

John 19:28-29

You and I can somewhat understand the suffering of a dry, unbearable thirst. We have all had it to one degree or another. And we have seen it, real or fictional, where after days without drink, one's lips become so chapped that they bleed; one's mouth becomes so dry that it's impossible to swallow. And so we can somewhat grasp what Jesus is enduring when He says the words, "I thirst."

He was fully human. He became hungry for food. He sweated. He became tired. He grew weak. And on the cross He becomes thirsty. He who once cried out to the people, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink!"—now cries out, Himself, for a drop of water.

As the rich man, from hell, begged Father Abraham to send Lazarus and dip his finger in water and touch his tongue, so Jesus cries out from the agony of hell, "I thirst!"

But why would Jesus, like the rich man in the parable, beg for a drink? The rich man was selfish. He thought only of his own needs and wants. Jesus did not come to be served. He came to give the "living waters," not to seek water for Himself. He was suffering on the cross willingly—of His own free will. He was suffering for us. Why would He desire to lessen His suffering? Why would He seek a drop of water to ease His agony?

Friend, the words, "I thirst," were spoken not for Himself, but for you. He cried out those words not because He thirsted for cool water, but because He thirsted for you.

"Blessed are those," He once said, "who hunger and thirst for righteousness." But we thirst for what is not good for us. Our thirst is to satisfy our fleshly desires. We thirst after what this sinful world offers. We thirst, not for God's good gifts, but for that which would hurt us, and separate us from our Heavenly Father. And so Jesus thirsts for us. His thirst is to draw us to our Father in heaven by His suffering and death.

Like a mother whose dying wish is for her runaway children to return home and be a part of the family once again, so Jesus' dying thirst is to return us—God's straying children—to the place of forgiveness and righteousness: our Lord's House, where He embraces us in love. Only, Jesus' words, "I thirst," are not just some dying wish. For with His suffering on the cross, He makes our return possible. In fact, He draws heaven and earth together. Suspended above the ground, Jesus brings His Father together with all sinners, for He was the sacrifice for all.

Jesus, on the cross, thirsts for you. He knows the problems you're struggling with in your life, and He thirsts to draw you to His Father in whom is our help and comfort. He knows the guilt that is eating at you—a heavy conscience because of sins you're afraid to confess. He thirsts to have you know the joy of sin that is forgiven; of knowing that the cleansing of your guilty past is not your problem—it's what He freely does for you through the mouth of His servant.

He thirsts to draw you, again and again, to your baptism—to find assurance there. To remind you that your head stays wet your entire life, for you are and remain God's forgiven

child. He thirsts to draw you to His Table in humble faith, where He gives you the good gifts of His body and blood for you; the gifts that grant eternal life to all who receive them.

He thirsts for you as a Husband thirsts to receive His Bride. To welcome you into His home. To love you with an everlasting love.

“I thirst,” Jesus cried. And they put a sponge full of sour wine up to His mouth. The soldiers did not know what He was thirsting for. Nor did they care. But Jesus knows your true thirst. He knows that your “sin-sick” soul thirsts for His Father’s forgiveness. He knows that His prodigal sons thirst for the Heavenly Father’s loving embrace.

He does not give you “sour wine” to drink. At His Table He puts into your mouth the sweet wine of His blood shed for you. He lets you drink deeply from the cup of life; the cup that gives forgiveness, which is overflowing for you.

He will not have you cry out in agony like the rich man in hell. Jesus experienced that thirst for you. On the cross He tasted the unbearable thirst of the flames of hell, so that in your life and for all eternity, you may always drink from Him who is the Living Water—Jesus Christ your Savior. Amen.