

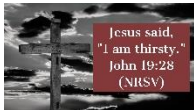
# I Thirst



As a recovering farm kid, I can think back to times in my life when I've

known true thirst. Most of that is my own fault for not bringing a water jug to the field with me. Because during the summer in the heat of the day, I was on an open-station International 865 or 656 lining bales. It wasn't physical work like stacking dummy blocks, but it was still hot and in my "I'm an invincible 16-year-old; I can't be sidetracked by mere thirst" mentality, more often than not, I wouldn't bring a water jug with me, even though my mom told me to, and we had water jugs readily available.

Thankfully, my dad is smarter than I am. Every pickup on our farm has an old Aquafina water bottle that definitely doesn't have Aquafina water in it, and it might be two weeks old or two months old, but it is still wet. And when you're really thirsty, that's all that matters. When you're thirsty, there's nothing better than a cold drink of water, and a warm, old-tasting drink of water is a pretty close second.



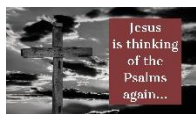
Today, as we continue our series of messages on the seven statements

Jesus makes from the cross, we hear the second-to-last thing Jesus says and it is words that maybe give us a "Well, yeah, that makes sense" response. And maybe we feel a little underwhelmed by it. So far, from the cross, Jesus has asked forgiveness on behalf of the whole of humanity, spoke words of salvation to a thief crucified next to him, made a new family at the foot of the cross, and cried out to God in Aramaic. This simple statement of his thirst that Jesus made before he died almost seems out of place among the other more dramatic statements he made from the cross. Jesus has been on this cross for three hours. It is a normal human function to need to hydrate. I get thirsty half way through church, and I'm not facing the hardship of what Jesus is facing.

Regardless if these words “fit in” with the rest of what Jesus had to say from the cross or not, they are still fascinating words that can teach us even more about what Jesus was experiencing in these final moments of life and even have an impact on our faith.

We’re told that Jesus is offered something to drink a few times and refuses to partake of anything until these final moments. Tradition says that what Jesus was offered to drink was a narcotic, something to take the edge off and make the crucifixion a little less horrible. In his commentary on Matthew, William Barclay points out that there was a guild of women who went to every crucifixion and offered the victim a drink of a drugged wine to help deaden the pain; Jesus is offered this either by a centurion or this band of women, but he refuses. Jesus is resolute in his desire to drink this cup, which he referred to when he was praying in the garden before his arrest. And Jesus is resolute to experience this in its fullest, taking no shortcuts or pleasantries along the way.

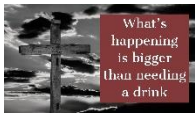
But now, in these dying moments, Jesus is apparently thirsty and makes his need known. It’s interesting how John phrases it: Jesus says these things in order to fulfill scripture. Maybe it wasn’t just a moment of human need that caused Jesus to make this known. John suggests that something even bigger than Jesus needing a drink is going on.



**Last week, when Jesus cried out to God in a spirit of forsakenness, he was**

quoting from the psalms, and as he declared his thirst, Jesus is again mindful of the psalms. Jesus is fully aware that the work he has been sent to the world to do is finished. He had revealed the Father’s name, gathered those given to him, and

exhibited God's love and revealed his word. He has sought and saved all the lost that he can, established a network of disciples that he had called and would soon commission to the work of seeking and saving the lost in his name... All is finished. But he knows that these things are a fulfillment of God's plan; the cross is a portion of the work God has sent him to do. His cry of thirst is not a desperate word from a dying man under a Middle Eastern sun. Jesus speaks in order to fulfill scripture, "I thirst" recalls Psalm 69:21, "They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst." This is what Jesus is fulfilling in saying, "I thirst."

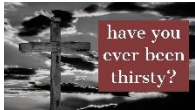


**What's happening on the cross is bigger than human thirst and needing a**

drink. What's happening is more than John seeking to prove to his day and age that Jesus was an actual human person who experienced actual human things, including death (which was a real part of the reason why John wrote his gospel the way that he did). What's happening is bigger than it first seems, as it has been every time that Jesus has talked about thirst in his earthly ministry.

A few weeks ago, I made mention of John 4, the story of the Samaritan Woman, but it all seemingly centers around a drink. Jesus, in the heat of the day, asks this scandalous woman for a drink, but the conversation isn't really about the water. Jesus may have actually been thirsty, but it isn't what he wanted to talk about. The conversation is about what the woman is longing for. She had spent so much of her life trying to find her fulfillment in men, she's been dissed and dismissed five times by men to whom she gave her heart. And when she comes to the well in the noonday heat, she's thirsty; she's longing for something to fulfill her. Because of her interaction with Jesus she is filled with a living water; she'll never be thirsty again.

Could it be that Jesus' words from the cross about his thirst have less to do with his human need as his body is in the process of dying and more do with his own longing for God? Last week, we heard that Jesus felt forsaken, felt the absence of God. Could it be that he's now longing for God's presence again? Perhaps when Jesus said, 'I thirst,' he was speaking of his own inner thirst—his longing for God.



Have you ever been thirsty? And not just “young, dumb farm kid in an alfalfa field” thirsty? Have you ever thirsted in the way that Jesus is thirsting from the cross? In those moments when we feel what Jesus was feeling on the cross, we remember this Jesus who took on human sinfulness on the cross. We remember this Jesus who offered to all a well of living water. We remember his love that points us to the very heart of God. And we drink deep. And on a hot day when our souls are parched, there's nothing greater than a cold drink of living water. Amen!