

Topic	The Gift Of The Spirit
Reference	John 7:37-39
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Speaker	Dr Peter Ng

- The Spirit is only available to the thirsty
- The Spirit satisfies us in Jesus
- The Spirit empowers to make a difference

#### **A. THE SPIRIT IS ONLY AVAILABLE TO THE THIRSTY**

*John 7:37-39 (ESV) **On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” 39 Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.***

I need to give you some context because this is the last day of the Great Feast. So basically, there are feasts of Israel and they occur in two parts per year, spring which coincide with two of the main harvests of the Israel. So you start off with the

**Passover:** Reminds the Israelites of the need for the shedding of blood, the lamb. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. So the feast parallels the spiritual life of Israel. The feast exemplifies the relationship with God, is celebrated. They reinforce its meaning.

**Feast of the Unleavened Bread:** It comes after one day of Passover, which is what we take for Lord Supper because leavened or yeast is a sign of evil and sin. So therefore when you take out the leaven, it is unleavened bread. So it symbolizes the holiness of God’s people.

**The Feast of the First Fruits:** Within their first harvest they come in and this is the time of dedication where you take the best and you have to give to God.

**Pentecost:** It comes fifty days after the last festival. It is a harvest festival where you actually thank God for all the abundance that he has given you.

**Feast of the Trumpets:** This feast comes in the second half of the year, where you actually blow the trumpets because they anticipate the coming of the Messiah. So everybody will be working in the fields and certainly they hear a trumpet which is basically the shofar, they blow that and then the people will rush back to worship and to celebrate the coming of the Messiah.

**Day of Atonement:** It is the holiest day in the Jewish calendar called Yom Kippur. Nobody does any work on that day. On that day after one week of preparation the high priest will enter the Holy of Holies and do offer a sacrifice for the atonement of the sins of the people. In fact, it is

the holiest day that's why when the Arabs attacked the Jews in one of the great wars recently in October 1980s, they attacked them on Yom Kippur day, because on this day nobody does any work.

**The Feast of the Tabernacles:** Finally, then we come now after the atonement day we have got the feast of the tabernacles. The feast of tabernacles is a very important feast. It is the last big feast and they actually celebrate harvest and the features of this which is September and October is that they will all come to Jerusalem and they will live in tents or booths. This is to reflect the time when the people of Israel were in the wilderness and in the wilderness in Sinai desert they all lived in tents.

So what they are doing is that they are reenacting that to actually basically story tell. The fact that our ancestors lived in the desert and they survived because they lived in the small little tents and God protected them and provided for them. Everyday there will be bulls sacrificed. Bulls are very-very valuable. Every day 70 bulls will be sacrificed. It is to show that without the shedding of blood, there is no atonement for your sin. There is something that you need. So therefore, there is some tragedy going on. There is some bloodletting going on, is something that we need.

There will be trumpets daily, there will be priest going to the pool of Siloam. They will gather water and they pour the water over an altar which signifies the time where God provided water at the place called Meraba, where the people rebelled against God. At night they will light the candles and it will be brightly lit around the temple and this is to again remind them when they were in the desert how did God lead them at night, a pillar of fire. So therefore, they are reenacting this whole thing.

### **What was the need to reenact?**

Basically there are three issues;

- They are going to reemphasize the temporal nature of life, that every year this cycle is repeated again and again and again.
- You actually need God for the water. You need God for the crops.
- Awareness of sin. When you start slaughtering all the bulls, it is horrible and it reminds you of your great need and your great sin.

So this feast of tabernacle reflects our greatest needs in our lives. Now Jesus says, *if anyone thirsts...* So here we are talking about thirst as a physiological phenomenon. It is the most physiological phenomenon a human being will ever experience. You can go hungry for 21 days, 40 days, won't die, but if you have thirst you will die within one week. 60% of the bodies are made of water. You lose just 10% and it becomes a medical emergency and you will die. So basically water is something that you absolutely need. So basically what Jesus is doing is taking that physiological phenomenon and saying that there is something in your life that you need as urgently, as importantly as water. Charles Spurgeon describes thirst as a painful need and

*A painful need, an emptiness. Thirst is a conscious need, conscious to a painful degree...a salutary warning that something very important is wanted*

So basically thirst reflects something missing in our lives. You don't actually feel thirst. Spiritual thirst is reflected in so many things, it reflected in depression, something missing in your life. Some people are very rich but yet they are depressed. If you look at the statistics of depression, in the United States depression has come up from 2013 to 2016 33% in the study of 41 million privately insured people. Dr Trent Haywood is a chief medical officer and he writes,

