“I Thirst”
John 19:28-29
April 10, 2016

Intro?

This morning we are going to be completing our series on The Seven Last Words of Christ by looking at Jesus 5th word from the cross, “I am thirsty.” At first this may not seem like a very significant statement by Jesus. We could easily overlook it as a natural reaction to a mere factual circumstance. Jesus is absolutely parched. He is utterly dehydrated and desperate for water. But when tie it back to its context—the rest of vs. 28—we discover that this single word is loaded with meaning. [vs. 28]

Let’s unpack verse 28 together.

1. This word was strategically spoken to display the active, thorough, sober-minded nature of Jesus’ suffering on our behalf.

Let me give you a little background and then unpack why I chose these specific words to describe Jesus’ suffering. We know from Matthew 27:34 that at the beginning of the crucifixion, Jesus was offered a drink of wine mixed with gall. We are told that the purpose of this first drink was to deaden some of the pain, maybe to reduce the struggle of nailing the prisoner to the cross. But Jesus refused this drink—He refused to anything to take the edge off the pain! I believe one of the reasons He refused the drink is because He had come to purposefully drink from the Father’s cup and He intended to drink the full fury of God’s judgment and wrath for man’s sin. He would drink it willingly and He would let nothing minimize its impact or cloud His mind.

But now in John 19:28, when Jesus knew that He had absorbed every drop of the Father’s cup, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, said, “I am thirsty.” He waited to take this final drink, which was necessary to fulfill prophecy, until He had sober-mindedly endured the full heat of God’s judgment on our sin.

But isn’t there something puzzling about vs. 28? How can it say that “all things had already been accomplished” when Jesus has not yet died? Well certainly death is so imminent that Jesus can think of His work as completed, yet keep this in mind: One the one hand, for God Himself, who had always lived in eternity past, to take on a physical body and then go through the process of death is utterly amazing, and yet on the other hand, physical death was not the supreme sacrifice for Jesus. Rather, the supreme sacrifice was what He endured of the Father’s displeasure for our sin in the hours just before He died. The only thing worse than dying is living under the wrath of God. And that is what Jesus endured for us to take the sting out of death.

What I want you to see here is that Jesus did not just go through the crucifixion passively. He actively embraced the full force of judgment. He intentionally walked into the fury of the storm of God’s wrath. He let nothing diminish the full severity of sin’s consequences. This is why I say His suffering was thorough and sober-minded. Just consider the mental and spiritual discipline required for Jesus to do this. Most of us will do anything possible to escape the full pain of our sin and suffering. But Jesus would make sure that He paid for every ounce and fiber and of our guilt. He would actively, thoroughly, and sober-mindedly ensure that His sacrifice would be flawless so that in no way could it be deemed imperfect and therefore ineffective. I think this is why this word, “I thirst,” is so important. It marks the comprehensive nature of Jesus’ suffering to the very end. In fact, His very next word will be, “It is finished!”

How should this reality influence us personally? We can have complete confidence to rest in the flawless perfection of Jesus’ sacrifice for our sins. Justice was fully served without even the slightest diminishment. The only perfect justice that has ever been served.

2. This word was purposefully spoken out of Jesus’ perfect reverence for the Holy Scriptures and therefore His perfect obedience to God’s will.

We know that Jesus spoke this word, “I am thirsty,” with purpose because of another key phrase in verse 28, “to fulfill Scripture.” Here is one more amazing example of the divine orchestration of Jesus’ sufferings. God’s hand was working out every detail. It would be impossible for us to read the evidence of Scripture and come to the conclusion that the crucifixion of Jesus was something that just spontaneously happened at the hands of men.
Let me give you a sampling of the details surrounding the crucifixion that were prophesied thousands of years before hand.

- The betrayal of a close friend (Ps 41:9)
- Being forsaken by His disciples (Ps 31:11)
- Being falsely accused (Ps 35:11)
- His silence before His accusers (Isa 53:7)
- The affirmation of His innocence (Isa 53:9)
- Being numbered with transgressors (Isa 53:12)
- His crucifixion (Ps 22:16)
- Being mocked by spectators (Ps 109:25)
- Being taunted by His enemies (Ps 22:7-8)
- Gambling for His garments (Ps 22:18)
- Praying for His enemies (Isa 53:12)
- Being forsaken by God (Ps 22:1)
- Being parched with thirst (Ps 69:21)
- Yielding His spirit into the Father’s hands (Ps 31:5)
- Not having a bone broken (Ps 34:20)
- Being buried in a rich man’s tomb (Isa 53:9)

Now just think of the mental discipline that Jesus must be exerting from the cross. As He hangs there in torturous pain and severely parched, He is mindful that there is yet another prophetic detail that must be fulfilled. He is not just passively letting the crucifixion happen to Him, He is actively fulfilling the Father’s predetermined plan. He recalls Psalm 69:21: “they also gave me gall for my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” So Jesus says, “I am thirsty,” which prompts what happens next in John 19:29: “A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth.”

