

John 7:25-52 “Living Water”

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 February 2024

Preacher: Derrick Harris

[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Thank y'all. What a, what better thing to prepare you to preach than that. My goodness, that was wonderful. That was beautiful. Hello, church.

Hello, Southwood. Hello, everyone visiting. Hello, mom. I think you're watching online. It's my pleasure to be able to preach, if we want to call it that today, to preach at you.

I'm going to talk at you, with you, to learn with you today, to talk about the words of God. I'm excited about it. And if you wouldn't mind, I'd love to open in prayer to get me on out of here and ask Jesus to be here.

Father, I ask that you would be present in your word today, as you always are, but would you work by your spirit in me and through me, Father?

[1 : 08] I need you as the living water, and we all do. So, may we learn from you today as we now humbly come to sit at your feet. In Jesus' name I pray.

Amen. Back when I was about eight years old, I stumbled upon something that still surprises many people today.

So, let me take you back to a visit with my grandparents in a rural area of Alabama. Their church was just down the road, and their pastor lived across the street.

His name, L.C. And in the countryside, water did not come from the city pipes, but from wells dug deep into the earth. And L.C. shared a fascinating story with me that day about how the people in that area found their water without fancy equipment, but rather just by using a branch from a tree. And it looked like this. You would take it off of a living tree, and you walk like this, and then eventually it finds water, and it would turn down in your hand and point at the water.

[2 : 23] And it's a bit controversial. I didn't believe it. But he demonstrated it to me into my disbelief.

The branch actually moved in my hand. If guided by some unseen force, it will rip my hand. And what's more intriguing is the technique doesn't work on everybody in my family.

If I'm right, Mom, correct me, but I don't think it works for you. I don't think it worked for my brother, but it worked for me and my dad and my granddad. And that's how they all have wells at their houses and in that area.

And to this day, they still work. And water is incredible, right? It sustains life. It quenches thirst. It holds immense power.

I've got some pictures. It's beautiful. There's a waterfall all the time after it rains up on Cecil Ashburn, especially after the ice melted. Water can shut cities down for a week.

[3 : 24] It can harness power. It's incredible. And in today's passage, we're going to explore a different kind of water.

But before we do, I want to acknowledge another reality. And that is the reality of uncertainty. All right. What's the next slide on this, by the way?

No, not that. Uncertainty. Uncertainty. I was uncertain. Is a common theme in our lives. All right. You are probably familiar with it.

Whether it's about the future or relationships or careers or actually perhaps your relationship with God, right? It can seep into our hearts.

It can breed doubts about our worth and whether or not God loves us. And this uncertainty many times can seep down in and start to manifest itself as fear, as depression, as anxiety.

[4 : 28] And this video that I saw the other day, it's kind of tiny on here, but I thought it was a great representation of what a lot of us feel like when we try to get through a normal day. That's what I need at the end of the Bible app, by the way.

That. When we're done reading, give me that song. Okay. Okay. You know, so somebody at church, right? You're going through your day like that. And then somebody at church comes up to you and they say, how are you doing?

And you're like, well, we need to talk, right? But instead we smile and say, I'm good. But that's been your week. That's been your day. That's been your morning.

That's been your parenting. That's been your relationships. That's been your job. That's been your doubts. That's been your insecurity and uncertainty, uncertainty, uncertainty. It can leave us feeling isolated in our struggles.

And then even worse, right? We have the ability now to go online and at any moment look at other people's lives and their versions of themselves and draw the conclusion that we're the only ones dealing with uncertainty.

[5 : 40] And then this little voice in our head says, what's wrong with you? But here's the truth. You're not alone in your uncertainty. Okay.

Hear that. It's okay to wrestle with doubts. And this community here, we welcome your struggles. Whether you feel overwhelmed and it hits you like a flood, or you're just trying to navigate each day like Mario dodged in those obstacles, know that others understand and empathize with you, even God himself.

And so as we look at the passage today, as we learn about the power and the beauty of a different kind of water, as we learn where to dig our wells, and as we view uncertainty in response to every one of Jesus' truths, I want you to remember that your uncertainty is worth something.

It's something greater than you may have ever considered before. All right? So Jesus has been teaching. This is the passage today.

Jesus has been teaching in the temple leading up to this. And the Jews, they're reasoning with Jesus. And as we read the scriptures, you know, pastors are trained to talk, believe it or not.

[6 : 56] You're probably trained to talk. And when something goes wrong, we just talk. Well, how are we going to fix this problem in our lives? Let's create a class where we sit and we talk more. Let's talk about the thing we need to do.

