

Text: John 7:37-39

Title: “Fueled by Faith” (Pew Bible, pg.1058)

INTRODUCTION

I’m in a series of messages starting this new year talking about “Holy Habits.” The Bible says to train ourselves for godliness in order that we might enter into the life God envisions for us as followers of Jesus. These habits are reflected in our Blueprint for Spiritual Formation. We exist to join God in developing passionate followers of Jesus Christ. Now we learn from Scripture that ...

PASSIONATE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS ARE IN THE HABIT OF ...

- **LEARNING AND APPLYING THE TRUTH OF GOD’S WORD**
- **OBEYING GOD AND DENYING SELF**
- **SERVING GOD AND OTHERS**
- **SHARING JESUS CHRIST WITH OTHERS**

ILLUSTRATION – Now I realize that for some of us this can be a little bit overwhelming, even just keeping those four things straight. As a boy growing up I was fascinated with those performers who could do something called plate spinning. The guy would have several plastic rods and he would start a plate spinning on the tip of those rods. He would get a couple of them started then he would have to go back to the first one to spin it a little more. He get a few more started and he would run back and forth trying to keep all the plates spinning so they wouldn’t crash to the ground. By the end the performer was running like crazy to keep all the plates spinning at the same time.

But as we think about these holy habits, they are not things we do so that God will be happy with us. If you’re saved, you’re already completely accepted by God; nothing you do or don’t do can change that. Instead, we train ourselves for godliness in these ways because we believe they are the way we enter into the life God has called us to live as followers of Jesus.

In other words, the life we are called to live as followers of Jesus is lived by faith. So...

PASSIONATE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS ARE IN THE HABIT LIVING BY FAITH

All the other things that followers of Jesus might do are for nothing if they are not fueled by faith. The life of faith and of the fullness of the Holy Spirit is essential to everything else we are called upon to do and be as followers of Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION - Without the Spirit of God filling us by faith we are like an empty glove. This glove can do nothing on its own. It’s only as my hand slips into the glove and fills it up that it then fulfills what it is to be as a glove. And the same thing is true of the life God calls us to as followers of Jesus.

Galatians 2:20 - I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Even in serving God and others or sharing Jesus Christ with others, we do it in the power of God.

1 Peter 4:11 - If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

So the life of a Christ-follower is fueled by faith. Turn with me to John 7:37-39. Jesus describes the life to which He calls us in these amazing terms. Read text.

Here is a glimpse of our life in Jesus. It describes how a person is saved, and how a saved person is to live every day. First Jesus describes...

1. THE THIRST (John 7:37)

This is an amazing scene. It happens during what is known as the Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths) which commemorated the Israelites travelling through the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. During those years they lived in tents (tabernacles) and God miraculously provided for them. On one occasion the Israelites despaired that there was no more water for them to drink, and they grumbled against God and Moses. But God led Moses to a rock and told Moses to strike the rock. Instantly water began flowing from the rock and the people's thirst was miraculously quenched.

Jewish writings describe how the Jews of Jesus' day commemorated this. Every day during the Feast of Tabernacles the High Priest would go down into the valley outside the Temple to the Pool of Siloam where he would draw a golden pitcher full of water and bring it up to the Temple. Then he would pour the water out of the pitcher on to the altar. While this was going on the people joyfully shouted words from the book of Isaiah. And all of this was a vivid reminder to the people of how God had quenched the physical thirst of their ancestors in the wilderness.

This was one of the most important religious celebrations of the year for the Jews. You might compare it to Easter or Christmas for us today. So Jesus was at the Temple watching and listening as all of this went on. And He knew that for all of the hyper-religious activity going on, for most of the people there that day there was still an aching emptiness in their hearts that religion couldn't fill. There was a thirst inside of them that religious traditions could not satisfy. Even as they celebrated the time that God supplied water for their ancestors in the wilderness, for most of them, their souls were like a dry, parched desert inside.

And so John 7:37 says that at just the right moment Jesus suddenly stood up and shouted over the noise of their religious activity, "Hey, if anyone is thirsty come to *Me* and drink!"

You see, Jesus knows that our deepest longing is for God and that our greatest satisfaction is found in God. Jesus knows this ... but we don't. Oh we know there is something missing in our lives ... that there is an emptiness and a longing, in us. But we're not sure how to satisfy it. So we turn to other things to quench our spiritual thirst. We turn to sensual pleasures like eating food or having sex or buying new stuff to quench the spiritual thirst within us. And they satisfy us for a little while, but mostly they leave us feeling emptier than ever. So we have to have more. We think that maybe if

we start going to church and doing some religious things that that will quench the thirst in our souls. Again, Jesus knew this was the case for the people in Jerusalem that day. They were all engulfed in a great religious moment, but Jesus knew that could never satisfy the thirst in their souls. Our deepest longing is for God and our greatest satisfaction is found in God.

The psalmist understood:

Psalm 42:1 - As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.

Psalm 42:2 - My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

Psalm 63:1 - O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

So Jesus shouted above the noise of religious activity, “If anyone is thirsty let him come to Me and drink.” And maybe it has dawned on you today that you can come to church and still leave thirsty if you don’t connect with Jesus. So Jesus not only describes the thirst but also...

2. THE DRINK (John 7:37-38)

John 7:37b - If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.

This is how the thirst is quenched. We come to Jesus, who has an inexhaustible supply of living water and we drink. Jesus knows that the other places we go to quench our thirst will, at best, leave us still longing for something, and, at the worst, will destroy our lives.

