

Rivers of Living Water

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 7:37-52
Preached on: Sunday, July 13, 2014

I would invite you to take your Bibles and turn to John's gospel, chapter 7. We find ourselves in verses 37-52 and I've entitled my discourse to you this morning "Rivers of Living Water" and this will become abundantly clear as we look into this amazing passage of Scripture. Let me read the text to you beginning in verse 37 of 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.

40 Some of the multitude therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet." 41 Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Still others were saying, "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? 42 Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" 43 So a division occurred in the multitude because of Him. 44 Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him. 45 The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?" 46 The officers answered, "Never did a man speak the way this man speaks." 47 The Pharisees then answered them, "You have not also been led astray, have you? 48 No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? 49 But this multitude which does not know the Law is accursed." 50 Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) said to them, 51 "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?" 52 They answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee." 53 Everyone went to his home.

John's gospel is like a diamond. With every angle of observation, another beautiful array of spiritual light is refracted. As we look at his gospel, we see the dazzling blue sapphire of the glory of God in the face of Christ. We see the bright red light of the crimson blood of the Lamb that was shed. As we look at it, we see the aqua blue light of living water that through him alone can satisfy a man's soul. And we see the rich greens of peaceful pastures to which we are led by the Great Shepherd. We see the fiery orange judgment lights that will come upon the wicked who hate the Savior. And we even see soft velvet light that speaks of heaven and the glory that awaits us. But in our text this morning we

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see another light and that is that ineffable white light of the Holy Spirit shining through with a mysterious beauty all of his own.

This morning, I wish to draw your attention not only to the Savior, the Lord Jesus, but also to the Holy Spirit to whom Jesus points. To be sure, Christ Jesus deserves our utmost adoration but we must also pay loving homage to our precious Holy Spirit, the third and perhaps most neglected member of the Triune Godhead, at least in many of our Reformed circles. While no man can be saved unless he looks unto the crucified Savior in repentant faith, no man can do so apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit so to preach Christ at the exclusion of the Holy Spirit is a grievous error that is dishonoring to the Lord. But likewise, to constantly focus on the operations of the Holy Spirit and fail to contemplate the unsearchable riches of Christ, is equally grievous and dishonoring to God because the one true God exists eternally in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, each equally deserving of our worship and praise.

It's interesting, as we look at the gospels, it is very clear that we are first asked by John the Baptist to behold the Lamb of God, God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, not behold the Spirit of God because as we shall see demonstrated from the mouth of the Son, from the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit was not given until Jesus had first been glorified. All of the gospels point first to Christ including what might be considered the first gospel that's found in the Old Testament which is Isaiah 53, the deepest and most lofty comprehensive exposition of the Lord Jesus Christ in all of Scripture. But here in John 7, it is Christ the Son who now asks us to give equal adoration to the Holy Spirit by considering the unique operations in those whom he has caused to believe and I pray that you will be deeply encouraged as you understand this passage, especially those of you who perhaps, like many Christians, are kind of drifting away from Christ. You know who you are, those who for whatever reason no longer rejoice in the love of Christ as you once did. You no longer experience that rich joy of his presence deep within your soul. You know little of his comfort. You experience little of his power and passion in serving him. You have no real desire to hear his voice, to see his face. If you're honest, your heart has gone in secret search of other lovers and you are no longer seeing Christ as the glorious object of your desire, the greatest source of your joy. Therefore, obeying Christ and serving Christ is just not a priority. If this describes you, your spiritual life, my dear friend, is in great danger. You're missing out on what Christ wants to do for you because of what the Holy Spirit has already done in you. The Spirit has given you eternal life and as we see from this text, from your innermost being shall flow rivers of living water unless you have grieved the Spirit and quenched his power in your life. How sad to see Christians who no little of the Spirit's work within, the one who is able to do exceeding, abundantly beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works within us, the power of the Spirit. So I pray that especially for you if I've just described you, that this exposition will speak to your heart.

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We're going to look at this text with three different categories. 1. We're going to see the Savior's invitation and this is one of the most dramatic and profound recorded in Scripture. Secondly, we will behold the Spirit's operation and frankly, this will be my primary focus. An amazing analogy of the inner experience, blessing and power that's available to every believer as demonstrated here in the words of our Savior. Then finally, we're going to see the sinner's reaction which will illustrate the most typical spectrum of unbelief in the world even today.

