

Jesus the giver of living water

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[0 : 00] Let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. 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. This is a very famous part of the Bible. It's the one where Jesus says, If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.

So to introduce this, my introduction is the question, what is Christian faith about? What is Christian faith about?

Well here's a possible answer. Being a good person. Some people think that Christianity is about being a good person.

Are you good enough to be a Christian? You Christians think you're better than everybody else. And things like that. Well I'm not going to say it's nothing to do with being a good person.

[1 : 12] But I am going to say but. But Jesus said, If anyone is thirsty. Is being a Christian about a moral code?

About rules? And behaviour tick boxes? Don't smoke. Don't go to the cinema.

Don't drink alcohol. Don't go to the shops on Sunday. Is that what Christianity is? And I'm going to say, Well sort of.

I mean the Bible does talk about a moral code and ethical standards and things like that. And yet Jesus said, If anyone is thirsty.

That's what he talked about. And then again, You might say, Well I thought Christianity was about helping others. And action on poverty. And care for the homeless.

[2 : 20] And things like that. And I'm going to say, Yes, That's a Christian thing. If we're no use to our neighbours.

It's not a very Christian thing to be. If we don't care, It's not a very Christian thing to be. And yet, Is that what Christianity is about? Because Jesus said, If anyone is thirsty, Let him come to me and drink.

And he didn't mention any of those other things, Did he? He stood up in a loud voice and shouted out, If anyone is thirsty, Let him come to me.

So, At least in that bit of the Bible, Jesus is not focusing on being a good person. He doesn't say, Are you being good? And he doesn't, He's not focusing on a moral code.

He says, Have you ticked these boxes? He didn't stand up in a loud voice and say that. And he didn't also say, Stand up in a loud voice and say, Have you given to charity? He stood up in a loud voice and said, If anyone is thirsty, Let him come to me and drink.

[3 : 36] And he is using a picture Of a fundamental human necessity, Which is drink.

It is fundamental, isn't it? Because I should have said to the boys and girls, How long can you last without water? Anybody know how long, Medically you can last without water, Roughly speaking? Yeah, three days, something like that? Three days. And then you're dead. Hmm? Done a little picture of it, In case you don't quite get the picture.

Hmm? Without water, we die.

It is as fundamental as that. It's not like saying, Have you got the latest fridge? It's not like saying, Is your Android running 4.4 instead of 4.2?

[4 : 38] It's not like saying, Have you got broadband? Instead of, you know, Things like that.

They're not fundamental. But water is absolutely fundamental.

And Jesus, And Jesus, On this Feast of the Tabernacles, On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood, And said in a loud voice, If anyone is thirsty, Let him come to me and drink.

And Jesus is saying, That he has come, That he is speaking about a fundamental human need, A fundamental necessity.

That's why he uses the idea of thirst and drink. And I'd like to look at it in just two ways this morning. Number one, The need.

And number two, The provision. Okay, Provision means, What is given to supply the need. That's what I mean by provision. So let's look at, First of all, The need.

[6 : 02] Jesus is referring, He's using a metaphor. At the Feast of Tabernacles, They had a water pouring ceremony. And again, I haven't done the homework on it.

The water pouring ceremony, And the light ceremony, People said, If you haven't seen it, You haven't lived. If you haven't been to Jerusalem, And seen the lights, And the water pouring. But Jesus doesn't have a gallon of water with him, And saying, If you're thirsty, Come to me, I've got some water here. He's using a metaphor, Isn't he? He's saying, This is a picture, Of something deeper.

So when he talks about this need, First, He's not saying, Like you and I might say, I could do with a nice cup of tea. A bit thirsty.

We use the same word for that, Don't we? But we're not talking about a deep need, We're just saying, Oh, You know, I'm not about to die, But I wouldn't mind a nice cup of tea.

[7 : 05] In fact, English people say that, On almost any conceivable occasion, They have a cup of tea. He is talking about, He doesn't mean, You know, Fancy a nice cup of tea.

One sugar, Two sugars, Milk. He's not talking on that level. He's talking on the level of camels in the desert. He's talking on the level of dehydration. He is talking on the level of life and death.

He is talking on the level of something which is life threatening, If you don't have it. He's using this metaphor and saying, Is anybody here thirsty?

Is anybody here dehydrated? Is anybody here just about to die? That's what he's meaning.

That's the sort of thirst he's referring to. So I say again, It's a fundamental, Objective, Human necessity for life.

