



Deeper Longing: I Thirst

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The Lenten journey is the time for Christians to intentionally reflect on one's relationship with Christ Jesus. This is an individual opportunity for you and me to examine our faith through deep reflection, fasting and forgiveness. It is not an easy passage for us to take because it means opening our souls to a thorough scrutiny of what we believe. The Lenten journey allows us to move toward a closer relationship with the one who came to be with us.

Friends, there are so many things that seek to pull us away from matters of faithfulness to the temporal aspects of life. We seem to satisfy our thirst with things that come from the world. The longing for possession acquisition, the desire for power and prestige, the draw from drugs and the allure of sex adjust a person's way of living. The person places more emphasis on satisfying the body and mind rather than the soul.

This is our time to draw nearer to the one who quenches our thirst and gives us life in all situations.

In 1996, a young marine corporal named Joey Mora was standing on a platform of an aircraft carrier patrolling the Iranian Sea. Incredibly, he fell overboard and his absence was not known for 36 hours. A search and rescue mission began, but was given up after another 24 hours. No one could survive in the sea without even a lifejacket after 60 hours. His parents were notified that he was "missing and presumed dead."

The rest of the story is one of those "Truth is stranger than fiction" events. Script writers would pass it up as "Not believable." It turned out that four Pakistani fishermen found Joey about 72 hours after he had fallen from the aircraft carrier. He was treading water in his sleep, clinging to a makeshift floatation device made from his trousers -- a skill learned in most military survival training. He was delirious when they pulled him into their fishing boat. His tongue was dry and cracked and his throat parched.

A few years later, as he spoke with Stone Philips of NBC Dateline, he recounted an unbelievable story of will to live and survival. Who would not give up? He said it was God who kept him struggling to survive. His discovery by the fishermen makes searching for a needle in a haystack a piece of cake. The most excruciating thing of all? Joey said that the one thought that took over his body and pounded in his brain was "Water!" [NBC Dateline: Nov. 1998]

When one thirsts, one seeks to have the desire met so life can continue. Water is essential for us as we live each day. Our body cells need the fluid so they can function well.

There is an ongoing study in the congregation during Lent of the book *“The Final Words from the Cross”* by Adam Hamilton. He examines the passage where Jesus says “I thirst” as a fulfillment of scripture.

While on the cross, Jesus was given something to drink. The Gospel of John states **28After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), “I am thirsty.” 29A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth.** Enduring the excruciating pain of the cross, he is given sour wine or vinegar. Psalm chapter 69 verse 21 fulfills the prophecy of old where it says **they put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.**

The vinegar or tart or sour wine was given to him as he lingered in the preparation for death, tormented with thirst. Hamilton writes that this offering of drink was thought “to expedite death or possibly to deaden the pain.” He thirsted after so many hours of pain, sweat and dehydration and loss of blood.

Today, whenever we visit with a loved one in the hospital, they may express thirst to us. Reaching for a cup with ice chips or ice water and straw, someone would give them water. Or using a little sponge on a stick, someone would dip it in water and then place it in their mouth. They are relieved of their thirst.

Indeed, Jesus chose to endure the pain until the end. Hamilton writes that Jesus didn’t have to do this but he “intentionally chose to suffer. His suffering communicated both God’s plan at the brokenness and sinfulness of the human race and the costliness of our redemption”. Jesus willingly gave his life for humanity by enduring the cross.

The Savior didn’t have to go through this pain and suffering. Yet, it is in this suffering and pain that he became one with humanity.

The theologian, Karl Barth, wrote about the duality of the Lord, “Jesus is very God and very Man”. He is one with us in our humanity as well as the Son of God. He willfully endured death on our behalf. He drank the bitter vinegar for us. He also is the one who offered us a drink of living water that is fulfilling and quenches one’s thirst.

Psalms chapter 42 verses 1 thru 2 draws our attention to the one who gives life to the soul especially to those who thirst for God. **1As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. 2My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?** Yes, my soul thirst for God, the living God.

In the story of the Samaritan woman drawing water from the well and Jesus asking her for a drink of water, sets the stage for a faith conversation. She questions him because she is of a different tribe than he. His response **“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”**

She wants to know where to get such living water. Jesus knows that the water in the well is only a temporary remedy for quenching one’s thirst. He says to her, **“14But those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”**

As a boy growing up in Alamosa, Colorado, I can remember the times when we stopped at a place outside of town where there was an artesian well. The pure rocky

mountain water gushed from a large pipe where we could get a drink of that cool and refreshing water. We walked away refreshed and satisfied.

Indeed, Jesus is offering something else that is life giving and nourishing to the soul. The need for the living water is more assuring and life changing. The woman says ¹⁵...**“Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”**

She later affirms that **“the Messiah who is called Christ”** will come to **“proclaim all this to”** those who are receptive to salvation. Jesus tells her that he is **“the one who is speaking to you now.”** The Savior of the soul made himself known to the woman at the well. He also makes himself know to us.

My dear brothers and sisters, Jesus “Initiated a new covenant with God and humanity; He was cleansing all who would trust in him; He was saving us from slavery to sin; and He was delivering us from death.” As Hamilton wrote.

Every one of us has a thirst for something in life. A person who is looking for someone to fill his or her life with hope and redemption seeks a Savior. A person begins to thirst for the Savior to give life and comfort. He quenches us with life giving energy and hope. He leads us through the difficulties of life and provides guidance for living a redeemed life.

So the thirst of our hearts, minds and souls is filled with the Savior who poured out himself for each of us. His approach to the cross was painful and heart wrenching. We must never forget what he did for our salvation. Remember that our everyday thirst is quenched by Jesus, the Savior of the world.

Jesus is the one who provides us and others with living water to quench the thirsty souls of those who freely come to him. He is the Living Water and quenches our thirst.

Dear Lord, be for us the source of living water. May our hearts thirst only for you. And my we, as your followers, extend water, both physical and spiritual, to all who are thirsty. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

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Scriptural Support:

John 4:7-15

⁷A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, **“Give me a drink.”** ⁸(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered her, **“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”** ¹¹The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹²Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” ¹³Jesus said to her, **“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”** ¹⁵The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

John 19:28-29

²⁸After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), **“I am thirsty.”** ²⁹A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth.