



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

John 7: 37-53

Summer 2022

"Rivers Of Life"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. It's a good text that he just read to introduce our text which will conclude our studies in the seventh chapter of John. It's chapter 7, verses 37 through 53. Jesus has been in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles. If you remember from last week, the Lord has taught them and now He's been in an involved discussion with them; and some are debating among themselves as to who He is. And so the authorities had gotten wind of that and decided they needed to stop this and they have sent the temple police to arrest Him. So that lies in the background of our text and we begin this morning with verse 37,

<sup>37</sup> Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. <sup>38</sup> He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" <sup>39</sup> But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

<sup>40</sup> *Some* of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet." <sup>41</sup> Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Still others were saying, "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? <sup>42</sup> Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" (*You may remember from last week, they had this*

discussion as well. And in verse 27 some were saying, 'We don't know where He's from'. 'It's going to be a mysterious appearance of the Messiah'. So there's all kinds of ideas among this crowd as to who Jesus is. Verse 43), <sup>43</sup> So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him. <sup>44</sup> Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

<sup>45</sup> The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?" <sup>46</sup> The officers answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks." <sup>47</sup> The Pharisees then answered them, "You have not also been led astray, have you? <sup>48</sup> No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? <sup>49</sup> But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed." <sup>50</sup> Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) said to them, <sup>51</sup> "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?" <sup>52</sup> They answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee." <sup>53</sup> [Everyone went to his home.

John 7: 37-53

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together.

(Message) Some years ago I visited the German National Museum in Nuremberg. There I saw the kinds of things you see in a fine European museum: works of art and suits of armor. But also there was an exhibit of very old Bibles, pre-Gutenberg Bibles, medieval texts copied in a scribe's hand. One that especially impressed me was written in gold. I mention that because of a comment Bishop J. C. Ryle made that, "There are some passages in Scripture which deserve to be printed in letters of gold."

And certainly our passage does. It is one of the great invitations of the Bible when Jesus stood up in the temple and said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.' " (vs37-38). Now that is worthy of gold letters; it's priceless,

literally. We can't buy that blessing, we can only receive it. But in receiving it, we are the richest people in the world. What a gift!

And it is a gift of free grace; a gift of love, unconditional love offered broadly and selflessly at a moment of peril, when Jesus' life was in danger. Yet without personal regard, He stood up and offered life to all. Well, that's the love that the Lord has for the lost.

The Lord's declaration was said during the Feast of Tabernacles, which is a harvest feast established as a memorial to Israel's wilderness wanderings when God provided for His people every day. And one of the most remarkable provisions occurred early on when God gave them water.

They were thirsty in a desert and they were grumbling against Moses, (as they would do for 40 years.) They were accusing him of bringing them out of Egypt in order that they'd die in this desert. Moses appealed to the LORD, and the LORD told him to strike the rock with his staff. He did—and water came forth in abundance and all the people drank.

The water from the rock in the desert and the annual rains that produced the harvest in the land were commemorated at the Feast of Tabernacles with a water ritual. Each day, of the seven days, there was a procession of priests that would go down to the Pool of Siloam and they would fill a golden pitcher with water and carry it back to the temple as the morning sacrifice was being offered. Then the procession would march around the alter seven times, where the high priest would then pour out the water at the side of the altar in remembrance of God's provision. At that point the temple choir would begin to sing Psalms 113 through 118 and then they would recite Isaiah 12, verse 3, "With joy you will draw water from the springs of salvation."

Seven and a half centuries after Isaiah wrote those words, Jesus stood up in the temple filled with people, and said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink." (vs37b). It was on the eighth day. It was on the last day of the feast; the ceremonies had

ceased; no more water was being carried to the altar. They couldn't confuse what Jesus had said with what the priest was doing.

At that moment Jesus invited people to drink—and this to a people who had largely rejected Him and to a crowd in which the temple police were already moving and hunting for Him—still, He stood up to be seen, stood up to be heard. It was, as I said, an act of love for the lost—love that willingly put His life in danger and would ultimately lead to the cross.

