

"I Am Thirsty"

SEVEN STATEMENTS FROM THE CROSS (#5)

John 19:28-29

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Introduction:

Over the past month or so, we have been looking together at the seven statements that Jesus made as He was hanging on the cross. We started several weeks ago by looking at the fact that as the Lord was being crucified, He continued to say, ***"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*** And we discovered that that prayer was answered seven weeks later as 3,000 people had a change of heart and were immersed in water for the forgiveness of their sins on the Day of Pentecost.

We then went on to consider the fact that Jesus was crucified between two thieves, and yet as the morning wore on, we find that one of the thieves has a change of heart, and then he addresses the Lord by saying, ***"Remember me when You come in Your kingdom."*** It took a lot of faith for this man to put his faith in a king who was nailed to a cross, and so the Lord spoke up for the second time that day and said, ***"Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."***

We then looked together at the soldiers dividing up the Lord's clothing, and we learned that when they got to that seamless inner garment, a garment most likely made by Mary when the Lord was old enough to leave home, when they start handling that garment, the Lord looks at His mother and says, ***"Woman, behold your son."*** He then turns to the apostle John and says, ***"Son, behold your mother."*** And with that very simple exchange, the Lord made plans for the care of His mother and set an example for children everywhere.

And then two weeks ago, we considered the darkness that fell on the land from noon until about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and we discovered that as the darkness was coming to end, the Lord cried out with a loud voice, ***"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"*** And we discovered two weeks ago that Jesus came to this point in His suffering for us. In other words, Jesus was feeling the weight of sin. God was allowing His Son to suffer as a sacrifice—taking our place as our substitute on the cross.

This morning, then, we come to the Lord's fifth statement from the cross, and in the Greek language it is the shortest of the seven statements, taking the form of a single four-letter word. Translated into English, the Lord said, ***"I am thirsty."*** The passage is found in John 19:28-29. In our pew Bibles, the Scripture is found on

page 1694. Perhaps this statement is the easiest for us to understand; obviously, because all of us here this morning know at least something about what it means to be thirsty. We have all heard our children say it. It seems, in fact, that children are thirsty a lot—sometimes at the most inconvenient times. They get thirsty right after we get back on the Interstate in the middle of a long trip. They get thirsty right as we are trying to get them to go to sleep. They get thirsty while standing in line. And yet we understand that thirst is one of our most basic human needs. We know that our bodies need to have water in order to work properly. Most of us, in fact, drink something all day long. Perhaps we start with coffee, or milk, or juice. And then maybe we drink throughout the day. We see a water fountain, and we take a drink. We cup our hands, we carry a water bottle with us, we drink in the car, we drink on an airplane, we drink at work, we drink at school, we drink as we ride our bikes, we drink as we work out. I have read that the average American drinks 54 gallons of pop every year, 25 gallons of beer, and 12 gallons of bottled water.

We know from elementary school that our bodies are nearly two-thirds water. I have also read that by the time we are 70 years old, each of us will have consumed nearly 16,000 gallons of water. We understand why water has been described as the world's most valuable natural resource. The world contains roughly 326 million cubic miles of water, and roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the earth's surface is covered by water.

And yet in spite of all of the water that we see around us, all of us have had the experience of being thirsty. Scientists tell us that we can go nearly 40 days without food but only 4 or 5 days without water. Most of us have never pushed it that far, and yet when we read in the Bible that Jesus was thirsty, we do know at least something about one small part of how the Lord was suffering on the cross. If you will, then, please look with me at the Lord's fifth statement as it is found in **John 19:28-29**...

²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty." ²⁹ A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth.