I think a lot of us need to do a lot more listening. That's what I'm learning in my own heart. And so as we look at this passage today while I'm talking, imagine that we're all listening, okay?

Sitting around listening to what Jesus is saying. And let's try to listen together and hear things. And also look for uncertainty. Look for certainty in the text as we read it.

So let's go there now. We're sitting around. Jesus is talking. And we're going to start with these verses here. Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, Is not this the man whom they seek to kill?

And here he is speaking openly. And they say nothing to him. Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? But we know where this man comes from.

[7 : 58] And when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from. So Jesus proclaimed as he taught in the temple, You know me and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord.

He who sent me is true. And him you do not know. I know him for I come from him. And he sent me. So they were seeking to arrest him, But no one laid a hand on him because his hour had not yet come.

Yet many of the people believed in him. They said when the Christ appears, Will he do more signs than this man has done? So you see there right at the beginning there, There's uncertainty.

There's certainty. Okay. Can it be that the authorities really know that this is Jesus? If so, why didn't they come arrest him already? Why would they not come get him right now? Is it because what he's saying really is real?

Does it mean that he is who he says he is? Verse 27, they jump in there. You see they start to justify their certainties. Well, we know where he comes from. We know his mom, his dad, his brothers.

[9 : 02] And when the real Christ appears, Nobody is going to know who he is. And then what does Jesus do? He responds with his first truth.

Okay. Jesus' origin is in eternity. Or Jesus' origin is eternity. We call this the theology that he is eternally begotten.

Okay. He always is. He is God. And now he's pointing back to where he came from. Right. And he says, You know where I come from.

In verses 28 and 29 there. You know where I come from, But you don't know where I come from. Right. And he's claiming his deity there. He knows the Father and he's sent by the Father. Here's another way of saying it. Yes, you think you know me and where I'm from. But that's not where I'm from. I didn't set myself up in business.

[10:00] My true origin is in the one who sent me. And you don't know him at all. I come from him. That's how I know him. He sent me here. And then what does the crowd do in response to that?

They want to arrest him. Because he's claiming again to be God. But Jesus does a Jesus juke. And he gets out. Without being arrested.

Why? Because it's not his time yet. Was that a coincidence? It was not. And people start to then get it in the crowd. How can more signs be done? This is the one. But they don't agree.

Some believe. Some say get him out of here. Truth. Uncertainty. And as we continue in this passage here. And Jesus is talking. Imagine we're listening again.

Imagine we're listening again. And we're going to read verses 32 through 36 now. The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him.

[10:59] And the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to arrest him. Jesus then said, I will be with you a little longer. And then I'm going to him who sent me. You will seek me and you will not find me.

Where I am you cannot come. The Jews said to one another, where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?

What does he mean by saying you will seek me and you will not find me? And where I am you cannot come. So this section is giving us a little bit more background info of what was going on in the crowd and that one right before it.

And he follows up his first truth that his origin is in eternity with his second truth. He's going to go back to eternity. And what's the response of the listeners again?

Then you'll notice a mix of certainty and uncertainty. Right? How can he hide from us? Is he going to the Greek world to teach the Jews who are over there?

[12:01] Is that what he means? Yet you also get the sense of fear in there. Is he crazy? What if what he says is true? What does he mean? Where is he going?

So they want some clear answers. And we know now that he's the way to where we want to go. Heaven. In the presence of God the Father.

But at that time it would have been very confusing if you're sitting there listening. Right? Which leads to his next truth. The truth of all the truths.

This is when Jesus is about to turn it up to level 10. On the last day of the feast. The great day. Jesus stood up and cried out.

If anyone thirsts let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me as the scripture has said. Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

[12:57] Now this he said about the spirit. Whom those who believed in him were to receive. For as yet the spirit had not been given. Because Jesus was not yet glorified. Glorified.

Okay. This is a big listen up moment in scripture. And it's easy to read this and just go on to the next thing. The first clue that you know this is a listen up moment is because of the volume.

It says Jesus stood up and cried out. Okay. Let that sink in for a minute. It's going to be very loud. This is creating a ruckus. The second clue is that it's the last day of the feast.

Okay. This was the feast of tabernacles. It was an eight day feast. And each day they would do different rituals. And they would celebrate how God had provided for his people when they were in the wilderness.

So they would make these booths and tents. And they would live outdoors. And the last day is the biggest day of it all. It's a big deal. It's like the end of the fireworks show.

[13:58] The climax. And on the last day they would have a water ritual. So the priest would have marched in a procession from the pool of Siloam to the temple.

And then they pour out water at the base of the altar. So people would have been singing Isaiah 12. They would have celebrated this time when God provided water for them in the wilderness.

Okay. So they said prayers for provision. Prayers for rain. Prayers for resurrection of the dead. And new life. And then scripture would have been read out loud teaching the lesson that rivers of living water would flow forth from the temple.

Bringing life to all the earth. So people would come from all over just to see this ritual. And then they even gave out, the archaeologists found that souvenir jars they could take home with them.

Okay. To commemorate this festival and represent it. So this would have formed the background to the listeners for what they were about to hear from Jesus. And what does Jesus do?

[15:03] He drops the mic here if ever there was one of those moments. But to fully appreciate it, we've got to read a little bit more of the Bible. Okay. So look at Isaiah 55 here.

Come everyone who thirsts. Come to the waters. Then Isaiah 12. God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Isaiah 58. The Lord will guide you continually. Right? You shall be like a watered garden. Like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.

So the listeners, they would have been very familiar with these passages. And they have been looking for the fulfillment of these passages for, guess how long? 700 years.

And then Jesus is standing up, yelling out loud at the water ritual, the third truth. Basically saying, I'm the fulfillment of all of these scriptures.

[16:03] Jesus is the living water. Jesus is the well of salvation. But how? How? How is he the fulfillment of these scriptures?

This is where it gets even way cooler. Okay? So hang on. If we go back to Exodus 17. Now what had happened was people had just asked Moses, did you bring us out here to kill us from thirst? And Moses has just gone to God and had a what in the world are you doing moment and said, what am I to do with all of these people griping at me?

And then God responds right here by telling him what to do. Now interesting, before I read this verse, after this, Moses names this place, Meribah and Massah, because it commemorates them questioning, is the Lord among us or not?

Certainty and uncertainty. Again, the same thing's going on, but hang on. And what does God say to do? The Lord said to Moses, pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, taking in your hand the staff of which you struck the Nile and go.

[17:19] Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink. Okay.

What happened here? The people are mad at God, and they're taking it out on Moses, because God's not provided for them the way that they wanted. They wanted water. They followed him. They're thirsty. They're in the middle of the wilderness. So they're hungry, thirsty, angry. So what do they want to do? They actually want to kill Moses. Moses says to God, they're about to stone me to death. He's the closest authority figure they have, and he's the closest thing they have to God. So they're going to kill him, and they're accusing him of being a bad manager. But God, on the other side, is accusing the people of being rebellious. And trials took place in front of elders with a rod that always represented judgment and discipline.

But what happens here? Notice. God says to Moses, take the elders, the rod, go up to the big rock in front of the people, and God says, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock.

[18:31] Catch what's going on here? God is saying he's in front of the rock, and Moses, come hit me with the judgment. The elders are the witnesses the people will see.

I'm the one who's going to take the accusation. I'm going to take the punishment. Though the people are the ones who are in rebellion. So when he gets hit, what happens?

Streams of water flow out to God's people. Their lives are saved. But it's all pointing to something more. A future point, 700 years later about, where God once again will take the rod.

And instead of punishing the people in rebellion, he's going to offer the gift of everlasting water, salvation, and eternal spring of life.

Enter Jesus. Praise God. Jesus said to her, everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.

[19:29] The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water, welling up to eternal life. To drink means to believe in him. To drink means to enter into a trusting and ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the living water. Jesus is the well of salvation. And in John 7, Jesus is saying there again, Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. Keep going. 1 Corinthians. The first Adam became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. And where is that spirit held?

You. Did you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? Jesus is the well, okay, of salvation.

Jesus is the living water. He's the giver of that spirit. So in John 7, he's saying, I'm the better water ritual.

[20 : 45] What you're doing right now, it all points to me. I'm the one who quenches your thirst. All the Old Testament, all history has been pointing to me.

Right now, you've been waiting 700 years. Here I am. If you believe in me, I will give you everlasting water. And the water is the life-giving Holy Spirit.

Jesus, God himself, is the only one who gives that water. But he must be struck down for us to be able to give it on the cross. And for all who believe in him, he offers you living water that will well up to springs of eternal life and overflow.

Now, here's why that matters right now. Because the rivers of living water flow through the channels of our uncertainty. You see, we are like the Israelites.

We're mad at God for not giving us what we want. And we're complaining all the freaking time. In our hearts, in our minds, to our church leaders, to our friends around us.

[22 : 00] What we're really mad at is God. We're not mad at those people. We're mad that we're not getting what we want. And so we got to take it out on somebody.

We're uncertain about why he didn't do things the way that we wanted him to do them. So we want to kill somebody. We just do it in our minds. We do it in our hearts.