Now, the context is very important and frankly, it's very foreign to us as Gentiles not coming out of a Jewish background so let me remind you that Jesus has been teaching in the temple during the middle of an eight day feast called the Feast of Booths and his listeners have a broad range of attitudes but basically they ranged from misguided adoration to murderous hatred. Some want to make him king, some want to kill him. Our text this morning brings us to the final day of this feast, probably the day after the events recorded in verses 14-36 that we studied the last time. Now, remember the Feast of Booth, this Feast of Tabernacles as it's sometimes called, was one of the most important of all of Israel's required feasts. God instituted it. We read about that in Leviticus 23 and other passages in the Old Testament. It not only commemorated God's provision and protection of his covenant people during their wilderness wanderings after he had delivered them out of the bondage of Egypt, but it also pointed to the magnificent blessings of the millennial kingdom when the Messiah will come and dwell with all who belong to him.

Now, central to their survival during their years in the wilderness was God's faithful provision of food and water, both of which are pictures of his saving grace. Jesus has previously described himself as the bread of life that must be eaten in order for a man to have eternal life and now he will use water to symbolize another magnificent aspect of his character. The people, as you may recall, would erect during this feast, this festival, they would erect temporary booths or shelters to live in as a way of reminding them of what happened in the wilderness with their ancestors. And they would use branches of various kinds in order to build their little booths, branches that were basically from the types of trees that were central to their survival like fruit trees, palm trees, olive branches, willow trees and so forth. And every day of the feast, they were instructed to bring some of their branches to the temple and add to them a crude covering over the altar and each day the high priest would take a golden pitcher and lead a procession to the Pool of Siloam which was basically a fresh water reservoir and he would fill that pitcher with water. He would then return through the Water Gate which is on the south side of the inner court of the temple and as that procession would go through the Water Gate, three blasts would occur, would sound forth from the shofar, signaling the return of the high priest and his procession and celebrating the intense joy of the occasion. But

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what's interesting is that on the seventh day, while the Levitical choir is singing the songs of the Hallel, which is Hallelujah, recorded in Psalm 113-118, the high priest and his procession would march around the altar seven times commemorating the Lord's victory on their behalf at Jericho which was the first city to fall when they entered into the Promised Land. He would then pour the water over the altar as a praise offering commemorating God's gracious provision of water for his people that burst forth from the rock of Meribah, as you may recall. A ceremony, frankly, that would give the people a foretaste of the future rivers of living water that we see revealed and foreseen by Ezekiel in Ezekiel 47, as well as Zechariah in Zechariah 13.

And even as water is a matter of life and death for people in a desert land, so too it is a matter of life and death spiritually to satisfy the thirst of the soul so throughout Scripture we see water being used as a symbol of salvation. We know that the Lord has promised to supply that same provision for these descendants that we're looking at here this morning when the Messiah comes to deliver the nation as pictured in Isaiah's hymn of prophetic praise in Isaiah 12, beginning in verse 3, "Therefore you will joyously draw water From the springs of salvation. And in that day you will say, 'Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name. Make known His deeds among the peoples; Make them remember that His name is exalted.'"

Now, with that background, my friends, let's go there. Let's put ourselves there in the temple with all of this happening. The water has been drawn, the shofar has been blown, the victory march has been completed, the water has been poured, the Hallel is sung and then suddenly at the perfect time, a man stands up and he shouts at the top of his voice, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me as the Scripture said, from his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." Now, we can't be certain that this is exactly how it occurred but certainly it would have happened within this context and in this way according to verse 37. So first this morning, I would draw your attention to the Savior's invitation and oh, what a magnificent invitation it is, one that is built around three verbs: thirst, come and drink. Thirst speaks of the body consciously craving that which it cannot live without, namely water. Likewise, the soul of man has cravings, has intense desires but apart from Christ, it yearns for things that never satisfy. It yearns for fame and for fortune; for pleasure and power; for meaning in life; for immortality apart from divine revelation. For this reason Solomon, who looked at all of these things said that it's all vanity. Like the ancient Israelites who rejected the Lord, the fountain of living waters in Jeremiah 2:13, they hewed out for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold not water and many people today do the same thing.