There was an intensity in His voice, an urgency about what He was saying to them. He “stood and cried out”, John wrote. The feast was ending. This was the last time that He would see many of these pilgrims who had come up to Jerusalem; they would be leaving the city; they would be going back to their homes and their farms and their shops; and some returning to foreign lands. They would never hear Him again. And so He seized the moment to preach this last time to them.

The Puritan Richard Baxter said, "I preach as never sure to preach again, and as dying man to dying men." So did Jesus. He took this last opportunity to shout out the good news, to shout out the Gospel, the hope of salvation.

Now it wasn't the first time that these people had heard such an invitation or had read such an invitation. It is really an ancient invitation; Isaiah gave it in Isaiah chapter 55, verse 1, "Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters." —"Everyone."

But there's a striking difference: The Lord's appeal is uniquely personal. It is, "Come to Me." Isaiah could never have said that. He could tell people to come to the waters of salvation but only the Lord could call people to Himself—because He only is the source of life.

He is the fulfillment of the feast itself; in fact, all of the ceremonies. Look at the one that is pictured in ‘the rock in the wilderness’, He is that One. He is the One who gave life and refreshment to ancient Israel. His invitation is simple in its meaning, "Come to Me." And it is generous in its offering. It is for “anyone”, He said—an invitation that is as broad as humanity: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me." (vs37b).

Everyone is thirsty; we are all born in that condition. We are all born restless and with a thirst for something more... 'Things are not right.—Everyone knows that!' And so they seek to find some solution to that. They are seeking relief from all kinds of other sources from the Lord.

But it's not righteousness and salvation that they want, (I speak of the majority); it's self-satisfaction. And so they look for peace and they look for fulfillment in things: in money, in pleasure, in prestige or rank, in self-indulgence. They're like thirsty men out on the desert pressing on toward the sparkling lake that's always out in front of them—and ultimately a lake that only mocks them because it's not a lake at all; it's a mirage. So they go from one mirage to another without gaining satisfaction.

Or like the soldiers of Alexander the Great who, during a long march in the heat, desperately broke open the casks of wine and drank—only to become thirstier and sick. The world and the flesh can only satisfy temporarily, but never fully, never finally. It offers a hope of contentment but it's an empty hope. It leaves a person even more thirsty.

I thought of what Mike, (*Black*), said this morning in his lesson, (and I had wrote it down). He spoke of the world and he said, 'The world; and that it is designed to wear you out.' And to go to that analogy of the mirage, that's what the world does: It offers you one mirage after another. One arrives and it doesn't satisfy, and it disappears. —And so we go on and on.

That's the world. The world and the flesh can only satisfy temporarily, never fully, never finally. We never find our hope and contentment there. It's an empty hope that the world offers. —It leaves a person even more thirsty, (as I said.)

Now there's pleasure out there. We all know that. In fact, the writer of Hebrews mentioned, "the passing pleasures of sin." (Heb 11:25). Pleasure, great pleasure—but it's passing. That's the catch; passing pleasures. It is all brief and then gone.

Moses passed on those. He's the person, actually, that the author of Hebrews was referring to, was describing, in that statement. Instead of the sin and pleasure in

Egypt, Moses chose "the reproach of Christ"; that was far "greater riches", he said. That's where the satisfaction is found.

But it's only through faith that we know that. It's not by looking around at the world for the world's going to attract us like a fly on a hook to a fish. No, it's only by faith that we know, that satisfaction and fulfillment is only in Christ instead of the 'sin and pleasure in Egypt'.

Moses understood that and understood the nature of the case; and that's why he's cited in Hebrews 11, (which is the great chapter of faith). Moses understood these things which is, (as the author says at the beginning of that chapter), defining faith as "the conviction of things not seen." (vs1).

Well what we see in the wonders of the world, its riches and promises, is visible to us. We can see them and touch them. That's why they're so tempting to us. But the world is a cheat. Sin is deceptive. And so often people have to learn that the hard way, through bitter tears and regret. Here Christ is offering the solution, here Christ is offering the direct path to full satisfaction—life as it was intended to be lived.

