

Sunday, May 24, 2026

The Day of Pentecost (A)

John 7:37-39

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

My friends,

I once had to make

 a connecting flight

 in Salt Lake City

 on my way to California.

Looking out the window on Utah,

I was very glad

I was only flying over it.

It was mostly barren sand.

And when there was water,

it was choked and narrow.

And sickly green.

I would not want

to trudge through Utah.

Fly over, okay.

But not stay.

We all have "fly-over lands"

 in our lives.

Parts that we wish

we could just skip over.

Failures

that turned life

into a dry wasteland.

Memories with a bitter taste.

Relationships that are desolate.

Tumble-weeds

and sand

blowing between us

and someone

who should have been close.

Times when the heat

and pressure are on.

Demands are baking us like the desert sun.

These dry places
 have wagging fingers and scorching tongues.
 They remind us of our sins.
 Our inadequacies.
 Unmet needs.
 Unfulfilled desires.
 Broken dreams.

Desert demons haunt these badlands.
 They point out our ugly duplicity.
 Our ongoing pride,
 lustful idolatry.
 They point out our loneliness.
 They whisper
 that we don't matter.
 And that the sky
 holds only burning anger.

I.

But, my friends,
 It is in these dry badlands
 that Jesus stands up
 and cries out:
*"If anyone thirsts,
 let him come to Me,
 and let him who believes in Me drink.
 As the Scripture has said,
 'Out of His heart
 will flow rivers
 of living water.'" (John 7:37–38)*
 Jesus stands
 in the dry places of your life.
 And from His heart
 He gives you living water.

We can't speed through or fly over
 the dry patches of life.
 But we can turn
 to the only One
 who can quench our thirst.

Jesus shouted these words,
 "On the last day of the feast, the great day."
His timing wasn't an accident.
This feast was the Feast of Tabernacles.
On each day of the feast,
the priests processed down
to the Pool of Siloam.
There,
they would draw water with a golden pitcher.
They would return to the temple
with singing
and the blasting of trumpets.
The people would wave branches and fruit.
Then the priests
would pour the water
on the altar while the choir sang Isaiah 12:
 *"With joy you will draw water
from the wells of salvation."* (Isaiah 12:3.)
On the final day,
the priests would do this seven times.

The Jews of the time said
 that one who had not seen
 the joy of the water-drawing
 did not know what joy was.

In a land
 where everyone
 was one bad harvest away
 from starvation,
Tabernacles was a time
of thanksgiving for the harvest,
and prayer for rain for the next.
It was also a time
of looking forward
to the fulfillment of the prophet's word:
 *"On that day living waters shall flow
out from Jerusalem...
It shall continue in summer as in winter."* (Zechariah 14:8.)

*"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 let him who believes in Me drink.
 As the Scripture has said,
 'Out of His heart
 will flow rivers
 of living water'
 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." (John 7:37–39)*

II.

My friends,
 When you are in the desert patches of life,
 Jesus is your well
 of salvation.
 Jesus' heart brings joy
 into the badlands.
 Rivers
 of living water flow
 from His heart.
 The Holy Spirit is poured out
 from Him.
 He pours the Holy Spirit
 into your heart.
 And the Holy Spirit
 puts Jesus' name on your lips.
*"And...everyone who calls
 upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:21)*

The rivers of living water Jesus speaks of
 is the Holy Spirit.
 And now that Jesus has been glorified
 in His death,
 resurrection,
 and ascension,
 the Spirit is received
 by all who believe
 in Jesus.

There's no use
 trying to deny the dry places
 of our lives.
 There's no way to skip
 or fly over them.
 But there is someone who understands.
 There is someone
 who can give you rivers of living water.

Jesus understands.
 Jesus knows the desert.
 On the cross,
 Jesus took on all the pain
 of human history.
 He took on all the torment of the fall.
 He became our sin.

*"After this,
 Jesus,
 knowing that all was now finished,
 said (to fulfill the Scripture),
 'I thirst.'
 A jar full of sour wine stood there,
 so they put a sponge full of the sour wine
 on a hyssop branch
 and held it to His mouth.
 When Jesus had received the sour wine,
 He said, 'It is finished,'
 and He bowed His head
 and gave up His spirit." (John 19:28–30)*

*"But when [the soldiers] came
to Jesus
and saw
that He was already dead...
one of the soldiers pierced His side
with a spear,
and at once there came out
blood and water." (John 19:33–34)*

On the cross,
Christ became the thirsty One.
On the Cross,
Christ became the well of salvation.
"Out of His heart [flowed] rivers of living water."

When your dreams are broken—turn to Jesus.
And with joy,
draw water
from the well of salvation.

