

St. Matthew's Church

NEW YORK CITY

THE RIVER THAT NEVER RUNS DRY

John 14:8-17

Pentecost Sunday, May 31, 2009

Introduction: Today is the day of the Holy Spirit! What better time to remember that at least once in your life, someone prayed that you might experience the gift of the Holy Spirit. **“And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate to be with you forever” (John 14:16).** {The Holy Spirit function is to be our “Counselor” or “Helper” or “Comforter.” *Paraclete*, often meant one who was a legal counsel in court, on who argued the case and stood in some-one’s stead.} Pentecost marks the crucial moment in the transformation of Christianity into a power-filled movement, dedicated to winning the people of this world to Christ and His Church.

The report of the descent of the Spirit is found in Acts 2: **“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it lay upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit; and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”** *‘All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, what does this mean?’* The next line is a gem: **“But others sneered and said, ‘They were filled with new wine.’** The Apostle Peter responded to this with a bit of good humor: **“These are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning.”**

Peter explained the relevance of this event to the history of the Jews, and the life and resurrection of Jesus. Then he uttered the words which would enlarged and expanded in meaning through the history of the Christian Church: **“Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”**

As you reflect on that day when you experience the gift of the Holy Spirit, for a moment, consider: Has it made a difference? How different would your life be had the Holy Spirit been absent? What difference does the Holy Spirit make in your decisions, your plans, or your goals?

Yosemite national Park in California has many beautiful waterfalls. During the spring and early summer, visitors get a breathtaking sight of water falling hundreds of feet to the bottom of the valley. The noise is so loud you can barely hear the person next to you.

However many travelers are disappointed when they come to Yosemite Park later in the year. In late summer the rivers above the falls almost dry up. The water coming over the canyon walls slows down to a trickle. It takes a strong flow of water to make the falls beautiful.

The life of a child of God filled with the Spirit can be like a powerful river of faith, producing a stream of God-pleasing words and deeds. The Spirit-filled life is like a river that never runs dry. This river is for the thirsty; is from the Holy Spirit; and is in the believer's heart.

The River That Never Runs Dry is for the Thirsty: *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Matthew 5:6). “On the last day of the festival...while Jesus was standing there, He cried out, ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to Me, and let the one who believes in Me drink” (John 7:37-38).* Jesus' invitation is for all that thirst, and who seek more than temporary relief. Jesus offered this invitation on the last day, the “great day” of the Feast of Tabernacles (also known as the Feast of Booths). His invitation was likely linked to the ceremonial act of bringing water in a golden vessel from the Pool of Siloam. While the water was brought, it is believed that the words from Isaiah 12:3 were sung; **“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”**

The water Christ offers is for those who thirst. He echoes the words of Isaiah, who said: **“Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy, and eat!” (Isaiah 55:1).** His invitation includes the promise for the faithful: **“They will hunger no more, and thirst no more:...for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of the water of life” (Revelation 7:16-17).**

The Samaritan woman who came to the well near Sychar found more than she was looking for. She heard Jesus say, **“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give hem will never be thirsty. He water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life” (John 4:13-14).**

The River That Never Runs Dry is from the Holy Spirit: A Sunday school class was learning the Apostles’ Creed. Each child around the table was assigned a phrase of the creed to say out loud. One Sunday the pastor visited the class. When they said they were memorizing the creed, the pastor asked to hear it. All went well until suddenly there was an awkward pause. “You’re doing fine,” said the pastor, “what’s wrong?” One of the pupils replied; “Pastor, the boy who believes in the Holy Spirit isn’t here today.”

The answer sounds humorous at first until we begin to realize that we often leave the Holy Spirit out of our thinking and praying. Perhaps that is why someone has called the Holy Spirit the forgotten God. **Luther** reminds us of what God’s Spirit does in baptism in his response to the question, **“How can water do such great things?** He answers, **“Water by itself is only water, but with God’s Word it is a life-giving water which by grace gives the new birth through the Holy Spirit.”** God’s Spirit convinces us of our need for forgiveness of our sins and enables us to believe the good news of Jesus. By the Spirit’s power, we can do God-pleasing works and share the Gospel with others.

The River That Never Runs Dry is in the Believer’s Heart: It is disappointing when there is only a trickle of water instead of a powerful waterfall in a national park. It is also disappointing when there is only a trickle of love and concern is evident in a believer’s heart. Believers are to become channels of life in others, in order that God’s love may be shared. Jesus said it this way: **“Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.” (John 7:37).**

The Spirit’s most difficult job is with people...calling, convincing, and conviction people to commit their hearts to God. If the love and beauty of Jesus Christ is not there, then where will it be? The work of the Holy Spirit is not in the moving of mountains. The work of the Holy Spirit is in the transforming of the stubborn stuff of the human spirit and brings it into the Spirit of Christ. Never did Paul or Peter or Stephen point to an empty tomb

as evidence of the resurrection. The evidence was the Spirit-filled fellowship.

God's transforming work is to take what is common and ordinary and out of it to bring something good, worthy, and beneficial. The Spirit-filled life is like a river that never runs dry. This river is for the thirsty, from the Holy Spirit, and in the believer's heart.

Peter preached that we are to be baptized. What was equally important was repentance, an act of self-recognition, remorse for wrongs, and an act of commitment to new life in Jesus Christ. This repentance, and baptism; were to be done in the name of Jesus Christ. God would then forgive the convert's sins and give that person **an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in the heaven for you.**

The people whom God added to the first-century church continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in praying. They ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and finding favor with all the people. That is what a Church is like when it is filled with the Spirit of God. Master, fill us with the Spirit of God.

PRAYER: Show us what we have done, O God...the hurts we have inflicted, the unlovely words we have spoken, the rejections given. Open our eyes that we might see ourselves as we have become. Then, O God, give us faith by which to repent and turn from former ways. In Christ's Holy Name we pray. Amen.