*"Some of the literature is already starting to predict that by 2030, depression will be the number-one cause for loss of longevity or life," Women and men with depression may on average lose up to 9.7 years of healthy life*

It is becoming a big thing. Depression is only an outside symptom of something deep that's missing inside our lives. Professor Phillip George estimates 40% of Malaysians will suffer from mental health issues in their lifetime. It is a big thing. New Cigna study reveals loneliness, another sign of spiritual thirst in our lives, at epidemic levels in America, 1 in 2 fear alone or left out, 1 in 4 feels nobody understands, 2 in 5 believe their relationships are not meaningful. We are talking about the riches nation on the face of the earth and these are the statistics that come out because there is a deep spiritual thirst.

You can either do three things,

- Deny your thirst
- Satisfy your thirst with substitutes
- Recognize and admit your thirst

### **Deny Your Thirst:**

Jesus challenges us, if anyone who thirsts, which is actually a very stupid question, because everybody thirst but it is not obvious. Some people deny their thirst. Steven Hawking says,

*"We are just an advanced breed of monkeys on a minor planet of a very average star. But we can understand the Universe. That makes us something very special."*

He feels no need for God. There are other people like that who are fairly satisfied and they feel no thirst at all. Couple of weeks ago there was a story of a very famous Australian gentleman who was an environmentalist, scientist, well recognized, he received an Order of Merit in Australia and he was getting old, he was about 104, David Goodall and he couldn't get to kill himself because in the law in Australia, Perth, you are not allowed to kill yourself. So he travelled all the way to Switzerland, to a country where they allow you to kill yourself and he writes,

*"My life has been out in the field (working), but I can't go out in the field now," "At my age, I get up in the morning. I eat breakfast. And then I just sit until lunchtime. Then I have a bit of lunch and just sit. What's the use of that?"*

For him there is no spiritual thirst at all, just lived life to 104, time to go. The saddest thing is that you recognize that you don't have thirst.

### **Satisfy your thirst with Substitutes – Sin:**

*Jeremiah 2:11-13 (ESV) Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. 12 Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the Lord, 13 for my people have committed two evils: they have **forsaken me**: the fountain of living waters, and **hewed out cisterns for themselves**, broken cisterns that can hold no water.*

So you have two things, God is describing himself as a fountain, bubbling water. God is saying that people are so stupid that they reject flowing water and they say, this broken cistern water is wonderful. Why would people do that? There was a nice saying couple of weeks ago by Rex Tillerson who is a former secretary of state of United States. He says,

*"If our leaders seek to conceal the truth, or we as people become accepting of alternative realities that are no longer grounded in facts, then we as American citizens are on a pathway to relinquishing our freedom."*

The problem is truth and nowadays there is no truth anymore and so therefore if you actually hide the facts and you live in an alternative reality which is what is happening you actually become slaves. You take the broken cistern water, is green, you drink it and say this is wonderful, this will prolong my life, this will be good for my health and you actually believe in it and when you believe in a lie that satisfies your spiritual thirst, which is very dangerous. Our finance minister just came out the other day and he said we got 1 trillion dollar debt and the markets are not used to the truth. First time somebody come and tell you the truth. The first time in our lives in this country people are telling the truth and yet the former prime minister s saying in Malay Mail on 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2018,

*"Now that the truth is revealed about this "RM1 trillion national debt", we congratulate the new government for unnecessarily spooking the market which has led to sharp falls of our stock exchange this week — capping 14 consecutive days of foreign capital outflows,"*

He hasn't realized that he has been lying, it is better to lie. If you lose the truth you lose your freedom. At least future leaders says

*"What happened was we became delusional; we got drunk on our own Kool-Aid and we got carried away,"*

*“Was there a signal? Yes, there were clear signals but we became oblivious to the signals.”*

So when you are used to lies, so when the truth comes in you cannot see it. That is the main problem and 2 Corinthians says

*2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (ESV) And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 In their case the god of this world has **blinded the minds** of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God*

The problem in the world is that, they cannot see the truth. The God of this world has blinded their eyes, so they cannot see the truth in their lives. They believe things like cash is king.