As we begin our study of this statement, I should point out that this is different from the earlier accounts when the Lord was offered and refused a drink of wine mixed with myrrh or gall, a drug that was mixed with the wine in order to dull the pain of those who were about to undergo crucifixion. We put the accounts together, and we find that the offer of the wine mixed with gall was made after they arrived at Golgotha but before they nailed Him to the cross. It is interesting that in Matthew's account the Lord tasted it briefly, but He was unwilling to drink it. In other words, the Lord was thirsty then, but He did not want to go into the crucifixion in any kind of a drunken stupor, He did not want any kind of narcotic to take the edge off, but He chose to go through it with a clear mind. And with that, they nailed Him to the cross. Now, though, we are six hours down the line, the Lord is right at the point of death, and the drink that is offered is different. This was not meant to dull the pain, but this was the common drink of a common Roman soldier—this is what they would have

had in their canteens. The Lord cries out, "***I am thirsty,***" again, one word in the Greek language, and apparently one of the soldiers shows perhaps a tiny bit of mercy, and shares his own cheap wine with the Lord. And as we will see over the next few weeks, the Lord needed that drink primarily so that He could go on and make the final two statements from the cross.

As we think about this statement, though, this cry of thirst, we need to ask ourselves: Is this truly important, or is this simply a meaningless little detail that John throws in for no good reason? This morning, I would invite you to consider with me several lessons from this single word that Jesus spoke from the cross.

I. First of all, for example, we look at this statement and we have A VERY CLEAR REMINDER OF HOW SELFLESS THE LORD REALLY WAS.

And here, very briefly, please consider just the order of these seven statements. Before expressing any concern for His own personal well-being, the Lord continued to say, "***Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.***" Before expressing any concern for His own personal well-being, the Lord had a conversation with a dying thief and promised the man that they would be together that day in Paradise. Before expressing any concern for his own personal well-being, the Lord made arrangements for the care of His mother. Before expressing any concern for his own personal comfort, the Lord cried out to His Father about being forsaken under the crushing weight of sin. And so it is only when we come to Statement #5 that Jesus finally (after more than six hours on the cross) makes any kind of statement about His own physical discomfort, and with only one word in Greek, simply says, "***I am thirsty.***" In other words, the Lord helped others first and put His own needs last. As John said in verse 28, "***After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, 'I am thirsty.'***" In other words, only after all of the other things had been done, Jesus (going into it with a clear mind) speaks up and says, "***I am thirsty.***" Surely He had been thirsty from the beginning, but He saves this statement for right near the very end.

A lot of times, we are so tempted to think of ourselves first. Perhaps we think that our problems are worse than what other people are going through. And from time to time maybe that's true, but let us remember the example that Jesus set for us on the cross. Even when nailed to a piece of wood, the Lord did not speak up about His own discomfort until right there at the very end. And even then, it only seems like a necessity so that He will be physically able to utter those last two very unselfish statements that are still to come. First of all, then, we find that this statement does have some meaning for us today—as a perfect example of what it means to put the needs of others before our own.

II. There is a second very basic reason why John would have recorded this statement for us, and it comes in the form of a powerful reminder that JESUS (EVEN AS THE SON OF GOD) WAS ALSO FULLY HUMAN.

We need to remember that John was writing this book pretty late in the First Century—perhaps even as late as 85 AD or even later. By that time, we know that a false doctrine known as Gnosticism was growing and just barely starting to take hold in the church. One of the basic ideas of Gnosticism was that spirit was good and that flesh was evil, and so obviously these people had a problem with our understanding of the Lord. They had a really hard time, therefore, with God taking on the form of a man. And so one way they explained this was that Jesus didn't really have a human body, but that He only looked human, that He was a spirit—almost like a ghost. They said, for example, that when Jesus walked He did not leave footprints, but He was spirit and His body was merely an illusion. And so we start to come to a deeper understanding of why John would have included this fifth statement from the cross. Even though it was only one word in the Greek language, that one word destroys the Gnostic idea that Jesus did not really live in human form. Spirits do not get thirsty. Humans do. Jesus was thirsty. Therefore, Jesus (even as the Son of God, even as deity) was also fully human. As John said in the very first chapter of his gospel account, *"...the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."* Yes, Jesus was human!