[8 : 07] And I've put in brackets, Spiritual life, Because he's using the idea of water, And that powerful idea, But he's referring, Not to water, But to something even more profound, Spiritual life.

So I put the three days there. Water is absolutely essential. And I think it is true to say, That we can survive for about three days without water. But the essentialness is the point I'm trying to give.

To make here. I'm also saying it's objective. Now we do feel thirsty. But when Jesus says, If anyone thirsts, He's talking about an objective reality.

I suppose we could deny that we're thirsty. I think it's something you're usually conscious of, isn't it? But he's not saying to people, Work up a bit of thirst, And come to me.

He's not saying conjure up a feeling. He's saying, Please, Can you not realize, What your situation is? I don't think he's saying, You might or might not be dehydrated.

[9 : 25] He's saying, Have you admitted it? Are you realizing what your objective situation is? If anyone is thirsty, As you sit this morning, Are you dead?

Are you dried up? Are you like the camel in the desert? Not much more than bleached bones, Spiritually speaking.

And I'm saying, It's a human necessity. So when Jesus says, If anybody thirsts, He's picking on something, He's picking on an idea, Which is not a religious idea.

It's not a particularly Jewish idea, Or a Muslim idea, Or a Roman Catholic idea. It's a human idea. And he's making this invitation, Not just to religious people, But to everyone.

And maybe, Let's just imagine, You had come along this morning to church, And you don't usually come, And it's all a bit strange to you. And you're thinking, Perhaps this is for, The sermon is for religious people.

[10 : 54] Perhaps he's got something about, You know, Rosaries, Or whatever those Baptists do. And, But, It isn't. It's about thirst. And everybody knows what thirst is.

You don't have to be a, Any particular religious person. Jesus is addressing you, Whether you are religious or not. There is such a thing as thirst.

And Jesus is saying, If that's you, I have something to say to you. And life itself is at stake. There is the idea that Christianity is a sort of hobby, That some people like to do.

Some people go to the golf club. Some people wash their cars. Other people like to go to church. And you more or less choose between them. But, I don't think Jesus would accept that.

He's not saying, If you're sure to have something to do on a Sunday morning, I can offer you this. He's actually addressing at a far more profound level, Isn't he?

[12:02] He's saying, Do you first. Life itself is at stake for you.

Not trying to ask you whether you've got a few spare hours. Jesus is saying, This is everything. This is life or death itself.

Do you first. And one more thing about the need, For we look at the provision. This isn't the first time Jesus has used this idea of thirst.

He talked to the woman at the well in chapter 4. This is a Samaritan woman with whom he got into conversation. And he made a similar offer to her. I'll read from chapter 4, verse 13 and 14.

Jesus said to this woman, She said, Oh, thirst, drink? Yes. That would save me a lot of trouble if you can provide for my drinking needs. And Jesus said, Everyone who drinks this water, Meaning the water in the well, Will be thirsty again.

[13:15] You still risk dehydration. But whoever drinks the water I give, Will never thirst. Whoever drinks the water I give, Will not be thirsty unto eternity.

It is sort of the translation of it. I will solve the problem of life for you permanently, Says Jesus.

If you come to me and drink, You never, You never die of thirst. You never get dehydrated.

You have eternal life. So I don't think he's talking about the variable degrees of desire That Christians have, Although that's a proper topic in itself.

And I'm not even sure that he's talking about what Christians call spiritual dryness. He's talking at a much more black and white level. He's saying, Do you have eternal life or not?

[14:17] If you come to me, You have eternal life. And it never ceases. So there we are for the need. Let's look secondly at the provision.

So Jesus said, If Anyone is thirsty, Let him come to me and drink.

Whoever believes in me, As the scripture has said, Streams of living water will flow from within him.

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. So let's look now at the provision. Which in brief, Jesus says is streams of living water.

So I've got a number of points for this. Number one, And I have to apologize for my pen. I've lost my original pen. And as we go through, You'll see I had to change pens.

[15:31] Sorry about that. I'll try and rectify that. But here's number one. Provided by Jesus Christ himself. If Anyone is thirsty, Let him come to me And drink.

So The first point here is the Jesus-centeredness Of what Jesus says. The person of Jesus Christ Is so central to real Christianity.

He doesn't say, If you're thirsty, Come to church. Although coming to church is a good thing. But that's not where he's focused. He says, Come to me.