So the bigger that you have, the bigger house you have, the bigger cars you have, the bigger bags you have, it shows you how poor you are spiritually, don't boast, because the amount that you have reflects that you have got a bottom-list pit you cannot fill. If you are happy in your small little house or whatever then I think you are kind of fine, but if you keep on grabbing more and more and more, it means you have a spiritual thirst, you can never satisfy.

There is no correlation about money and personal happiness, talking about the personal happiness that you actually feel on a day to day basis. Alan Krueger was one of the authors of the study as well as the head of the council of economic advisors for Obama, he wrote.

*“If people have high income, they think they should be satisfied and reflect that in their answers,” “Income, however, matters very little for moment-to-moment experience.”*

*“Despite the weak relationship between income and global life satisfaction or experienced happiness, many people are highly motivated to increase their income,” the study said. “In some cases, this focusing illusion may lead to a misallocation of time, from accepting lengthy commutes (which are among the worst moments of the day) to sacrificing time spent socializing (which are among the best moments of the day).”*

So we sacrifice time to gain wealth and we lose out. This is the US Bureau statistics, people will earn less than 20,000 a year and woman earning less than 20,000 a year spend about 34% of their time in leisure activities. People who earn more have lower quality of life. Marcus Pearson is famous for selling off Minecraft. He made a lot of money from that. He said,

*“Hanging out in Ibiza with a bunch of friends and partying with famous people, able to do whatever I want, and I've never felt more isolated.”*

It is like you are sitting in first class but you are actually feeling very isolated. The scientist has shown that they are components of happiness and two types of component, if you are rich, the richer people experience pride, contentment, amusement but the poorer people will have awe, compassion, enthusiasm and love.

There are different aspects of happiness which only poor people can experience and rich people don't. Happiness is not a one-step flat kind of proportional curve. It is very complex that that. What determines happiness. There are three factors that determine happiness; circumstances, intentional activity and set point which is genetic. If you are born with a lousy disposition, every day also feel sad. There is a fallacy that if you make more money, you could be happier.

### ***What is a blessed man?***

The blessed man is a man who actually recognizes he has a deficiency in his life, who recognizes he needs water to survive. Jesus said,

*Matthew 5:3-6 (ESV) Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. 5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. 6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*

Blessed are the thirsty. Psalms reflect the feelings of the psalmist and you read

*Psalms 42:1-2 (ESV) As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?*

*Psalms 63:1 (ESV) O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*

So we can be like that or we can be like the Stenocara beetle, which is found in the desert in Namibia. Every morning it gets up in the morning and then he raise its backside because there he got some special nobs on the back of the beetle and when the fog goes by, it collects water and then once it collects the water, he tips himself, the water goes into his mouth, he drinks and that's enough for the whole day already. He is satisfied. Sometimes we can be like that too, if you are really honest in the life do you actually hunger more for God in your life. Many of us are like the Japanese who go to the Shinto Shrine. Whenever you come to God, either you are in trouble or you want your IPO to go well so that you have more and if you are satisfied simply because you have a big house, your kids are doing well but you don't feel the spiritual thirst in your heart and if you don't feel the spiritual thirst in life you are going to be like the Stenocara beetle that's all I need and that is a deadly combination.

When you actually become severely dehydrated, you won't feel thirst anymore, you will be confused and the Bible challenges us that is everybody who thirst. We need to be like the psalmist, we need to ask God to fill our hearts with the Holy Spirit. We need to feel the thirst, that you wake up in the morning, God I want more of you. Your happiness, cannot be reflected in how well your family has done or how much money you have in the bank. If your happiness is on that then it is deadly. Every single one of us needs to get up in the morning and say, God how can I know you more and grow.

## B. THE SPIRIT SATISFIES US IN JESUS

*John 7:37-39 (ESV) On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."*

On the feast, every single day the priest will go down to the pool of Siloam and he will actually collect water and they will take all this water and they will have a procession and they will read Psalm 113 to 118 and then what he will do is take the one flagon of alcohol and one flagon of water and pour it onto the altar, to symbolize what God has given them on the waters at Meraba, recognizing that we need this water to survive and this water is a sign of the spirit. Right at the last day when they are doing this, Jesus stands up and says, he who is thirsty come to me, I will satisfy the thirst. So what Jesus is saying is that, the temporal nature of life, dependence on God and awareness of sin, everything can be fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus said,