But there also exists this intense thirst for Christ within the soul of every man, one that only the Spirit of God can produce, much less satisfy. And that thirst is an overwhelming

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sense of guilt, a deep conviction of sin, a longing for this burden of sin to be removed. That thirst includes a profound awareness of sin's bondage, an awareness of one's inability to do anything about it, a conscious awareness of being alienated from God and subject to his just wrath, a craving for undeserved mercy, for peace, for rest. A heart filled with fear at the prospect of facing a holy God in judgment to the point where a man will say like the Publican in the New Testament, "Have mercy on me a sinner," as he pounded his chest. It's to this person, dear friend, that the Lord Jesus says, "Come to me and drink." I'm reminded of what the Psalmist said in Psalm 42:1, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God."

But not only does Jesus use the term "thirst," secondly he uses the term "come" and this means to draw near to God, to draw near ultimately to Christ in repentant faith knowing that you have nothing to offer, knowing that he alone is the only source of forgiveness, that he alone is the only supply of soul-satisfying living water. It's to deny yourself and follow Christ. It's to turn your back on all of the things that you've been pursuing that really bring no lasting joy and satisfaction and coming to Christ. It does not mean coming to church. It does not mean coming to some denomination, to some pastor or some priest. It does not mean come to waters of baptism. It means come to Christ. And then when you come, you must drink and that simply symbolizes the idea of making Christ your own, appropriating his provision of grace, to take in all that he is and all that he offers. To not only profess him but to possess him as your own and we know according to what Jesus says that the man who drinks proves that he has been born-again. You recall what Jesus said in John 6:54, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life." He doesn't receive it, he has it. It's already his possession, otherwise he would have never eaten, he would have never drank. Then he says, "I will raise him up on the last day."

So it is the Spirit of God that produces this thirst in very unique ways as we will discuss in a moment but I would ask you: do you have a thirst for Christ? Have you come to him to satisfy that thirst? Or are you still trying to satisfy the yearnings in your soul through all of the things that the world has to offer? Now, my friends, this is important with respect to the order that Jesus has given these terms. This is crucial in evangelism. Let me put it this way: never ask a man to come and drink who isn't thirsty. Too often this happens in evangelism. People are pressured or they're manipulated to come to Jesus but when a man is truly thirsty, there will such an intense, internal desperation and longing for that water that he will not need to be manipulated. He will not need to be coaxed anymore than a thirsty man physically would need to be coaxed to drink water.

By the way, this is a real danger in child evangelism so be careful. Don't rush the process and have the child drink something that he doesn't crave. Does that make sense? Because what he will drink will not be the living water but it will be a superstitious misguided

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substitute and too often I fear that children are not coming to Christ to quench their spiritual thirst but they're coming to their parents for approval or they're coming to their peers to fit in and on and on it goes. The same can be true of adults who really have no intense spiritual thirst for a remedy of sin. Their conscience has not yet been awakened to the dreadful state of their condition before a holy God. In fact, they still love their sin in many cases so they don't come to Christ for the right reason, they come to Christ to be successful, they come to Christ to be self-fulfilled, maybe to be healthy, to be wealthy or to be a part of the local religious country club of which many are called a church.

The question might arise: how can we make a man thirsty? Well, technically we can't. That's the work of the Holy Spirit but he uses us in that process. We are to be salt. What does salt do? It preserves but it also makes people thirsty. We are salt as well as light. We are to go and make disciples. The Spirit of God uses his word, he uses his people to give people the gospel, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ," and so on. And so in evangelism, the way the Spirit of God will use to make people thirsty is for us to begin with lives that demonstrate the transforming power of Christ but also in our words to begin with the law. Don't begin with grace, begin with the law and then when a man understands the bad news, he will cry out for the good news. Does that make sense? Never sing Amazing Grace until you have first been amazed at your sin and the judgment that you deserve.