We know from other passages that Jesus came in human form so that He could fully empathize with our struggles. As the author of Hebrews said in **Hebrews 2:17**, *"Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."* As a man, therefore, Jesus knows what its like to work for a living. As a carpenter, He learned first-hand about splinters and blisters. Perhaps he even learned what it was like to hit His thumb with a hammer. As a man, Jesus knows what its like to get tired and lay down in the bottom of a fishing boat during a storm. We have some children here this morning. Jesus was a child once. Jesus knows from His own personal experience how hard it is for you to keep your room clean. Jesus knows how hard it is to go to school. Jesus knows how complicated friends can be. As the oldest of at least six other children in the family, Jesus knows what it means to have to share and take care of those who are younger in the family. Jesus knows how hard it is sometimes to listen to your mother. As the Creator of heaven and earth, it is most likely that Jesus had a bedtime! Luke, after all, tells us in **Luke 2:51** that Jesus (at the age of 12) continued in subjection to His parents. He put Himself in that situation so that He could understand what we are going through. Jesus knows what it is like to be mistreated. We may have people at work gossip about us—Jesus knows from personal experience what that is like. Our closest friends may turn against us. Jesus understands! Perhaps you have lost a close friend or loved one to death, and maybe you have just broken down in tears. Jesus understands! The Bible says that He was tempted in all things as we are, and yet He did not sin (**Hebrews 4:15**). And if you have ever been thirsty, then know from this passage that Jesus also understands.

The apostle John, therefore, was reminding us that Jesus (even as God's Son) was also fully human—and for that reason, the Lord understands exactly what we feel.

III. There is a third basic idea from this one-word statement from the cross, and it comes in the fact that THIS ONE WORD (AND WHAT HAPPENS NEXT) ARE THE FULFILLMENT OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY.

In other words, with this one short statement, Jesus was saying, **"I am the Messiah! I am who I say I am!"** Please notice again what John actually says in **verse 28**, ***"After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, 'I am thirsty.'"*** Jesus made this statement so that He would ***"fulfill the Scripture."*** As far as I can tell, there are at least two Scriptures that apply here. The first is found in **Psalm 69:21**, where the author looks forward to the Messiah and says, ***"They also gave me gall for my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."*** The second passage is found in **Psalm 22:15**, that Psalm we considered two weeks ago, the one with so many references to the crucifixion. In **verse 15**, the Psalmist says, ***"My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and You lay me in the dust of death."*** With one word, Christ fulfilled two of the more than 300 prophecies about His life from the Old Testament. He spoke of His thirst, ***"...to fulfill the Scripture."***

How interesting that the God who caused water to gush from the rock to supply Israel's thirst in the wilderness, this God is now thirsty. This God, the God who changed water into high quality wine for His very first miracle, is now thirsty Himself and is given sour wine to drink. This God who asked for a drink at Jacob's well and promised a woman living water, this God is now thirsty. And He did it to fulfill the Scriptures. And as an unknown soldier grabs a stick and a sponge, he also plays such an important part in God's plan, because the stick that he grabs seemingly just happens to be the branch of a hyssop. You may remember that the hyssop is the plant in **Exodus 12** that the people were to use to smear the blood of the sacrificial lamb on their doorposts so that the angel of God would ***"pass over,"*** the origin of the Passover that so many thousands of people were now in Jerusalem to celebrate. That hyssop is then used to quench the thirst of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. And again, all of this is a reminder that this sacrifice had been planned since before the foundation of the world. It was not random. It was not by accident. In God's mind, the sacrifice of Jesus came first, this was the plan, and then He designed the whole Old Testament system to lead up to it.

We start to understand, then, why there are so many prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament—most of them made hundreds of years before the coming of Christ. For example...

- He will be born of a virgin (**Isaiah 7:14**).
- He will be from the tribe of Judah (**Genesis 49:10**).
- He will be from the family of Jesse (**Isaiah 11:1**).

