

West Valley Presbyterian Church
What Are You Thirsting For?
Preaching: Matt Hall

Today we continue our series looking at Jesus' words from the cross. Pastor Kim began this series by saying that Last Words, the final words people say before they die, are important, and I want to take a moment to reemphasize how important the last words of Christ on the cross are.

We began this series looking at a statement of incredible forgiveness. Father forgive them, for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34). Jesus looks at his executioners and cries out to God asking for their forgiveness. Undeserved. Unrequested. In his life leading up to the cross Christ taught about forgiveness, and now here on the cross he lives out that teaching of forgiveness.

Next we looked at the gift of eternal life in paradise, given by Christ to a criminal on the cross, who again does nothing to earn it. Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise (Luke 23:43). This criminal simply makes a statement of faith, and Christ promises an unearned reward. Christ taught about his heavenly kingdom, and here he opens the gate to take in a thief, somebody use to taking what they did not earn -- but not somebody use to being given what they have not earned.

Next, we see the gift of family. Woman, behold your son: behold your mother (John 19:26-27). Jesus had radical teaching about family throughout scripture, surprisingly Jesus often undermines our biological family, our family of origin, and he teaches towards a new family structure -- a family of faith. And here, he demonstrates that teaching by welcoming his mother into his family of faith. What an incredible gift to a woman about to lose her son, she now receives many sons.

Last week, we made a turn, from looking at Jesus' gifts to others, to looking at Jesus' gifts from his father. Namely, a relationship, a relationship that would be severed on the cross. My God, My God, why have you forsaken me, (Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34). Jesus taught that he was the son of God, and here we see his grief at that separation.

Four amazing statements from Jesus, four amazing, mysterious, truths. These statements draw us into worship, they remind us of Jesus' divinity. What an amazing God we have. So with that, let's turn to the fifth statement of Christ on the cross.

"I thirst."

Now, you know why Pastor Kim choose this week to go on study leave.

"I thirst."

Only John recorded this statement, and if you're like me you might be asking, what was he thinking? Why is Jesus' thirst important? Other gospel writers completely ignore the fact that Jesus requested a drink, and simply record him receiving it. Some commentaries speculate that he only took a drink so he could utter out his next great statement, "It is finished." What does this statement of Jesus' thirst offer us, that justifies it being included among the great statements that preceded it? Amongst the great statements that follow?

This verse actually gives us some great gifts. It shows us the humanity of Christ, it reminds us that Jesus was human, fully human. Those of us who are believers, we are drawn to the divinity of Christ, we accept Jesus as God and we feel his spiritual presence in prayer and worship, we read of his miracles in scripture, and we marvel at the miracle of our own transformation through faith in him. We easily accept that Jesus is God. But then so convinced of his divinity, we begin to forget his humanity.

This is a challenge for Christians. The secular world has reconciled themselves that Jesus is a real historic figure, he is one of the most well docu-

mented figures of the ancient world, they cannot deny his place in history. So they challenge his divinity.

For those of us who believe, we tend to swing the other way and we begin to doubt the humanity of Christ. James Montgomery Boice, who Pastored Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia wrote “We forget that Jesus was a real human being who walked on this earth. We forget that Jesus was sweaty and dusty, that he grew tired and hungry, that he had bodily functions... For us to hear Christ say that he was thirsty on the cross is to be reminded how completely he entered into our humanity. Jesus was thirsty! You and I know what it means to be thirst. We have been thirsty before, because we live in bodies that get thirsty... Jesus thirsted on the cross, just as we thirst. He was human after all.”

Jesus was human -- completely. Christ entered our humanity -- completely. The beginning of the Gospel of John teaches us that all things were created through Jesus, which means that he created streams, and rivers, and ponds, and lakes, and oceans... think about that. Jesus created all that water and now he's up on the cross and he needs to ask his executioners for a drink. Philippians 2:8 reads, “And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself...”