ILLUSTRATION – Years ago Tom Hanks was in a movie called “Cast Away.” He was in a plane crash over the Pacific Ocean which he miraculously survived, then he washed up on a deserted island. He was about to die of thirst, so one of the first challenges he faced was finding drinking water. Now that may seem odd. He’s surrounded by water; why is he dying of thirst? It is because the water that is all around him is salt water ... not the kind of water that quenches thirst. In fact, it will kill you if you drink enough of it. Sometimes people get so thirsty when they’re in that predicament that they just begin to gulp down salt water. What happens is that salt water is four times saltier than the water in our bodies. This causes our body’s cells to begin to shrink. So our kidneys begin to remove the salt from our body so fast that we are losing more water than we are taking in. And we soon dehydrate even more. Drinking salt water doesn’t quench your thirst; it kills you.

And Jesus knows that there are many things and many experiences that we turn to and drink from thinking they will satisfy our thirst; but in the end they kill us because they keep us from coming to the real source of satisfaction that is found in Jesus.

Matthew 5:6 - Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Now Jesus goes on to explain what exactly happens when we come to Him and drink. You see, he’s really talking about putting our trust in Him.

John 7:38 - Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”

So drinking = believing. But believing is more than just thinking that something is true.

ILLUSTRATION – A familiar illustration is a chair. I can look at this chair and believe that it will hold me up. That’s one kind of belief. But that’s not the belief that Jesus is talking about. It means to put your trust in something ... to put your weight on something. So faith is not saying I believe that chair will hold me up. It means I put my weight on the chair and trust it to hold me up.

So I can either put my confidence in my own righteousness to save me, or I can put my confidence in Jesus. I can either put my confidence in something sinful to make me feel satisfied, or I can put my confidence in Jesus to give me meaning in my life. I can choose to lean on my own understanding and worry about things, or I can put my weight on Jesus and have the peace that passes understanding.

One day Jesus encountered a woman in the heat of the day at a well in a place called Samaria. This woman was an immoral woman, and Jesus knew it ... and He had plans to change her life. As the woman drew water out of the well Jesus explained to her that our bodies need water, but our souls need something else to satisfy ... living water. And then He said to her:

John 4:13 - Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,

John 4:14 - but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

And Jesus is describing here the one drink that brings eternal life. You see, when you put your trust in Jesus to pardon your sins and to take control of your life, the one drink is all it takes. The word “drinks” is in the past tense, meaning completed action. Come to Jesus and drink of the living water He will give you, and your life will never be the same.

But the Christian life is more than just a one-time experience of having my sins forgiven and getting my go-to-heaven-free card. It’s much more than that. It is a life of living moment by moment in complete trust and reliance upon God. And that is the drinking (the believing) that Jesus describes in John 7.

John 7:37b - If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.

“Let him come” means “keep on coming.” “Drink” means “keep on drinking.”

John 7:38 - Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”

“Whoever believes” means “to keep on believing.”

So the life of a Christ-follower is a life of minute-by-minute, hour-by-hour, situation-by-situation dependence upon God. And the result of this is that “streams of living water” or “rivers” of living water will flow from within us.

This is not a little puddle of water that appears after a rain and then dries up. This is a mighty river that flows in us straight from God. It never runs dry. It’s inexhaustible. It meets every need. It satisfies every longing. And it never runs out.

Now, listen carefully. All this has to do with the ministry of the Holy Spirit in us. It is the Holy Spirit who makes Jesus real to us in this way.

John 7:39 - By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

There is the one time gift of the Holy Spirit when we are saved. That is the one drink of salvation. But then we know from the Bible that there we get to come to Jesus and drink countless times every day depending upon our need. This is called being filled with the Holy Spirit.

So our thirst is quenched when we come to Jesus and drink living water from the fountain of eternal life. And that becomes a river in us, but it doesn’t stop with us. So notice...

3. THE OVERFLOW (John 7:38)

It overflows into the lives of others.

John 7:38 - Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”

So this living water of the life of Jesus in us quenches the thirst of our souls. But notice the direction of the flow. This flows “from within” us. Jesus doesn’t just say it flows “into us.” No, it flows “from within.” That means that Jesus puts this river in us that satisfies the longings of our thirsty souls, but it doesn’t just stop there; it overflows into the lives of others with whom we come into contact. So when another thirsty soul comes into contact with us, the soul-thirst-quenching life of Jesus can flow through us to them. Your life becomes a pipeline of the life of Jesus into the lives of other people.

Now again, Jesus is speaking here about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in us.

John 7:39a - By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.

The Holy Spirit comes to live in us to make the life of Jesus real in us.

FOR NON-BELIEVERS WHEN WE ARE FIRST SAVED:

A very religious man named Nicodemus came to Jesus one night because he was afraid to be seen talking to Jesus in the daylight. He knows that there's something special about Jesus, but he doesn't know what to do. And Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born again. Nicodemus is confused.

John 3:5 - Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

John 3:6 - Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

It's not enough to be born physically. You must be born again spiritually. This means the Holy Spirit of Jesus comes to live in you. This is that river of living water that flows from within us.

FOR BELIEVERS EVERY DAY WE LIVE:

Remember Jesus said we are to keep on coming and keep on drinking and keep on believing. Jesus is describing here the repeated filling of the Holy Spirit that we need many times each day.

Ephesians 5:18 - Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.