

John 7:37-39a

“You can lead a horse to water,” the saying goes, “but you can’t make him drink.” You are not horses. You are people for whom Christ died. He, the Living Water, is here for you. You will not get this Living Water from your faucet. You will not find it in anything that this world has to offer. The satisfaction of a job well-done; the reward of a paycheck after a forty-hour work week will not give you this water. Spending time with the family, fishing on the lake, mowing the lawn, will not give this Living Water to you. It comes only through God’s Sacraments given and His Word proclaimed. You are here. You are not horses, but you have been led to the Living Water. For some of you, this is a journey you make every week. For others of you, not so often. But you are here today. All of us have been led to Jesus Christ, the Living Water.

Now, just showing up at the waterhole does not water the horses. The horses need to drink the water. Just showing up in church is not, of itself, drinking the Living Water. If attending church is some good work I perform to make God happy, to satisfy His requirements, then I am not here to drink. If I am here today but am planning to sin tomorrow, then I am not here to drink. If I am here in church and listen to the word of forgiveness, but refuse to forgive another, then I am not here to drink.

The Living Water stands before us and cries, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.” You can lead a sinner to Jesus, but you can’t make him drink. If you are not thirsty, why would you drink? If you don’t take your sins seriously; if you regard them only lightly, why would you drink of Jesus Christ? If you believe that Jesus is not the “water” you need, why would you drink?

“If anyone is thirsty,” says Jesus. People who work outdoors in southern Arizona during the summer months have to drink water throughout the day or they will become very sick. They drink water even though they are not thirsty. The temperatures soar over 100 degrees, but the humidity is so low that they don’t feel thirsty. Nevertheless, they know that they must drink water because their bodies thirst for water even though they don’t feel the thirst.

Your eternal soul thirsts for Jesus Christ, the Living Water, even though you may not feel thirsty. Your sinful soul needs your Savior. It needs the forgiveness and blessings of eternal life that only He can give. This is why Christian parents need to get their children into the habit of being in God’s House every single week, and in the Word every single day. As Arizona workers train themselves to drink water regularly, so children from little on up, need to be trained that coming to church to drink of the Living Water is just something we always do. An outdoor worker in Arizona who is not in the habit of drinking water regularly will suffer for it. Christian parents—you need to get your children in the habit of drinking of their Savior weekly at church and daily at home. Their eternal soul craves this Living Water even though they, or you, may not feel the thirst.

If you are spiritually sick—if you have not been drinking much of Jesus Christ, then listen to this good news. Jesus gives you His Holy Spirit to lead you to the Living Water, and to bring that water to you. One who is sick and dying is too weak to even bring water up to his mouth. The Holy Spirit, who has led you here, gives you the Living Water you need. He knows how weak in faith we are. He knows that we are dying sinners. But in mercy, He gives you life. He gives you Jesus. He gives Living Water to your thirsting soul.

And do not think that if you are spiritually healthy, that this is to your credit. It is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit to lead us to water and to make us drink. We are not horses. We are weak sinners. We were born God's enemies. We were not born with faith. We were born despising the holy things of God. Your faith is the result of the Holy Spirit leading you to the water at the font and there giving Jesus Christ to you. Your spiritual health is the result of the Holy Spirit leading you to God's House week after week and giving you Jesus here. It's the result of Him leading you into the Word of God at home with your family and giving you the blessings of the Living Water.

If a worker in Arizona, out in the hot sun, were to pass out from dehydration, what would his companions do? Would they not give him a drink of water? That is what God the Holy Spirit does for you. Whether you come here to His House often, or whether you rarely come, the Spirit of Christ welcomes you and gives you everything you need. He forgives you for your poor "drinking habits," and He desires to help you drink of Christ more and more. He forgives you for your sinful intentions, and He desires to lead you out of temptation. He forgives you for coming to God's House for the wrong reason, and He desires to give you a love for the truth.

You don't live in Arizona. You live in Missouri. The hot sun may not dehydrate your body here, but facing the trials of each day can surely drain our strength. It's tough for a Christian to live in such an unbelieving world. It's tough when we hear about College students being murdered, and High School students dying in accidents. It's tough when the bills are more than we can afford to pay. It's tough when friends are disloyal to us and family members argue and fight with us. We become spiritually tired, emotionally spent, and unable to face life.

Friend, do not despair. Jesus gives you His Holy Spirit. He promises to strengthen you. He promises to help you with your troubles. He cares for you. He will not let you fall. He is Living Water for your thirsting soul. He refreshes you for your journey to heaven. He forgives your sins. He leads you to the water, and He gives you drink.

On this Day of Pentecost, be comforted—God is for you...He is on your side. Jesus is the Living Water because He, who died, now lives. He lives for you. Do not think that you can drink of Him just every now and then. He is always here in His Word and Sacraments as Living Water for you to drink. And this Living Water gives life eternal to you. It enables you to live each day in the strength of Christ.

You are not horses. You are sinners for whom Christ died and rose again. And the Holy Spirit is He who leads sinners to Christ and gives them drink. Rejoice that this Living Water is for you. Amen.