When the memories of past sin haunt you—turn to Jesus.
And with joy,
draw water
from the well of salvation.

When your needs and desires are unmet—turn to Jesus.
And with joy,
draw water
from the well of salvation.

When you aren't enough,
and the pressure is mounting—turn to Jesus.
And with joy,
draw water from the well of salvation.

When the devil's wagging fingers
and scorching tongue accuse you—turn to Jesus.
And with joy,
draw water from the well of salvation.
And the flood will wash the devil away,
hurling him into the sea.

When you feel like you don't matter—turn to Jesus.

And with joy,
draw water from the well of salvation.
And *'out of [your] heart*
will flow rivers of living water.'

Look to Jesus—and see the sky rain down love upon you.

III.

My friends,

Jesus
is the well of salvation.
From His heart
flows water
that is living and active.
Water that does something.
Water that washes
Water that gives
and sustains life.
Water that gives joy.
Christ makes the desert bloom
with flowers and shade.

The living water
from Christ's heart
changes you.
Earlier,
Jesus told the woman at the well:
"Whoever drinks of the water
that I will give him
will never be thirsty again.
The water that I will give him
will become in him
a spring of water
welling up to eternal life." (John 4:14)

The Holy Spirit

puts Jesus' name on your lips.
 A name to call and proclaim,
 for
"everyone
who calls upon the name of the Lord
shall be saved." (Acts 2:21)
 The Holy Spirit,
 poured out
 from Christ's pierced heart,
 wells up in **your** heart.
 And He changes you.
 He quenches the thirst.
 He washes you clean.
 He fills you to overflowing.
"Whoever believes in me,
as the Scripture has said, '
Out of his heart
will flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:38)

And even when

you do not feel His work,
 His promise still stands.
 The Spirit is given
 not according to your feelings,
 but according
 to Christ's sure Word and gifts.
 Often,
 we don't even realize
 when the Spirit is working His fruit in us.

The Holy Spirit flows out of you in rivers.

He flows out of you
 in rivers of love.
 Rivers of joy, peace, and patience.
 Rivers of kindness, goodness, and faithfulness.
 Rivers of gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23)

The Holy Spirit is living water.
That's water that moves.
Water that flows.
Water that give life.

Everyone who drinks the Spirit lives.
They move.
They blossom.

After Jesus' death,
resurrection,
and ascension,
Jesus instigated
God's next act
in the plan of salvation.
He sent the Holy Spirit
to make you alive.
He gave the Holy Spirit
to empower you
to serve.

On the day of Pentecost,
Jesus poured out the Spirit
on all His people.
He answered Moses' prayer:
*"Would that **all** the Lord's people were prophets,
that the Lord
would put His Spirit on them!"* (Numbers 11:29)
Each of you
who believes in Jesus
goes forth
in the power of the Spirit.
The Spirit bears fruit through you.

He puts the Lord's name in your mouth.
Through you,
He demonstrates
to those in your school,
workplace,
club,
care home,
family,
and neighbourhood
that God loves them.

Therefore, when others are in trouble,
don't fly over them.
When you walk into the dry places
of other people's lives,
the living water comes with you.
The Holy Spirit uses you
to be a shade and a pool.
The Holy Spirit uses you
to speak Christ's name into their brokenness.
He uses you
to hold forth the Word of life.

Sometimes
that looks as simple
as listening patiently,
speaking a word of forgiveness,
praying with them,
sharing why you have hope,
or inviting them
to hear where Christ's living water is freely given.

*

My friends,
Come to Jesus.

He was crushed, cursed, and parched
by my sin and your sin.
He died for you.
And yet He is alive forevermore.
And from His heart,
rivers of living water flow.

The Holy Spirit floods your baptismal font.
He forgives your filth.
He defeats your death.
He quenches your thirst.
When you are weary,
make the sign of the holy cross
and remember your Baptism.
Hear His absolution.
Open the Scriptures.
Pray,
"Lord Jesus Christ,
have mercy on me."
Come to His Supper.
This is how,
with joy,
you draw water
from the well of salvation.
Eternal life wells up for you
in the Word read and preached.
Rivers of life flow
in the Eucharist.

His living water has one destination:
the fly-over lands of our lives.
So trust in Jesus.
Even when you feel dry,
His living water
has not run out.
With joy,
draw water
from the well of salvation.
For the living water
of the Holy Spirit
still flows
from the pierced heart
of Christ
into every desert place of life.

*"Whoever drinks
of the water
that [Jesus gives]
will never be thirsty again.
The water... will become in him
a spring of water
welling up to eternal life."*

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts in Christ Jesus, amen.