So he's not promoting an institution. And he's not promoting an ethical code. Or a culture. Or a tradition. Please notice that.

He's promoting himself. And he says, If you're thirsty, Don't go hunting around different architectures. And different buildings.

[16:40] And don't go looking at the different liturgies. And things like that. And don't go, Look for me. In person.

Jesus says, Come to me. Jesus provides this living water himself. And I want to say, Don't, If you're investigating Christianity, Don't stop until you've found Jesus.

Don't be content with, I found a nice group of people. Or don't be content with, I've got into a good routine. Or don't be content with, I quite like the sound of the singing.

Don't be content until you've found Jesus. Jesus. That's very important. Now let me make a suggestion, Before we get, As we move on to the second point.

On the punctuation. And I could be wrong on this. But I offer this as a suggestion. The original, The original language doesn't have punctuation in it.

[17:45] That's put in by the translators. And it's traditional to put a full stop after the word drink. Here is a suggestion. Put the full stop after the word me.

And then you get two lines which read like this. If anyone is thirsty, Let him come to me. Full stop. New line.

And drink whoever believes in me. Comma. As the scripture says, Streams of living water will flow from within him.

It's just a suggestion. It has a few advantages. Because it puts the me twice. In a prominent place. If anyone is thirsty, Let him come to me. And let him be drinking the one who believes in me. And the other advantage that it has, Is that it puts the focus of that quote, Not on the believer, But on the saviour.

[18 : 49] As the scripture says. Now who's the scripture speaking about? Well I think, Here's the suggestion. That Jesus is saying, The scripture speaks about me. What does scripture say about me? It says, Rivers out of his belly will flow of living water.

Meaning Jesus. Meaning the saviour. Rivers flow from his, From him. Rivers of living water flow from him.

So it prevents us from having to look within ourselves and say, I'm not quite sure whether I've got living water flowing from me. Because it's primarily referring to Christ.

And it's saying, He is the source of living water. And it flows from him. And you might be interested to know, That when Jesus died on the cross, Do you remember one of the things that happened to him?

He got stabbed. And one of the, He got stabbed in the sort of belly area, Didn't he? In the side. And out of his side, There flowed blood.

[19 : 50] And water. That's just a thought. So you might or might not find that helpful. So my second point is, That Jesus is at pains to say, This is according to the scriptures.

Come to me and drink. Drink those who believe in me. Just as scripture said. It's an interesting point.

It doesn't say that the living water is provided by the scriptures. Jesus doesn't elevate the book to the position of being the savior.

But nevertheless, the book is key. As far as Jesus is concerned. And so when he says, He talks about coming to me and drink, He says, This is what scripture says.

And it's interesting. I was thinking about it this morning. Jesus' life is constantly, Referred back, And constrained by, The word of God.

[20 : 54] Jesus did things, Conscious that he was under scripture. Jesus also spoke scripture. But he was himself under scripture.

He did things so that scripture would be fulfilled. And I say this because, People who are interested in Christianity, Are sometimes puzzled about the Bible. And they might say, You Christians just argue about words.

It's all very wordy. To which the answer is, Words are important. And they're important because, God is the sort of God, Who chooses to convey meaning, And indeed, To convey himself, Through his word.

Which means, That if you're looking for a sort of Christianity, Which doesn't refer much to the Bible, I'm sorry to say, You're not going to get very far. Because, This is the, If you like, The door you go through, To find the Savior.

You open this book, And the Savior walks out of it. It's not provided by the scripture, But Jesus, But yet, The scriptures predict, And describe, And root, And unfold, The things of Jesus Christ.

[22 : 14] Jesus himself said of his words, My words are spirit, And they are life. So if you are thinking, Words is one thing, Life is very different, You can't put it in words, Jesus says, Exactly wrong.

If you want life, Spiritual life and reality, You do it through the words. And he gives an example of it here, Doesn't it? This very important promise he makes, It's according to the scriptures.

And so I'm flagging up, The essential nature, Of God's words for life, And faith. So if you're interested, In finding out about, Christianity, Please don't be surprised, If somebody were to say to you, Have you thought of doing, A Bible study?

Have you thought of reading, In the Bible? Because that's the way you find it, You see. And I put a little footnote, For myself there, You might be saying, Which scriptures is Jesus referring to?