Our great God, the Creator of all, humbled himself, taking on the form of a man. Why? Why did he do this? Philippians 2:8 continues..." and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!" Jesus humbled himself so that he could die.

That forgiveness he gave his executioners, that promise of paradise he gave the criminal, that new family he gave his mother -- all of that, all of that was only possible because Christ humbled himself to death. Humbled himself by becoming fully man.

You see, we talked about the fact that the executioners and the criminals did not deserve the gifts that Jesus gave them. You and I, we don't deserve these gifts either. In fact, the bible teaches us that what we deserve is to be on the cross. Jesus is literally in our place, taking what we deserve, so that we can receive what we do not deserve. That's the message of the bible. We get what we don't deserve, because Jesus got what we deserved.

Christ took on our physical weaknesses, so that he could take on the punishment for all the sins we committed in the weakness of our own character, so that we can find our strength in his power; and ultimately have the relationship with the father that Christ sacrificed on the cross for us. And we

are reminded of that in the very human thirst of a God who created every source of water.

His human thirst is not just a desire for a diet coke or a Starbucks frappacino; this is the thirst of a man who has been brutally beaten, made to carry his cross, and then finds himself experiencing the most brutal death known to mankind in the middle of the day in the middle east. Christ is on the cross suffocating, each statement he says requires himself to pull up on the cross, grasping for breath to say each utterance. This is not a peaceful death, and this was not a simple thirst. This was the thirst of a suffering and dying man.

The verse we read today indicates one of the reasons why this verse was important. You see, you and I needed to know he was thirsty. You might not have known when you walked in here this morning, but this thirst, this thirst is crucial to our understanding of the identity of Jesus. This thirst, proves that Jesus is who he says he was. This verse reminds us that Jesus came to fulfill the promises of a Messiah. Jesus is thirsty to keep his father's promises. John 19:18 reads, "so that the Scriptures would be fulfilled, Jesus said, I thirst."

Jesus thirst is the fulfillment of a promise. The Old Testament is full of prophecies about the Messiah that Jesus fulfills. Jesus' thirst shows us that he was the promised Messiah. The Old Testament tells us that Jesus would be betrayed by a friend, that he would be innocent, that he would be mocked, that he would be counted as a criminal, that he would have his hands and feet pierced, that his clothes would be gambled away, that God would forsake him, that his bones would not be broken, that he would be buried in a rich man's tomb. Those of you familiar with the history of Easter know that all of this came to pass. All of this happened so that we would recognize Jesus as the Messiah. And this little detail of his thirst, it was prophesied too, Jesus from the Cross wanted us to know that he was who he said he was, so he made sure to share with us his thirst. The ensemble read earlier passages of Psalm 22 and Psalm 69. "I am poured out like water... My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death."

Christ fulfilled this prophecy. These verses are about the promised Messiah, and Jesus fulfills them.

Psalm 69 told us that the drink he would be given would be sour wine. That prophecy is fulfilled. Jesus is who he says he is, and from the

cross he is thirsting that you know him for all of his glory, that you know the truth of who he is.

Because when Jesus says that he thirst, ultimately on that cross he thirst for you. Jesus wants a relationship with you. This is why Jesus became a man. Jesus became a man to fulfill the promises of scripture, to suffer and die as a man, so that he could offer you the promises of forgiveness and grace.

What are you thirsty for? The world tells us to quench our thirst with sex, money, success... but our thirst is for something bigger than that. Our thirst is for a relationship with God, for a relationship with a God who loves us unconditionally. We thirst for that acceptance, that love; but it is only in the power of Jesus on the Cross that we find it. Jesus knew that.

Today, we have the opportunity to quench our thirst, by responding to the thirst of Jesus, and accepting him as our savior, as recognizing that Jesus went to the cross as an invitation for us to be in relationship with him.

Through a relationship with Jesus we have a relationship with God, we have the gift of a new family of faith, we get to spend eternity in paradise, because we have found the forgiveness that only Jesus can offer. Will you pray with me?