And we're born into this life hostile and angry at God. The Bible calls that dead in our sins. And you see, that means we're born condemned to the death sentence already.

We're guilty of rebellion. And punishment is inevitable. And actually, punishment is unavoidable. So then how do you move from that status to becoming a rock that overflows with the living water that Jesus is talking about?

Well, there's only one way. And that's to take the strike of God. The strike of the rod. God's judgment.

[23 : 02] And you can do that one of two ways. You can say, I'm going to take it on my own. And that will play out in eternity in judgment. Or God offers a gift.

How about I take it for you? And how about I give you the water? And I take the penalty in your place. Forgiveness of your debt.

Accepting the strike of the rod that he already took. That we deserved. And where did that happen? On the cross. Right? And he promises then all who come to him and accept that gift will overflow with the living water that he gives.

But how will you respond? How will you respond? In verses 40 through 52, there's not time to read all of that. But go read it. You'll see that Nicodemus starts to get interested. You'll see there's a lot of uncertainty.

And some people say, just go arrest him. Not much different than us. I'm going to believe God or I'm just going to question his authority and gripe all the time and make my own way. But where are you?

[24 : 10] How will you respond? Some believe. Some doubt. But he's telling you this. Right? You may have come to the temple today and Jesus showed up.

You came here for your ritual. For your weekly. Come to church. Do your thing. Go home. Eat lunch. Go back to life. Maybe Jesus showed up. And said, hey.

There's something different here. There's something bigger I've got for you. And it involves you going out into this world and sharing who you are.

Sharing where I took the rod of discipline for you. Sharing a blessing. Perhaps sharing a burden. He's telling you that he's what you're looking for today. And all of the things that are causing your life to be so anxious.

For some of you, it may mean that you have to admit for the first time that you actually are parched. And that you've been digging empty wells and that you've come up dry. Man, I have.

[25 : 11] For some of you, it means you need to come to Jesus and say, all right. I'm ready. I want to drink from that well of salvation. Because what I've been drinking from is like an energy drink and I can't get enough.

And then after it goes away, I'm just lazy and I don't want to do anything. The rivers of living water flow through the channels of our uncertainty. Okay.

And the direction of the current is always first to us, then flowing through us. The miracle that the followers of Jesus carry is that life-giving water.

Okay. We hold it in our bodies, which he calls the temple. And that means that our uncertainty and our brokenness is worth something. Something greater than we may have ever considered before. The messes in your life and in my life, the things that are taking you down that you think are going to be the things that kill you. The things that are overwhelmed may be the things you don't even think you can talk about to anybody.

[26 : 20] Okay. They are the channel through which the love and grace of God flows to us. Okay.

And through us to other people. To flood this world with God's grace. Are you a dam? Because you're holding it in?

Keeping it from God or keeping it from someone else? It's the broken parts of us that not only let the light in, but they let the love out. To overflow.

Imagine just pouring a cup and it just continues to have a, you know, continual water going in. It's just going to overflow forever. That's what it's supposed to be like in the Christian life. And what's poured into our cups is supposed to be the most life-giving thing that you've ever experienced.

Is that your experience with the church and in the world today? If it's not, we've got to figure out why. We've got to figure out why. And that's a whole other conversation.

[27 : 25] But when you think nobody understands, or you think that nobody gets you, you can know that Jesus understands you. He understands your uncertainty.

And in fact, he holds it close. He died for that uncertainty. And he's working through that uncertainty. And that means that our blemishes are beautiful.

Because they're the greatest opportunities for us to know his love. And for the world to know his love. Does that make sense? What I'm saying? Whatever that thing is that's bugging you, it may be different than the person next to you.

And the thing that you think is the worst thing about you. That's the number one thing on the dashboard light that Jesus is saying, bring that over here to me. I want to talk to you about that. I put that on your dashboard so that you see me.

Go to him. And it may mean going with some of his people. And then you're going to find that that's the frequency that other people tune into to know the love of God.

[28 : 27] And just see how alive you come when you encounter that. But it first starts with taking it to him and letting it flow to you. And then it will flow through you.

And it's not going to be overnight. But is that how we're living? Is that how we're living as a church? I'm trying to push us there. So don't avoid your blemishes. In fact, share them.

Okay? God's there to meet you in them. You don't have to put on church face. Okay? So here's the challenge to do that. Share a burden or share a blessing.

Your choice. And you're going to find when you share a burden, you actually are sharing a blessing and giving a blessing of God to someone else. I want you to think of that. What's a burden that you might need to share? What's a blessing that you can call out the goodness and greatness of God in someone else this week within this community?