*John 4:13-14 (ESV) Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again."*

The fulfillment of the thirst is total and complete and John 14 says

*John 14:17 (ESV) even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you*

*John 15:26 (ESV) But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.*

*John 16:13-14 (ESV) When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*

There are two processes which the Holy Spirit will do. He will reveal and He will glorify. The spirit takes the truth about Jesus and turns it into a thirst quenching experience of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit tells you the truth about Jesus Christ, his love, his grace, his wisdom, his power, his joy and it makes it a heartfelt reality. That's the difference between the Christian faith and every other faith in the world. Every other faith in the world, you take your holy book, and read and recite and nothing happens in your heart. The Holy Spirit takes the word and it makes these concepts into reality in your life and you look at what it does,

*Ezekiel 36:26-27 (ESV) And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*

The transforming reality in your heart is just not for you to feel good, it is for a particular purpose. The purpose is to cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. Holy Spirit is spirit of truth. Spirit of truth causes us to be holy.

*Romans 5:5 (ESV) and hope does not put us to shame, because **God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit** who has been given to us.*

Holy Spirit makes God's love real in our hearts so that you will be like a couple who are totally devoted to each other in love. Holiness is devotion. When you are in love then you run towards the person, you don't run away. So devotion is a better word than holiness. The word comes from Greek, 'Hagious', which means set apart. Set apart is devoted.

Holiness is the proof of love, if you don't love someone you won't be devoted to that someone. If you don't love someone, you won't sacrifice, you won't walk towards the person, you won't get excited about the person, you don't want to get to know about the person, you don't want that person spirit in you. So holiness is basically devotion. The Pharisees have it opposite, devoted to no one but no love. That's like a marriage, married already, but inside broken, no love. The Pharisees have a loveless marriage, they are there because if they divorce God they fear they will go to hell and they got issues of pride. Some of us are like that, we are here not because we want to but we have to. That is a disaster as it was a disaster for all the Pharisees. Jesus said,

*Matthew 13:45-46 (ESV) Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, **46** who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

In Japan they found two pieces of paper. One of them have a saying written on it,

*"A calm and humble life will bring more happiness than the pursuit of success and the constant restlessness that comes with it,"*

It is signed by Albert Einstein. This signature makes the difference, it becomes precious. The Holy Spirit makes that happen in your heart. So when you read the word of God, it is like God is writing to me and it really opens up your heart. It is a miraculous experience every time it happens and if you haven't experienced it then we need to get on our knees and ask God to make that happen, bring that excitement and it only comes with the Holy Spirit working with the word of God.

### **C. THE HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERS US TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

*John 7:38-39 (ESV) 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, **Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.**" 39 Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*



Straits Times published about Hannah Yeoh. She published her book about her testimony, about her walk in Christ and the NGOs launch a police report for her to preaching Christianity

*"The verse is clearly to provoke Christians in the country to 'invade' our country under the orders of their God. This is a very seditious statement which could bring disharmony to the country."*

It caused a lot of huha in the country, but I guess that is not wrong because a lot of people misunderstand. When Pilate was interviewing Jesus, Jesus said

*John 18:36 (ESV) Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."*

*John 18:37 (ESV) Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose, I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."*

In Ezekiel chapter 47 there is a beautiful vision, Ezekiel is a prophet in Babylon during the time of the exile when people were away from their country and he had a vision one day. The vision was there is water that actually comes out from the temple and it flows as a tiny-tiny trickle of water out from the east gate and as you go out from the east gate, he followed the water. As he followed the water for 500 meters, the water deepens until his ankles and he followed the water some more he is very excited for another 500 meters and it went out to the knee, another 500 meter to the waist. The vision showed him, the water flowing into the dead sea and the salt of the dead sea was converted to fresh water and fresh water means a lot of fish coming. That's a fantastic vision and then you go back to the scripture today.

***out of his heart will flow rivers of living water'***

God's temple is Jesus, every single one of us is his body, which means every single one of us will flow out the spirit of truth and that will actually reintegrate the entire community. In the temple the paradigm shift is, the temple was a place where you clean yourself. Now it is completely opposite and that influence goes out to the whole world.

Wherever Christians go, the spirit empowers us to make a difference, in integrity, in love, in service. So therefore you can't sit and say, I am only in church, I am doing this. Wherever you go, this huge river, the spirit of God will use you and it flow out. You cannot be a Christian and say, the water is all my one. If you are a Christian, the spirit comes out, it overflows, the truth overflows to the community and you are going to make a difference. Every single one of us is going to make a difference. The spirit is available if you are thirsty, it satisfies us in Jesus and it empowers us to make a difference.