

Message: Come in for a Drink**Have you ever been in the desert?**

Some of you have been to the Grand Canyon and know the heat of Arizona, including Death Valley. Some of you live in the high desert and know the dry heat of that region. Some of you been to Joshua Tree National Park and know the ins and outs of that arid landscape. The desert is a beautiful place, but it's also a very dangerous place.

We see dry land around us. Summer is coming and dry months are ahead. The hills are turning brown. Yards and plants turn brown without water and care. We live in a semi-arid region of the country. But that doesn't, and shouldn't, limit us. We regularly go out in the heat of the day to work, visit others, run errands, for many reasons.

What happens when you spend time in a hot and dry place?

We get thirsty. If we don't drink water, we'll become fatigued and feel faint. If we go longer, we may find ourselves feeling nauseous. We find ourselves breathing rapidly and our heart begins racing. Those are the symptoms of heat exhaustion. We need to pay attention, cool off and drink water.

What happens if we don't pay attention? When we don't, or can't, find a cool place and water, that's when things get bad. Without water, we may find ourselves irritated, agitated, confused, delirious or even fall into a coma. Those are the symptoms of heat stroke. Without prompt treatment and water, heat stroke is deadly.

We've all been hot, tired and thirsty. The thought of cool water is refreshing. It's one of the reasons we love going to the beach, lakes and rivers. It's one of the reasons we love the sound of running water.

Water is essential for life.

Withhold it and it's all we can think about until our thirst is quenched. Some of you may be developing a thirst as I speak.

Jesus talked about water.

The water Jesus talked about is also essential for life.

Jesus says, "Come." The Holy Spirit says, "Come." John 7:38 tells us Jesus stood up in a crowd and shouted, "*If anyone thirsts, let him come*

to me and drink.” Jesus and the Spirit invite us to drink the water God offers. It’s a gift. God says, *“Let everyone who is thirsty come”* (Revelation 22:17).

The gift Jesus offers is the water of life.

God offers it to everyone. Anyone who wants to can receive the gift.

What is the water of life? The apostle John reveals to us that the water is spiritual life. The reason people are unsatisfied and seeking a deeper spiritual life is because their spirits are thirsty – tired, fatigued with racing hearts. They’re suffering the equivalent of heat exhaustion. Sadly, in some cases, those around us are suffering from spiritual heat stroke. They’re agitated, irritated and confused. That can be deadly.

Jesus invites people to drink the water of life. He said, *“I didn’t make this up. What I teach comes from the One who sent me. Anyone who wants to do [God’s] will can test this teaching and know whether it’s from God or whether I’m making it up”* (vv16-17, The Message).

God made us in the divine image.

We have free will. God gave us a conscience and wrote on our hearts and minds. We know right from wrong, good from bad, love from apathy, logic from emotion. God gave us the capacity to choose.

Here’s the thing, though. We can’t have it both ways.

Jesus gives us a choice: accept the gift or not.

Drink the water of life or not. It’s up to you. Jesus offers the gift, freely and willingly. There are no strings attached.

How can we receive God’s gift if we don’t believe there’s a God?

The amazing thing about unconditional love is this: when we reject God, when we do things to dishonor God, when we feel so hurt that we find it hard to open our heart, God still loves us. God loves us in spite of what we do or don’t do, what we say or don’t say. God loves us even when we despise and reject Jesus. God loves us even when we feel unlovable and unworthy.

All we have to do is one, simple thing: believe in Jesus.

Lower the walls, even if it’s just for an instant. Allow yourself to receive God’s love. If you do, your life will be changed. Sure, your

circumstances and situation may not change immediately. The things that give you stress will still be present in your life – tough work, health issues, broken relationships, addictions, whatever they are. But you’ll have an ally working on your side, the Holy Spirit. That’s the gift God gives when we’re saved. That’s what Jesus promised. And he kept his promise. That’s what we remember on Pentecost Sunday.

The Holy Spirit works in and through us by grace, one small step at a time. It may seem like those stressful things aren’t changing, but they are. That’s because we’re changing, our view of things changes. Our responses change and people react. The harder it gets, the more strength we’ll have to hold on, turning to God for help in times of trouble. That’s what it means to be in a loving relationship you can trust unconditionally, relying on another.

God knows we’re afraid. Like a loving parent who comforts a child who is afraid of the dark, God says, “*Don’t be afraid. I’m here with you. I’ll help you and give you strength*” (Isaiah 41:10). We can trust God. God will always be there to help pick us up and give us strength for our journey. All we have to do is ask. And, after a while, we’ll begin to see what God does for us. Sometimes we have to look back to see and understand. Sometimes God reveals things to us in the present. Sometimes God will send visions of what’s to come. That’s exciting!

What happens when we drink God’s water?

Jesus tells us, “*Rivers of living water will brim and spill out of the depths of anyone who believes in me this way*” (v39). With God’s Spirit living inside us, our spirit becomes stronger. Our spirit shines more brightly. We’ll find ourselves more at peace. We’ll be content even when things don’t go our way. We’ll think about others more often. We’ll be kinder and more gentle. You’ll have greater energy and enthusiasm for life.

Others will take notice. People will be drawn to you. They’ll want to spend time with you, to share what’s going on in their lives. God’s Spirit is never in conflict with itself, so when two or more people who are filled with the Holy Spirit come together, God is present. Lives are touched. People change. Love is present. Good things happen. And we’re filled with hope.

Isaiah 12:3 tells us, “*on the day we trust God without fear ... we will joyfully draw water from the wells of salvation.*” We’ll thank the Lord, calling on God’s name. We won’t be able to keep our happiness bottled up inside. We’ll have to tell others about our joy. We’ll want to share the reason we have hope.

Drink deeply from the water of life. Your spirit is dusty, tired and thirsty. Come out of the desert. You need a drink to revitalize and renew you. Jesus has his hand out in invitation. You know you need it. Come and join those who have gone before in the cool, refreshing water of salvation. And, after you have been filled, you’ll be amazed to find that same water will bubble up inside you and spill out into the lives of those around you.

How do you drink the water of life?

When we gather together to worship, pray, sing songs, serve others and read God’s Word, we’re being filled spiritually. The very words of our weekly commitment remind us how we quench our thirst through our prayers, presence, giving, service and witness. It’s hard to do alone. Come and join us and be filled to overflowing with spiritual life.

What spills out? God’s love, faith and hope.

I’m not talking about the syrupy, sappy kind of love. I’m not talking about fleeting emotions, though they reflect what lies within our heart. I’m talking about the oh-God-I-can’t-believe-it’s-true kind of love and faith. It’s the kind of love that holds up in the crucible of any stress or strain this world can put on us. It’s the kind of love that leads us to love the unlovable and care for those who can’t care for themselves. It’s the kind of love that gives life, just like water in the desert. That’s how we find hope.

**Trust God. Believe in Jesus. Follow the Holy Spirit.
Take a long, cool drink and then let’s go share God’s love.**

Let us pray:

Lord, help us to be open and willing to receive your love today. Refresh and renew our spirits with the gift of the water of life, your Spirit, which fills us with the spiritual power and energy we need to live as your children. Help us to be changed by your love so we are filled with joy and we can't wait to share the reason why with others. Help us to give ourselves to others in faith so they will know your love and have hope. Let us drink deeply from your river of living water in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

John 7:37-39 (NRSV)

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”