And if you don't see it impact somebody there, go try it in the world in a Mexican restaurant to somebody that you see. See what happens there if you call out a blessing. You can do it.

[29 : 30] And it's not flattery. But just try that out. A burden and a blessing. With the loved one, someone in your family, your friends. You choose. And watch God use you.

I'm going to close with this. This is an illustration by Tim Keller. He says, have you ever been in a dark room in a theater or something and a spotlight comes on and hits a particular figure up there? You see nothing else. And before the spotlight hit, you could sort of make out other kinds of forms. But when the spotlight hits, that one person just dazzles your eyes. You can see nothing else. You can't see a background. You can't see the spotlight itself. You can just see that person. That person becomes glorious in your eyes. Well, the way that you can tell the Spirit of God is working in your life is the Spirit of God is doing that to Jesus.

Taking what Jesus is doing to you and what Jesus is to you and what Jesus is and glorifying it. And Jesus comes to you and he says, I'm your divine lover.

[30 : 37] I'm your king. Your true king. I'm your savior. I'm your shepherd. I'm your guide and your friend. I'm your life. I'm your hope. I'm the author and the finisher of your faith.

I'm the Lord of your personal history. I'm all of these things to you. I'm the road to fulfillment of your craziest dreams. And I'm the prize at the end of that road.

I'm all of these things to you. And here's how you know that the Spirit of God is working. Is when those things become so glorious to you that you can't see anything else.

It overwhelms everything else. When the love of God is so real to you that it overwhelms the rejection around you. That it overwhelms you and it captures your heart so no matter what other people say, you feel loved.

The Spirit of God then is working. You can take criticism. You don't have to fish for affirmation anymore. You don't have to stick around people who only like you.

[31 : 41] You're free. Why? Because the love of God stopped being a concept. And it became a thirst quenching reality. I sure pray for that for all of us.

I pray for that for me. And here's the reality of what we're all seeking. The river of the water of life. Now it's located in heaven and guess what it flows out of?

The temple. Jesus is the water. Why am I getting emotional right now? I don't know. Lord, what's going on?

Jesus is that water. Don't miss your purpose. It's every single second of the day. This is just the appetizer.

And when you go into this world and you share what's going on with you, watch what happens. And it's not going to be easy.

[32 : 50] He gives us a community to start with. Start with a grace group. Start with your friend. Start with your pastors. And then go and call the good in life out in somebody else.

Tell me if you don't see that river overflow. And tell me if it doesn't change how you come back to church and how you read your scriptures and how you pray. It makes a huge, huge difference.

What that is is the river of life flowing through us until we get to be there face to face in heaven. And Jesus is the only reason that can happen. That's the healing that we're seeking.

And not just in here. Every single car driving by here. Whether or not they know it or believe it. And that's the healing that God offers. And it's on the way.

But until then, he holds us. The one whose origin is eternity. The one who went back to eternity. The one who went back there to prepare a place for us.

[33 : 47] The one who sent his spirit till the work on earth is done. And the one who's the living water and the fulfillment of all of those promises to God's people.

You and your stories and your uncertainties are the channels through which God's grace and love flow first to you. And then through you to flood this world with grace.

Lord Jesus, I pray that you did something this morning with your word. Something way beyond Derek talking. I know that you're moving my heart.

Goodness, you stirred me to something in there. What you're teaching me in there. But thank you. Thank you for showing me where I dam up the flow.

By just holding back who I am. And being afraid to talk to people. And Lord Jesus, thank you for people in here who pattern the opposite of that. And are places to talk.

[34 : 45] And who give life. Thank you for how you're using this flock here in this city in so many ways. And the channels of the branches of the life-giving water flow to so many places that we cannot imagine.

Thank you. Thank you for every person here. And I pray by the power of the gospel that you will use them. And that they will know you. And they will love their church. And that they will see the mission that you call them on.

That this world needs it. And you have called this church as the army. And the churches all around the world as the army with the weapons of love. And the gospel. And the Holy Spirit.

But first we have to sip of you and drink of you over and over again. And I pray that's what we want. Because we meet you there. And when you meet us there, we are changed. Lord Jesus, be the center of everything that we have.

Be so bright we can see nothing else. And may that love just envelop us. And be a beacon of hope to everyone we come in the encounter with. Lord Jesus, thank you for your gospel.

[35 : 44] I pray for your spirit to rest on this church. And I thank you for the ability to talk about it. Lord Jesus, thank you. May we listen. We go in your name.

We ask you to be here. And now we get to celebrate your sacrament. In Christ's name we pray. Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.