And who better to know that than Christ Himself? Christ who is the creator of all things—the creator of us. That's how the Book of John begins, "He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him." (vs2-3). You came into being through Him. He knows best what is going to satisfy us, He's our creator; and joy and peace that "passeth all understanding" is found in Him, and in Him alone. (Phl 4:7).

But again, as Jesus taught us in the previous chapter, in John chapter 6, verse 44, that is impossible for people to believe, unless the sovereign God brings us to that understanding and that knowledge. We are debtors to mercy alone; we are debtors to grace alone, and that point was made very thoroughly and clearly through three different verses in chapter 6. "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." (Jn 6:44)

And sovereign grace is real. God does work in the hearts of people to make them thirsty for something else, for someone else. Then they begin to turn from false

substitutes and mirages so that when they hear the good news about Christ, and about life, about real life, about eternal life—they respond. They come to Him and drink, which is simply a way of saying, 'They believe.' They believe in Him: *Drinking* is believing.

And to those who believe, a great promise is given: "From His innermost being" Jesus said, "will flow rivers of living water." (vs38). Which is a hint at, and an allusion to, the smitten rock in the wilderness. It was God's provision for Israel in a time of terrible thirst and desperation. And that's what Christ is for us. He is the rock; He is the remedy for our thirst. He supplies all our needs. And He does that in abundance, with "rivers", so that we will never want for anything spiritually. And we never will as we walk with Him—as we walk by the Spirit.

Those 'rivers of water' come from within and flow out of us—which means that Christ, who is the source of our blessing, makes us a source of blessing to others. The emphasis here is on the outgoing nature of the Spirit filled life.

That is how Leon Morris in his commentary put it; "The outgoing nature of the Spirit filled life." He made that point with an example of the opposite from the Qumran community that existed in the Lord's day. It was a community of scribes that copied manuscripts, many of them biblical manuscripts like Isaiah, and are famous for reproducing what are now called the Dead Sea Scrolls. Well, they had withdrawn from Jerusalem and the corruption of the temple and formed a little community out in the wilderness just north of the Dead Sea—away from Jewish society to be God's 'special' people.

They lived a quiet life. They studied the Law and they copied it into manuscripts. They kept it all to themselves and they lived under themselves—an insulated life, insulated from the world.

But Morris pointed out that, 'There is nothing of the "piety of the pond", (as he put it), about Christianity. We are not a pond. We are a river.' And he illustrated that from the Dead Sea, which receives the water of the Jordan River but gives nothing out.

The Dead Sea is a dead end: The water that comes into it evaporates—nothing goes out. It's a lifeless lake.—It's a pond.

The Church is not that; and the Christian must not be that. We are a river of refreshing water to a dry, thirsty world. We don't 'receive and keep', we receive God's gift and we pass it on to others. And this church ought to be such a place: That when visitors come here, they see in each one of us the joy and the warmth of our new life which expresses the vitality as an expression of the vitality of our faith. And I think sometimes we need to be reminded of that.

But if we're walking by the Spirit, if we're studying the Word of God, if we're living in obedience, that's going to be a natural thing. It's just going to be what people see in us because it flows out of us naturally; the fruit of the Spirit—love and joy and peace.

Ours is a different life from the life of the world, a distinctly different life—as different as light is from darkness. As I say so often, (and I think it's particularly appropriate to say right now with this text), it is a supernatural life that can rise above the circumstances—that is an expression of God's life because it is God's life in us and lived out of us. From our innermost being will flow rivers of living water! —That's quite a promise.

In verse 39, John explains the statement, which clearly shows that it is a supernatural life, because it's all about the Holy Spirit; "But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified." (vs39).

Now that points us to the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given to the church and a new era began; 'the age of the church', 'the age of the Spirit'; it's described with different titles but it's a new age, the 'New Covenant' age.

Now that doesn't mean that the Holy Spirit wasn't active before that time. He's always been active and we see that all through the Old Testament as well as in the Gospels.

We see it at the very beginning, Genesis chapter 1, verse 2, the second verse in the Bible has the activity of the Spirit. We read of Him "moving over the surface of the waters", involved in some work of creation, (literally, He is "hovering" over it). Some translations, Jewish translations, speak of it as "a great wind rushing over the waters." But that does not fit the description. It is of the Spirit "hovering", evidently implanting life within this created world involved in the work of creation. So from the very beginning we see the Holy Spirit involved in all of the work of God as this third person of the Trinity. And in the Old Testament He did the work of spiritual recreation in the regeneration of all believers.