Where does it say, Streams of living water, Will flow from within him? And the answer is, I don't know. I don't think there is a verse, That says that in so many words. I think it's using, A way of speech, In which, A whole set of things, Are brought together, And he said, This is what the Bible says.

[23 : 33] The Bible has got, Quite a bit about living water. And the Bible has got, Quite a bit about streams, Flowing from certain places, And I think Jesus is, Combining that all together, And we'll try

and see, An example of it in a moment, But it is a question, Which I'm not, I'm being honest, I'm not fully answering that one.

Number three, How do you get this drink? How do you get it? Well Jesus seems pretty clear, That to drink, Is, To come, Is, To believe, Not three different things, But, The same thing, In three different ways, How do I drink?

How can I come to Jesus, And drink? What do I do? I come to Jesus, And I go, Like that? What is this? Well look what Jesus says, Let him come to me, If you follow my division, Of the sentence, If anyone is thirsty, Let him come to me, Full stop, There's the answer, And drink, Whoever believes in me, And right at the end it says, Those who believed in him, Were later to receive, So, To have this drink, One needs to come to Jesus, One needs to believe in him, That's what it is, The act of faith, Is like, Drinking, It's like receiving, So I want to flag up, That when Jesus speaks here, About receiving the spirit, Which is actually what he is speaking about, He's not saying, You need faith, But that isn't quite good enough,

You need a second extra step, He's absolutely not saying that, He's absolutely saying, If you come to me, And put your trust in me, You receive, Eternal life, In all that that means, In all that that can be, In this world, You don't, You're not a second class Christian, Until you've taken some further step, Says you are a Christian, As Christian can be, If you believe in me, And we have a hymn that says, The vilest offender, Who truly believes, That moment, From Jesus, A pardon receives, So I would like to encourage you, To ask yourself, Have I come to the point, Where I am putting my faith, Totally,

In Jesus Christ, So that I'm saying, I am in myself, I'm dead, I'm as dry, As, A dehydrated camel, In the desert, But Jesus, Can supply me, Jesus, Can change that, I hear what he says, And I put my faith in him, That's to drink, To come, Is to drink, Is to believe, Full stop, To believe, Is to receive, Eternal life, That was the third thing, About the provision, Fourth thing, About the provision, What is Jesus, Actually offering, Now please notice, He says, In verse 30, By this, He meant something, When he's been talking about, Living water, And streams of water, By this, He meant something, Verse 39, By this, He meant,

[27 : 18] The spirit, Whom those, Who believed in him, Were later to receive, Come to that bit, In a moment, But I'm saying, What Jesus offers, Is, As it says here, The spirit, By which Jesus means, The holy spirit, Which we, In our, Nowadays way of putting it, Would say, The third person, Of the trinity, What Jesus offers, Is, God, Himself, He's saying, I can, Take a soul, That is, Miles from water, There's no watering can, That will water you, There's no pipe, That will water you, I can take you, As a dried up husk, Of a soul, And I can fill you, With the life, Of God, Himself, By this, He meant, The spirit,

Now, In John's gospel, The spirit, Is, Several times, Referred to, In impersonal terms, So the spirit, In chapter three, Is like wind, And, It's actually the same word, Wind and spirit, And Jesus, When he talks to, A chap called Nicodemus, Says the wind blows, Wherever it pleases, You hear it sound, You can't tell, Where it comes from, Or where it's going, That is it, That's the way, With everyone born of the spirit, So the wind is powerful, The wind is unseen, And Jesus says, That's the way to understand, The work of the spirit, It's powerful, But you can't see it, And then, Quite often, Jesus says, The spirit is like water, So he uses the idea, Of pouring out, The spirit, Or being, Having the spirit, Poured out, The word he would use, Would be baptised, Which is something you do, With a lot of water, Dunked, Splashed,

Immersed, The spirit is like water, And I do have, An Old Testament text, Which you might like to look at, Which, I think, Jesus would have had in mind, It's Isaiah 44, So here's, A scripture, It's looking forward, To the future, At the time of its writing, It's in the book, Of the prophet Isaiah, Chapter 44, Where God, The God, Of, Israel, Says, Isaiah 44, Verse 3, I will pour water, On the thirsty land, And streams, On the dry ground, I will pour out, My spirit, On your offspring, And my blessing, On your descendants, They will spring up, Like grass, In a meadow, Like poplar trees, By flowing streams,

