The shadows have passed away. The substance is here. Jesus is saying, "I am here. All of your longing and expectation, all of the broken heartedness that you feel in this world, I am the one that will heal it. All of the needs that you have, I am the One that will satisfy them." Everything that you need centers around water. You can't live without water. You can only live a couple of days depending on how good your situation is. If you're hot, you can live only a couple of days in hot weather. If you live in a cooler setting, you might live four, five, or six days without water, but you're going to die soon without water. You can live without food a lot longer, can't you? But you can't grow food without water. Water is the essence. He's the fulfillment of the feast.

The substance of Jesus' words has basically two points: *I am the fulfillment of the feast*. That's the first statement which we've laid out kind of in the setting. The second statement is: *I am the fulfillment of your need*. He says: "***If anyone is thirsty...*** It's the idea of need. To truly experience thirst is to experience the most profound need that we can experience. To be thirsty where you can't find water and there's no hope of water, the body becomes parched. He says: "***If anyone is thirsty...*** The reality is we're all thirsty. We just don't know it. We're all parched in our souls. Every human being on the face of the earth is parched and dying, drying up, and withering away, because they don't know God. He wants to fill us.

In fact, the statement that He says is: "***From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.***" What a contrast. The word *innermost being* could be translated as *belly*. From his belly. In the Greek word, the root of it, the etymology came from a word which meant *hollow*, from the hollow place, from the empty place, from the place that needs to be filled, like your belly. That's your hollow place. It grumbles when you're hungry. It needs to be filled. "From that place that needs to be filled, I'm going to make rivers flow for the one who believes in Me." But the idea first of all is a thirst, a need, and a hollowness. He's saying, "If you realize that you are thirsty, then drink." The first need of salvation is to realize how thirsty you are. It's to come to understand what Pascal said, that within the heart of man is a God-shaped void, an infinite emptiness that cannot be filled by anything other than the presence of God, a relationship with the Living God.

People try to fill this emptiness with everything in this world, but it does not satisfy. People want fame, they get fame, and they're still empty. They want money, they get money, and they're still empty. Nothing satisfies. It's like what Maria Antoinette was reputed to have said. She was a woman who lived an incredible opulence as the Queen of France, having everything that she could want, people waiting on her constantly, and she said, "Nothing tastes. I have everything, but nothing tastes." Oh that she would have understood that what she needed. The one thing that would satisfy her is Jesus Christ. Jesus says, "If anyone thirsts." It's not just an invitation to have your need met. It's an invitation. It's an open invitation. ***If anyone...*** The beauty of the Gospel is it's open and preached to every creature. The Lord invites all comers. His word is always, "Come." When people don't come, it's through no fault of God's. He's not made them stay away. He's invited them. It's their own wicked heart. That's why Jesus said, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how I've longed to bring you to Myself, but you were not willing." It's an open invitation. It's a clear invitation.

How do you satisfy your thirst? You come to Jesus and you drink. There is only one way to satisfy the thirst of the heart and that is to go to Jesus Christ. The thirst of the heart is rooted in our sinfulness. It's rooted in the fact that we're separated from God. The one thing that we long for is God. Everything that we really think we long for is just tokens or types of God's goodness.

I mentioned a little bit earlier, and this is with peril that I go to this point in the sermon at this time after 12:00, but we long for food. When you know that what you're going to eat that night is one of your favorite meals, one of your favorite places, isn't it funny how you can anticipate that? I mean, you've got things you're doing, you're going about your business, you should be serving the Lord and honoring Him, but the thought keeps coming back of what we're having tonight. I have to confess there are times when I've been eating one meal and then think about the next meal. Have you done that? *I'm eating something really good now, but we're going to have that for dinner.* The Lord's made us to enjoy things.

In fact, He's created all these things for our pleasure. The fact that we have so many types of food is staggering. I was talking with someone the other day and we were talking about how wonderful it is to have international foods now. Isn't it amazing? Thai food? Vietnamese food? Who knew that these things were so great? What you can do with rice when you put the right sauces on it... Well, the Lord made all of this. It was His idea. He fixed it and He helped people to know to dig that up, mash it up, put some cinnamon and sugar on it, and serve it at thanksgiving. That's sweet potato soufflé. But the Lord did this. He created all of these foods for us to enjoy them. Why? Because He says, "If you enjoy these which I have made, enjoy Me! I'm the One that satisfies you."

The joy of relationships, what fills our hearts with joy is to be loved, and to be with people we love, and to laugh, and to enjoy times of intimacy and sharing. When we share our hearts, our burdens, our concerns, if someone comes alongside us and walks alongside us, what a joy that is when two people walk together. What is that but God who is relationship: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a communion of love inviting us into the Oneness of Their loving fellowship. Our fellowship is with God and with His Son Jesus Christ, John writes, and he writes his epistle of 1 John so that our joy might be full and his joy might be full in fellowship with God.

In all of these things, how can we enjoy the benefits and not want the One who authored these things? I mean, if we can have joy among each other, what's it going to be like to stand in the presence of His glory, to see His beauty, to behold His majestic power, and at the same time to see His tender love, to be loved, to be

known, and to be loved in the presence of God? You and I who are of dust of yesterday, we know nothing, and yet God has set His love upon us and given all these things as tokens of what it is to be in His presence, and then people run away from Him. How can it be? That's the heart of Jesus. saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink." What happens when you come to Jesus? Out of your belly, out of the hollow place, out of the emptiness, He makes a river flow.

Sometimes in this life we have to be reminded. We get distracted and we get away from the source of water, but isn't it wonderful when He brings us back as Christians and we come back and remember, "Oh yes, this is what I need"? And the river's flowing again. All of that's a token of what awaits us. All of it is fulfilled. Everything that God says, you need the presence of God more than you need anything else, and when you get the presence of God, you get everything. If you don't know Jesus, then you're not going to have anything, but if you know Him, you will possess everything, fullness, upon fullness, upon fullness, to be filled up with all the fullness of God. I pray that you know that reality today and that if you don't, that you will do what He said and come to Him. Come to Him today. Believe on Him today and be filled.

Let's pray together...

Our Father, we marvel at the incredible kindness, the incredible love and goodness that are the essence of who You are. The Lord, the Lord, compassionate and gracious, abounding in loving kindness and truth, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin. Lord, that You would show kindness to us when we have been so wicked, when we have tried to enjoy the blessings, and at the same time hate the One that gave them. Lord, we deserved to be destroyed without any hope of blessing or any hope of repentance, but You in Your great patience kept revealing Yourself through Your prophets, and You gave us Your Word, You gave us the feasts, You gave us all of these pictures, and said, "This is what My salvation will look like," and then in the fullness of time, You sent forth Your Son. It should have been so evident that that's Him, and yet even then they rejected You, and still You kept loving and seeking.

Father, help us all in this room to evaluate our own place before You, to know where we stand before a Holy God and a God who offers mercy, but that mercy must be received by faith. It must be experientially received to drink it, to bring it into ourselves by faith.

Father, for those who are here that have not yet repented and believed, help them that today might be the day of salvation, that they might not leave this place thirsty, but that they might know the fullness that is Christ. For those of us who have come to know the joy of salvation, who have come to fill our wells with the water of salvation, may You keep our hearts focused that we might not be distracted by the cares of the world or the things of this life, but that we might drink fully from the Rock which is Christ, and that we might honor You with more and more satisfied hearts and more and more earnest seeking all the days of our life. We pray this in Jesus Name, Amen.

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