But on the day of Pentecost He established a new relationship with the people of God. It is a much more personal, intimate relationship. The difference between the Spirit's relationship with believers before Pentecost and the present relationship with them is defined by our Lord later in chapter 14, (*verses 16 & 26*), He comes back to this, and there He promised the disciples that His Father would give them the "Helper", (the Paraclete)—the Holy Spirit. Then He told them that the Spirit, (who abides with you), 'will be **in** you', indicating that He was not in them at that time. He was with them; He was among them; He was affecting and influencing them. But in the time that He spoke of, He would be **in** them. So it's a future blessing.

Now there are occasions, as you read through the Old Testament where the Spirit came upon individuals in a special way—indwelt them for a time. Bezaleel, for example, the artist who built the tabernacle, is described in Exodus 31, (*vs2*), as being "filled with the Spirit of God," —filled with Him. So He was indwelt. And He also inspired the prophets and He anointed the kings.

But that was not a permanent indwelling. It was a provision of the Spirit for special tasks that individuals were given. We read for example of Sampson, that the

Spirit of the LORD would 'come upon him mightily', (Jdg 14:16), suggesting that He would come and go. When God wanted him to do a task, (And Sampson, I think, can be described as a killing machine, that's what God raised him up to do, to kill the enemy), He would 'come upon him' to give him the ability to do that. So we see that in various individuals, how the Spirit would 'come' and then He would 'go'.

But today the Holy Spirit permanently dwells in the believer. In Ephesians chapter 1, verse 13, Paul stated that every believer is, "sealed...with the Holy Spirit of promise." And the significance, the meaning of that verse is, 'At the moment of faith we are sealed, and sealed permanently.' He takes up residence with us and never leaves us.

Now the dividing line between the previous age and this present age, and this privilege that we now have of the Spirit of God being within us, (...Just think about that! The third person of the Trinity literally dwells in you to enable you to live the kind of life you are to live!), but the dividing line between the two ages and the event that made the difference, is referred to here—it's the cross. That's what John refers to when he writes in verse 39, "...the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

Christ's glorification was His crucifixion—which certainly strikes us as odd if we're just introduced to that for the first time. But we find it all through the Gospel of John; that's how His crucifixion is described. We wouldn't think that of the cross because the cross was designed by the Romans to be a shameful and painful instrument of execution. —Not one of glorification but one of shame, humiliation, and degradation.

But at the cross Christ was glorified because it was there that God's love was given its greatest display. You want to know what the love of God is? Do you want to know what the ultimate example of love is? —Then look at the cross; that's where it is demonstrated: 'God so loved the world that He gave up His only begotten Son to death for us.' It's not only glory because there we see the love of God, but it's there that our salvation was obtained. It's there at the cross that Christ saved His people, settled the issue. "It is finished."

So the cross is a victory, not a defeat, because there, as I say, Christ won our salvation. There Christ rescued us from judgment when He paid for all of our sins. It is finished. There's nothing more glorious than that.

Well that's the reason the Lord's sacrificial death had to precede the coming and the giving of the Holy Spirit. Before the Spirit could live within us, (sinners under the wrath of God), before we could enter into His life and He into ours God had to cleans us from the guilt of sin. And that's what happened at the cross. When that happened, the Spirit was given so that He filled God's people with power and equipped them for service. And He has not left us—and He will not leave us.

It is a privilege that is true of every believer in Jesus Christ. I've mentioned that. What a great privilege it is. But every believer in Jesus Christ has this great blessing. The Holy Spirit conveys to us the life of Christ which empowers us to live His life, the obedient life, and it is like “rivers of living water”—refreshing and cleansing.

We still have a sin nature that is at work within us and we are continually in this struggle between, what Paul will describe in Galatians 5, as the struggle between ‘the flesh and the Spirit’ —between our flesh and the Holy Spirit who is in it—and it is a frustrating experience. I don't think any Christian can walk in obedience and not sense the frustration of it.