One will say, I belong to the Lord, And another will call himself, By the name of Jacob, And still another, Will write on his hand, The Lord's, And will take the name Israel, So the picture, Is of, A desert, So there I've drawn a desert, It's dry and barren, And showers of rain, Come down on it, If we lived in a Middle Eastern country, Perhaps we would have seen this, And suddenly, With the addition of this water, Up pops, Flowers, And grass, And all sorts of things, And the desert blooms, And taking that picture, That God pours out his spirit, On people, And where they were dry and

barren, They become, There is life, And growth, And beauty, And that's prophesied, I will pour out, Water on the thirsty land, And streams on the dry ground, They will spring up like grass, In a meadow, And that's a, A prophecy, Of the work of the Holy Spirit, And I think Jesus is saying, Exactly that, If you want that work, In you, Come to me, And I will, Pour out on you, These streams of living water, I'm speaking of the spirit, Whom those who believed in him, Were later to receive, But having said, That, I would like to add, That the spirit is indeed, A divine person, And John, In John's gospel, That is only made, Completely clear, As you go further on, In what Jesus says, Where he says, I'll send another comforter, So that's not impersonal, But at this point, Let's stick with what it says, Jesus says, If you're thirsty, Then, I give you water, By this he meant the spirit, Whom those who believed in him,

[32 : 26] Were later to receive, So finally, Let's look at that, Last point, This provision, Rests on, Jesus's, Space, Time, Action, It says, In verse 39, Up to that time, The spirit had not, Been given, Since Jesus, Had not, Been glorified, So he's not talking about, Something which is true, In a timeless way, He's sort of talking about, Something which, Depends on, Some particular action, At some particular time, So at the time, At which he said this, It hadn't happened yet, The spirit was not yet given, Because Jesus was not yet glorified, So something has to happen, And I'm saying, That Jesus' action, In space, And time, A particular place, A particular day, Late on the calendar, He did something, And John says, He had not yet been glorified, Now,

In John's gospel, Glorification, The glory of Jesus, Well what does he mean? Well he means, Jesus being glorified, But he actually, Focuses it on the cross, Strangely enough, Which you'd think, Was Jesus' greatest moment, Of shame, That Jesus didn't look, Particularly nice, When he hang on the cross, He didn't look particularly, You know, At his best, Covered in blood, Dying, And yet, For John, That's the moment, When Jesus is most glorious, There is a particular glory, Attaching to the cross, So I'm going to say, That he's referring to, Yes his resurrection, Yes his enthronement, In heaven, But let's, Focus, If we may, Or at least, Not forget, Jesus' death, On the cross, And it strikes me, That Jesus said,

A particularly significant thing, When he died on the cross, In relation, To, Water, And the provision, To people who are thirsty, Can you remember, There's two words, That Jesus said, I thirst, I'm pondering that, The one who says, If you're thirsty, I can supply you, Went to a place, Where he said, I thirst, I'm dried up, I'm dead, I'm done for, Because he did die, Didn't he?

He died, Everything that death, Could possibly be, Not just physically, But with, The wrath of God on him, Bearing the weight of sin, And Jesus could say, I thirst, I thirst, So that they, Need never thirst, And I want us to think, Of the achieved, Result, Of, His work, On the cross, I'm not sure, That I want to try, And analyze it, We may not know, We cannot tell, What pain he had to bear, I think the wisdom, Of theology, Is to say, What Jesus did, On the cross, Was so profound, And so powerful, That it's always a risk, To reduce it, To a neat formula, And think we've got, The hang of it, I mean he died, For our sins, He died that we might,

Be forgiven, But we don't, We can't plumb, The depths of what that took, But he said, I thirst, We know, That he laid down, His life, For the sheep, He laid down, His life, For the sheep, And we know, That John tells us, That as a result, Of that, And only, As a result, Of that, Jesus, Can say, To anyone, Who thirsts now, I, On the cross, As I died, As I shed my blood, As I bore, The darkness, The weight, Of the wrath of God, Upon me, Whatever it was, That Jesus experienced, Whatever he went through, Jesus says, I did, All that was necessary, So that you,

[37 : 14] Need not thirst, Ever again, The provision, Rests on Jesus, Space, Time, Action, His work on the cross, Is glorification, And therefore, We've looked at the need, And we've looked, At, This wonderful provision, And Jesus says today, Guys, If you thirst, You can come to me, And you will never thirst again, Let's sing together, I don't know if Tim was able to do this for us, Thank you, Thank you,