- He will be born in Bethlehem (**Micah 5:2**).
 - When He is born, other children will be murdered (**Jeremiah 31:15**).
 - When He is born, He will be presented with gifts (**Psalms 72:10**).
 - He will be preceded by a messenger (**Isaiah 40:3**).
 - His ministry will begin in a small town in Galilee (**Isaiah 9:1**).
 - He will enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey (**Zechariah 9:9**).
 - Leading up to His death, He will be betrayed by a friend (**Psalms 41:9**).
 - He will be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (**Zechariah 11:12**).
 - He will be accused by false witnesses and will not answer those accusations (**Isaiah 53:7**).
 - He will be wounded and bruised (**Isaiah 53:5**).
 - He will be spit upon (**Isaiah 50:6**).
 - He will be mocked (**Psalms 22:6-8**).
 - His hands and feet and side will be pierced (**Psalms 22:16** and **Zechariah 12:10**).
 - He will be killed with others (**Isaiah 53:12**).
 - The people will shake their heads at Him (**Psalms 109:25**).
 - The people will stare at Him as He dies (**Psalms 22:17**).
 - People will gamble for His clothing (**Psalms 22:18**).
 - And yet in spite of this, He will ask God to forgive them (**Isaiah 53:12**).
 - While dying, He will suffer from extreme thirst and cheap wine will be offered to Him (**Psalms 69:21**).
 - Although He will feel abandoned by God (**Psalms 22:1**), he will commit His spirit into God's hands (**Psalms 31:5**).
 - Through all of this, not a single bone will be broken (**Psalms 34:20**).
 - While He is dying, darkness will cover the land (**Amos 8:9-10**).
 - And after He dies, He will be placed in a rich man's tomb (**Isaiah 53:9**).
- [Jefferson Williams. "Dying for a Drink," accessed on SermonCentral on April 8, 2010].

Is any of this starting to sound familiar? Many years ago, a statistician and professor [Peter Stoner] wrote the book *Science Speaks*, and put in terms we can understand what it would mean for someone to fulfill just 8 of the 332 prophecies about Christ from the Old Testament. He figured the probability of someone today fulfilling only 8 of those prophecies would come out to 1 in 1×10^{17} . That is a one followed by 17 zeroes! The author compared it to covering the entire state of Texas two feet deep in silver dollars, marking one of those silver dollars, stirring it all up, and asking a blindfolded man to go out there traveling as far as he wishes, and to pick up the marked coin on the very first try! And that's the statistical probability of someone fulfilling only eight of the 332 prophecies about Jesus from the Old Testament! And please remember, many of these are things over which the Lord did not have any control—the place of His birth, and so on. We think about this morning's passage. Jesus did not have this all planned out ahead of time. When He cried out, He was not crying out to a friend, He was not pointing at the hyssop branch, and the sponge, and the sour wine. He was not telling someone what to do. But as He cried out, "***I am thirsty***," someone responded, and in doing so, several prophecies were fulfilled right there.

Jesus, therefore, is a Scriptural Savior—in every way, Jesus is the answer and the fulfillment of the Old Testament. And because of that, we can put our trust in Him.

Conclusion:

As we close our lesson this morning, I would simply point out that Christ was thirsty so that we would never need to be thirsty. In describing heaven, the apostle John said in **Revelation 7:16-17** that, ***“They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”*** Several chapters later, we have a promise from the Lord Himself, ***“...I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost”*** (**Revelation 21:6**). And then in some of the closing verses of the entire Bible, we have a personal invitation, ***“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost”*** (**Revelation 22:17**).

We accept the Lord’s offer by having a change of heart in the way we look at sin. We see what sin has the power to do, and so we turn away from it. And then we accept the Lord’s offer by allowing ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins. If you would like to talk about it, we would love to meet with you after the service this morning, but if you are ready to obey the gospel right now and cannot put it off, we would invite you to let us know about your decision as we sing this next song. Let’s stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: church@fourlakescoc.org