

INTRODUCTION

- In the current crisis there's no better place to anchor ourselves than in God's word. So let's turn to John's gospel: Jn 19:28.
- We're continuing our series: "Amazing Love!" (the title comes from Charles Wesley's hymn, "And can it be"). Held by that love, we're secure in any storm.
- We've been looking at the seven sayings of Jesus from the cross - TODAY: the fifth: **Jn 19:28 "I am thirsty."**

The shortest of all the statements our Lord made from the cross. In the Greek, just one word. But very revealing. Here we see:

1. OUR LORD'S HUMANITY: JESUS, THE SON OF MAN

We worship Jesus as God the Son, the second person of the Trinity. But we must never forget that He took our humanity to Himself, becoming fully human, made like us in every way except without sin. And as human being, he was vulnerable to all our weakness. He knew what it was to be tired, lonely, hungry - and, as we see here - thirsty.

And He experienced pain as we experience it. Remember that when He said these words He was hanging on a cross. Jesus lived in terrifying times. No court of human rights to protect Him. No convention outlawing torture. Life was cheap, and His life was being taken from Him in the most brutal way.

We can imagine Him gasping out these words: "I am thirsty." They gave Him "wine vinegar" (v.29) - sour wine" - all they could offer Him.

It's another of the many ironies in John's gospel: here's the One who gives the water of life - yet He's dying of thirst. One of the agonies of crucifixion.

And so we see here our Lord's physical suffering (which must have been intense). It means our Lord Jesus is able to empathize completely with us, to identify with our pain / need / hurt.

That's the lesson drawn for us by the writer to the Hebrews. He writes (He 2:17) that our Lord "had to be made like us, fully human in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God ...".

And he goes on to say (He 4:14-16): "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to feel sympathy for our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet He did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Therefore we can come confidently to the throne of grace. That encourages me not to quit in the present troubles, because I can come to Jesus and find grace to help me.

He can sympathise with us in our lock-down, because His own lock-down was complete: He was fixed, not in a comfortable house, but naked on a cross, nails through His hands and feet. He more than understands what we're going through.

Here we see how our Lord can sympathise with His suffering people. All suffering can be brought to the cross. He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows and so He is a sympathetic high priest.

If you're frightened of the suffering that may come through coronavirus, you can talk our our Lord Jesus. He understands suffering – and He understands you.

2. WE ALSO SEE JESUS, THE SON OF GOD

HOW did Jesus in the weakness of human flesh give Himself to the suffering of the cross? The answer lies in His perfect trust in His Father. That enabled Him to embrace the Father's will for Him. Of course, we should all do that – but we fail. But Jesus was the perfect Son of God, who always did the Father's will, so that the Father said of Him, "This is my beloved Son."

And so we read (Jn 19:28) that it was *"so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said 'I am thirsty.'" (Note: there is another way of reading the Greek construction, but I think the NIV has it right).*

This does NOT mean that Jesus was merely acting out a role – pretending to be thirsty – His thirst was real enough. John's point is that Jesus was conscious as He spoke of His thirst that He was obeying His Father's word, fulfilling what the Scriptures had foretold. We see Jesus, the perfect Son of God, reverencing the Holy Scripture in death as in life.

Matthew and Mark tell us that earlier in the crucifixion Jesus had refused drugged wine, resolving to do His work on the cross with a clear mind. But now He receives a drink, fulfilling the psalms which foretold His sufferings:

- Ps 22:15 "My mouth is dried up ... and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth."
- Ps 69:21 "They ... gave me vinegar for my thirst."

Everything our Lord did was in obedience to the Word of God, because He trusted His Father completely. That is how He found strength in the weakness of His humanity to do the very difficult, even the impossible.

Yesterday I read something by Elisabeth Elliot that expresses this very well:

"Jesus slept on a pillow in the midst of a raging storm. How could He? The terrified disciples, sure that the next wave would send them straight to the bottom, shook Him awake with rebuke. How could He be so careless of their

fate? He could because He slept in the calm assurance that His Father was in control. ... Jesus, in the unbroken intimacy of His Father's love, kept a quiet heart.

"None of us possesses a heart so perfectly at rest, for none lives in such divine unity, but we can learn a little more each day of what Jesus knew ... Jesus, because His will was one with His Father's, could be free from care. He had the blessed assurance of knowing that His Father would do the caring. ... He taught us to work and watch but never to worry, to do gladly whatever we are given to do, and to leave all else with God." (From "Keep a Quiet Heart" pp.17-18).

Even in the midst of all Jesus' sufferings, God was still His Father. He is ours too.

3. WE SEE JESUS, THE KING OF LOVE

We've seen WHAT Jesus did (He thirsted on the cross) and HOW He was able to submit to this voluntarily (because He trusted His Father completely and obeyed Him perfectly).

But WHY did Jesus do this?

Here we see Jesus, the King of Love. He endured the cross for the same reason He did everything else: to make known to us God's amazing love for us. Because we too are thirsty - and not just physically. Our thirst is deeper than that.

The first time the Gospel of John mentions thirst is in ch.4 when Jesus is seated at a well and meets a Samaritan woman who has come to draw water. He asks her for a drink, but then says something intriguing: *"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life"* (John 4:13-14). Jesus says there's more than just physical thirst.

As water is necessary for life, even more necessary is a relationship with God. Without that we're lost even while our body lives, and if it's not put right we'll be lost forever, cut off from God who is the source of all life.

But our relationship with God has been broken by sin, and Jesus compares this broken relationship to a raging thirst. It's the thirst that drives us to look for satisfaction in so many different people, places and things - but always we're left dissatisfied, longing for more. For we were made for God, and only in relationship with Him can our thirst be satisfied.

That's what Jesus came into the world to do. Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus is the thirst-quencher (2:1-11; 4:13-14; 6:35; 7:37-38). But to be the thirst-quencher, Jesus must thirst. On the cross He took our place, bore our sins, received our penalty and died our death. He experienced the emptiness we deserve that we might be filled.

Jesus diagnosed our need and proposed the solution in a nutshell: He said (Jn 7:37): *“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink!”*

- Jesus diagnoses our need: we’re thirsty!
- Jesus holds out the solution: let’s come to Him and drink!
- And in v.38 He promises wonderful results: not only abundant satisfaction, but overflow! *“Whoever believes in me, ... rivers of living water will flow from within them.”* He was referring to the gift of the Holy Spirit, whose presence in the believer is the essence of eternal life.

That’s why Jesus went to the cross. That’s why He thirsted. He became poor to make us rich. He had no need of His own to be in that terrible position, but WE needed Him to be there, bearing our sin and guilt and shame, and He endured it all because of His amazing love for us. He thirsted so that we might have our thirst quenched – might have within us a spring welling up to eternal life, and overflowing to bless others.

*O Jesus –
Why do you promise to quench all our thirst,
When we have despised all your ways?
Why do you rescue the damned and the cursed,
By dying our death in our place?*

Because of His Amazing Love!

CONCLUSION

There is no thirst in heaven: *Rev 7:16: “Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst.”* In fact, do you know what is the last invitation in the Bible? *Rev 22:17: “Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.”* Really, the question for people is not “Do you thirst?” Of course we all do! Rather, the question is, “How long are you going to continue to thirst?” Because Jesus thirsted for us on the cross, so that we might have our thirst satisfied. AMAZING LOVE!

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION:

- Which areas of your own life feel dry?
- What holds you back from coming to Jesus and asking Him for “living water”?