So Jesus stands up and he cries out, the text says, which literally means to yell at the top of your voice, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink." But then he makes this astounding statement in verses 38-39, he says, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.' 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," referring to his ascension back into glory after his death and resurrection. So here, my friends, we come to the second point in our little outline and that is the Spirit's operation. Here Jesus describes some of the amazing realities that a believer will experience, namely the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit but as we see here, he would not be given until Jesus was glorified. Of course, he already existed, he just did not dwell within individuals prior to Pentecost as we read in Acts 2. You will recall when the saints were suddenly filled with the Holy Spirit and supernaturally empowered to exalt Christ through ministry and evangelism.

Now it's interesting, four times in John's gospel the Holy Spirit is described as a helper. As a helper. For example in John 14, beginning in verse 16, Jesus said, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth." He is the Paraclete. He is the one who comes alongside and in Scripture we see some of his unique operations. He is the one who helps, advises, comforts, encourages, exhorts, empowers, instructs, strengthens, intercedes, convicts. He even seals

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us unto the day of redemption. Utterly astounding. In fact, in John 14:22, Jesus promised all who believe in him that “the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do,” greater in extent not in kind. And it's remarkable, these promises, my friends, are not reserved for some type of super-spiritual Christian but for the run-of-the-mill Christians like me and like you. I just find that to be so refreshing and so encouraging and so humbling. Every believer has the indwelling Spirit within him, right? That's what Scripture teaches, Romans 8:9, “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him.” End of discussion. And sadly, most Christians have no idea the resident power that lies within them, that ability to put Christ on display in magnificent ways nor do they have any idea of the blessings that they forfeit because they do not walk by the Spirit, they walk by the flesh, Galatians 5. They're not filled with the Spirit, Ephesians 5:18, which is a result of being yielded to the will of God as he has revealed it in his word.

Folks, think of the profound reality of this blessing that Jesus promised to all who come to him in saving faith. As marvelous as it was for Jesus to be present with his disciples, it was to their advantage that he leave them and be replaced by the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. It's a fascinating thought. I would give anything to spend an hour with Jesus in his Incarnation but he's saying, “It's to your advantage that I leave and give you the Holy Spirit,” he said that in John 16:7-8. Here's what Jesus said, “But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.” Now, you must understand that prior to this time as we see throughout the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit would come and he would go to convict people to regenerate them, to illumine them, to empower certain individuals but he did not abide on people. He did not indwell them. Yet this is the magnificent promise Jesus makes to all who thirst and come to him and drink. I find it amazing to think that God redeems us that he might inhabit us. He makes our bodies his temple. The Spirit of God dwells within us to conform us to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. He comes to us so others will come to Christ through our witness. According to 1 Corinthians 12 and all through chapter 14, we see that he gives gifts to every believer, at least one if not more, supernatural abilities to be used for the common good in the body of Christ. They are divided typically into two categories: serving gifts and speaking gifts, a whole list of them there.

But I want you to notice again I verse 38, he says, “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said,” referring to a variety of Old Testament texts that promised the blessing of the Spirit, he says, “From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.” Now folks, you just have to camp on this for a moment. This is an amazing statement. What he's saying is that existing within the inner man, within the inner core of every believer is a supernatural fountainhead of ability for ministry and evangelism. It's an astounding

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thought and I want you to look: it's not just a stream, it's not just a bubbling brook, it's not even a river, it is rivers of living water. I've seen some magnificent rivers gushing forth in my day but to think of rivers? Amazing. Beloved, if I can put it this way, what he's speaking of here is torrents of spontaneous grace that bursts forth from within a believer. That's the capacity that we have. This is surging white waters of evangelistic zeal and effectiveness. This is a gushing deluge of ministry fervor and ability for the glory of Christ and how sad to see a Christian whose innermost being is all clogged up with self-will, with worldliness, with laziness, with apathy and all kinds of other sins. Instead of rivers of living water flowing from their innermost being, their witness and their service is a mere trickle, barely noticeable to anybody. How sad. Their life has virtually no impact for the sake of Christ. They have no passion for the glory of God. They have no eagerness to be used by him. They have no desire really to see others come to him and obey him. No energy bursting forth to be used in the body of Christ for the glory of Christ. They live unto themselves and their influence for Christ is a mere dribble here and there.