The fact that Jesus was thirsty was a secondary reason for His request. His primary reason was to fulfill Scripture. Why was this such a great concern for Jesus given the state that He was in? Because His ultimate passion was to perfectly fulfill His Father’s will. This is what drove His passion to fulfill every point of Scripture. As Jesus suffered from the cross, with stunning mental discipline, He held before Himself the whole scope of God’s word. He would not take His mental eyes off of God’s word.

When we are suffering we tend to give ourselves excuses, we tend to let down, but what we need in times of affliction is mental alertness to God’s promises and purposes. How do we prepare for those times of greater testing? By feeding our minds with God’s Word and exercising the diligence and faithfulness of obedience now before the greater testing comes. If we are not developing the habit of turning to God now, it won’t be natural for us to turn to Him when the pressure is on.

Are we imitating Jesus’s devotion to honoring the Scriptures? Does our obedience to God through His Word outweigh every other pressing need in our life?

- Grumpy (sickness): easier life over holiness
- Worry (finances): paying bills over trusting God

Is God’s word a lamp to your feet because you are walking in its light? Are you discovering in God’s Word the revelation of His mind and will toward you? Are its commands binding on you, so that you truly obey them? Is the Bible the final court of appeal for you? No argument. No justification. Just humble submission born out of delight in God Himself. What we see in the life of Jesus and consequently in the suffering of Jesus is a reverence for Scripture that propels His unwavering obedience to God’s will.

3. This word was genuinely spoken as an expression of Jesus’ humanity.

We often emphasize the deity of Jesus—that He is fully God in every way along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. But its equally important to remember that Jesus also became fully man. As the Son of God suffered and died on a Roman cross He did so as a real man, just like us. He didn’t use some supernatural ability to endure what He went through. The agony of the cross wasn’t somehow easier because He was God. He experienced all the raw pain and anguish with a human body like ours—right down to experiencing severe thirst. Jesus didn’t just merely utter this statement as if it was the right time in the script to fulfill the Father’s plan. He really experienced it—He was suffering from dehydration just like we would if we were in similar circumstances.

The great benefit to us is that Jesus can identify with the suffering and even physical pain we experience on this earth. He knows what it’s like to have one’s soul in great distress. And this can be a great comfort to us. The author
of Hebrews said it this way, “we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:14). In other words, we can have great confidence in Jesus as our high priest because He is without sin’s corruption and we can also find great comfort in Jesus as our high priest because He can sympathize with our weaknesses. He’s lived as we have lived, with all of life’s sorrows, pain, and injustices. One of the purposes of Jesus’ suffering was to be able to identify with ours. Hebrews 2:17 says “He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest...”

One thing we know for certain as we look to the cross, God is not ignorant or indifferent to our suffering. He carried our sorrows (Isa 53:4), He experienced human pain. He’s not unmindful of our distress, He took our greatest distress upon Himself.  

Pink: “Here, then, is comfort for the aching heart. No matter now despondent you may be, no matter how rugged your path and sad your lot, you are invited to spread it all before the Lord Jesus and cast your care upon Him, knowing that “He [cares] for you” (1 Peter 5:7). Is your body wracked with pain? So was His! Are you misunderstood, misjudged, misrepresented? So was He! Have those who are nearest and dearest turned away from you? They did from Him! Are you in the darkness? So was He for three hours!”

We have a great High Priest who can identify with our sufferings.

This comfort is only for those who by faith have laid their sins, with all it’s sorrows, on Christ. Jesus died a thirsty death to give us living water, so that our souls will never thirst again. Jesus said, “whoever drinks the water that I give him shall never thirst; ...the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life” (John 4:14).

If you die in your sin you will be eternally parched, like the man in Luke 16. There Jesus tells the story of a rich man who lived high on the hog, thinking he had no need for God in this life, unlike a poor man named Lazarus who struggled to survive during his earthly life. At the end of their lives, Lazarus when to heaven but the rich man was sent to Hades (hell). From his torment in Hades he looks up and sees Abraham and Lazarus in heaven and he cries out, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.’

In his desperation the rich man in Hades pleads with Abraham to send Lazarus back to earth to warn his unbelieving brothers of the torment waiting them. But Abraham says, they have the Scriptures (Moses and the prophets) to warn them. And if they do not believe Moses and the prophets, then they won’t believe someone who returns from the dead either.

Oh, what great need we have to listen to the Scriptures and respond today. We may be well off in this life or we may suffer. But what matters most is how we use this time on earth to prepare our souls for eternity. Turn from your sin, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive the living water of eternal life.

Prayer:
Father, how thankful we are that Jesus suffered for our sin so thoroughly and followed the Scriptures so meticulously that He could be a perfect sacrifice to redeem us from our sin. Thank you for giving us a great High Priest who suffered, not only to identify with our suffering, but to spare us eternal suffering in hell. Father, open the eyes of our heart to see and treasure Jesus as living water and to know Him as our present comfort and our eternal hope.

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1 A.W. Pink. *The Seven Sayings of the Savior on the Cross.* Pg. 103.
2 A.W. Pink. *The Seven Sayings of the Savior on the Cross.* Pg. 103