Like the regular rhythm of a leaky faucet. Have you ever had those in the middle of the night? And you hear that drip...drip...drip and it begins to drive you crazy. A lot of believers are that way. You will see them and you will hear them drip every Sunday but nothing in between. Like that faucet, they are more of an irritating nuisance than a blessing. They're squirt gun Christians. From them squirt little trickles of water but not rivers and yet, my friends, the capacity is there. The Spirit of God dwells within them. Oh, what a glorious truth Jesus gives us here, "From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." Now beloved, if this doesn't describe you, there is a real problem and you need to ask the question: if not, why not? Can I give you three reasons real quickly? If you're honest with yourself and you're just not seeing this type of thing come from your life, there's three reasons: either you're not saved, you're not serious or you're not satisfied. Let me explain that: you're not saved meaning you've never been thirsty, you've never really come to Christ, you never drank of his glory so the Holy Spirit is not dwelling within you so you have no resident power so there's no flowing of grace and ministry from your innermost being. In fact, you're filling yourself up with all the junk of the world that will ultimately damn you. So you're either not saved or you're not serious. Oh, you're saved but you're not serious about Christ. You walk by the flesh, not by the Spirit. In other words, you're not willing to really submit yourself to the revealed word and will of God. You're ruled by your lusts: your lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the boastful pride of life. And/or you're 3. not satisfied, meaning you're not satisfied with Christ. He has been replaced in your heart with other things. He is not the priority of your life so your soul is empty, living waters of spiritual blessing to others will never flow from a soul that is not overflowing with the abundance of his grace.

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You know, if this is you, I can describe your life because I deal with people like this on almost a daily basis. They are worldly. They know Christ but they're worldly. They're addicted to entertainment, addicted to materialism, to fashion. They're indifferent towards Christ and his word. They're unteachable, easily offended, angry, jealous. They stir up strife. They're immoral. They're frustrated with life. Oh, they can see the splinter in another brother's eye a mile away but they can't see the log in their own. They have no desire, really, for the word of God, I mean Sunday is good enough. No prayer life. They spend all of their money on themselves. Most of the time they're hopelessly in debt, poor stewards of God's resources. The fruits of the Spirit just aren't growing on their tree. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, those things just aren't there. And you know what else? If this is you, right now your conscience is screaming at you and you're doing everything you possibly can to silence it and most of you have done it so long that you're really good at it and you'll probably forget this within a few hours.

So you rob yourself of joy, you rob God of glory. You say, "Pastor, what can I do?" Two things, can I give this to you? It's real simple: 1. confess it to God. Confess means to agree with God about your sin. "Lord, this is pitiful. This is terrible. I confess it. I beg for forgiveness." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," right? But, folks, there's a second thing that you've got to do and here's where it's going to get really tough for many of you: you need to confess it to other brothers or sisters in Christ that you can trust who will help you bear your burden of sin and pray for you. James 5:16, we read, "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed," talking about spiritual healing. "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." Again, this is where most folks fail. I've seen it thousands of times and if you fail there, it means that you weren't serious about your confession to God. Let's just call it what it is: if you're serious about your confession to God, you will obey what he says here in his word. You will confess your sin to him and to others that he has empowered to help you. Folks, we need the Lord and he wants to use us to help each other. We're part of a body. The kidney will not function somewhere out here. Friends will hold you accountable; they will encourage you; they will exhort you. I am so thankful for godly friends, for godly discipleship over the years of my life. They are the ones who can help me see how to practically put off the old sinful habits and put on the new, to unclog that drain so that the rivers can run freely.

So having considered the Savior's invitation and the Spirit's operation, finally we look at the sinner's reaction and here we witness the typical spectrum of how unbelievers respond to the gospel invitation. The first category we might call the convinced. Notice verse 40, "Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, 'This certainly is the Prophet.'" By the way, by that they may have meant the prophet referring to the

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actual Messiah or perhaps the forerunner of the Messiah. We're not sure, the Scripture doesn't tell us but at least they're persuaded that he has been sent from God but then others in verse 41 says, "Others were saying, 'This is the Christ..'" I love that. There's the bold proclamation. Regardless of what the Jewish authorities say, regardless of the consequences, this is the Christ.

Then the next category would be the confused. You know, the maybe, maybe not. I need to sort through all of my tradition, all of my doctrine which is typically errant and figure this out. Verse 41, at the end of the verse says, Still others were saying, 'Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He?' Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" You see, they didn't realize that that's exactly where he did come from.

"So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him. Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him. The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, 'Why did you not bring Him?'" I love this. "The officers answered, 'Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks.'" Don't you know it would have been an awesome experience to hear Christ speak. To think that even in his Incarnation, even during that season of his humiliation you could still see and experience the glory and the majesty of his person.

Then there's another group, the contemptuous. These are the scornful, conceited, close-minded mockers of Christ. Verse 47, "The Pharisees then answered them, 'You have not also been led astray, have you? No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he?'" In other words, "Do you really think that you know more than us? I mean, we're the experts. Are you going to go against us?" And then they add this, "But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed." In other words, this rabble, this mob of people, they're accursed. You see, for the self-righteous Pharisees, the very thought that somehow any of those low-life people would ever enter into the kingdom would send them into an absolute rage because, you see, they only saw themselves as worthy of the kingdom.

So these are the contemptuous and then there's also what we might call the considerate, the thoughtful, the judicious, the prudent, the ones that are pensively reflective, they're really thinking it through with an open heart. Verse 50, "Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) said to them, 'Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?' They answered him, 'You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.'" In other words, "You're not an ignorant red-neck like a lot of the rest of these people. Don't you know that Messiah doesn't come out of Galilee? You obviously, even though you're supposed to be the teacher of Israel, you obviously don't know as much as we do." Of course, they were ignorant too because Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in the city of David,

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as Micah had promised and, by the way, so too the prophet Jonah, the prophet Nahum and the prophet Hosea and perhaps some others.

Then what a sad statement in verse 53, "Everyone went to his home." Let me think about that. The Son of God is standing before them. He invites all those who thirst to come to him and to drink freely of his grace but they want nothing to do with him. There is both biblical evidence as we will see, as well as historical traditional evidence that indicates that Nicodemus was, indeed, thirsty and that he did come to Christ and that he did drink. Here we see Nicodemus standing up for Jesus, defending him. In John 19, we're going to read how he joins with Joseph of Arimathea who was a secret disciple of Jesus, the text says, because he feared the Jews. And Nicodemus brings 100 pounds of spices to prepare the body of Jesus, a very costly preparation, one that would have been fit for royalty. And according to tradition, Nicodemus appeared at the trial of Jesus before Pilate and defended him. According to tradition, he was baptized by Peter and John and we also learn that his confession that Jesus was both the Christ and his Savior cost him everything: cost him his office, he was removed from the Sanhedrin; he was permanently banished from Jerusalem; and he along with his family was reduced to utter poverty. In fact, their poverty was so severe that there is a story that indicates that a Rabbi once walked by a dung heap and saw a girl digging through it to try to find some grain to eat because she was starving and he thought he would help her so he asked her her name, who she was and she told him and then she said that she was the daughter of Nicodemus and he asked her, "What happened to your father?" and she said that he had followed Jesus Christ and has been banished and according to the story, based upon that testimony, the Rabbi refused to help her. Another ancient document indicates that ultimately Nicodemus was beaten to death by a mob.

But we can't be certain of all of this. There is a high probability that it was true. We won't know until glory but it's certainly been true for countless others as it is true to this very day. Oh dear friends, the ravages of sin and the power of the cross, the high cost yet the infinite value of following Christ. I pray that each of you have thirsted for his grace, that you have come to Christ, that have you have drank freely from the fountain of living waters. And if you haven't, I would plead with you as a minister of the gospel, do so today before it is too late and I pray that all who have drank freely from that fountain will burst forth with a torrent, it's a good word, isn't it? A torrent of active, fervent, sacrificial service for Christ, abounding in every good word and every good work so that from your innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these amazing truths that nourish our soul. Lord, we confess that we are so undeserving and I pray that by the power of your Spirit you will indeed convict

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Rivers of Living Water

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 7:37-52

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us in those areas that are restricting that flow of blessing to others for the glory of Christ by the power of the Spirit. And Lord, if there be one within the sound of my voice that knows nothing of what it means to experience forgiveness and hope and blessing and help that is found in Christ, Lord, I beg you to make them miserable until they run to the foot of the cross and plead for the mercy that you will so instantly give them. Lord, we give you thanks, we give you praise in Jesus' name. Amen.

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You've been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.

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