Paul sensed it. He speaks of that in Romans 7, this battle that goes on within us. That's what I would describe as ‘the normal Christian life’—not falling into sin but the struggle that we go through. And the more we mature and we grow; and the more of this life that becomes evident and extant within us, the more the struggle will occur. It's an ongoing battle.

Still, by the Spirit's power, we are able to triumph over sin. And as a result of the change He produces, the wisdom that He gives us, and the growth that He causes, we are able to bless others as those rivers flow out of us.

Now you can see why someone might call this a passage that 'Deserves to be printed in letters of gold.' These are great blessings that He's promising will come to the people of God in 'the not-too-distant future' from when He said it.

Now all of this produced a response from the crowd. These were glorious, authoritative words that He has spoken; and so this crowd that had gathered there in the temple, (it's a large crowd), had different responses. They were divided in what they concluded from what He had said. Some thought that He was the prophet that Moses prophesied, (or promised), would come in Deuteronomy 18, verse 15; they thought He was 'the Prophet', but not the Messiah. While others thought, "No, this is the Messiah. This is the Christ!", they were saying. Others disputed that because they knew that Jesus was from Galilee, He was from Nazareth, and they knew that the Messiah would be born of the house of David in Bethlehem in Judea.

What we see later in the Sanhedrin is that all of these people, (in the Sanhedrin as we'll see in a moment and there in that crowd), knew far less than they thought they did. And they knew far less than they thought they did because they didn't bother to search the Scriptures to know more. The Pharisees will say, 'Search the Scriptures and you'll see no prophet arises out of Galilee.' Well they obviously hadn't searched the Scriptures very carefully themselves or they wouldn't have said that.

John wrote that, 'Some of them were so fierce in their opposition to Christ, (here's another division among this crowd), that they wanted to do violence.' But he said, "No one laid hands on Him." (vs44b). And the reason is, (that he says elsewhere), "His hour had not yet come." (Jn 8:10). This is all according to God's specific plan and everything that's going to follow His plan until He accomplishes the salvation on Calvary...and it will follow His plan from there on out!

Others wanted to lay hands on Him as well, as we have seen in the previous passage and are reminded of here—the Jewish leaders. Earlier, they had sent out their police to arrest Him and now the arresting officers returned empty handed. When they entered the Sanhedrin, (which was the Jewish supreme court), without Him the chief

priests and Pharisees were surprised and asked, "Why did you not bring Him?" They answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks." (vs43-44).

The temple police were an elite group and they were chosen from among the Levites. So these were men who were trained in the Law and they had heard lots of rabbis teach. But as they moved among the crowd looking for the opportunity to quietly arrest Him they heard teaching with authority and wisdom, clearly and graciously given. They witnessed what John in chapter 1 witnessed when he said, "We saw His glory full...of grace and truth." (vs14). And as these men experienced His grace and truth, they were unable to arrest Him. They couldn't get close to Him. Evidently the crowd was so interacting with Him that they couldn't. But they were, as it were, stunned and arrested themselves by the greatness of what they were hearing.

Well the Pharisees weren't satisfied with that. They didn't want to hear what they had said, (that answer), and they responded by mocking these Levite officers with the question, "You have not also been led astray, have you?" (vs47), (meaning, 'You've been led astray.')

They then condescendingly dismissed the crowd as 'an uneducated bunch', (while they were ignorant and unaware that even some of their own members were investigating Jesus and were begin drawn toward Him.)

But what a difference we see here—and we see it all through the Gospels. Here we see the difference between these men, (these priests and these Pharisees), and the Lord—He was the true shepherd of the sheep. These men were to be the shepherds of the sheep; they were to be the teachers and the counselors of the people. But you don't see that in them at all. Often you see this in the Gospels: Christ sees the crowd and they're like sheep without a shepherd—and He felt compassion for them. But not these men—these Pharisees looked down on them. They are 'hoi polloi'. They are 'the great unwashed' and they don't know anything.

Knowledge, as Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 13, can lead to pride and you could say that is the case with these Pharisees. But the reality is they didn't know as much as

they thought they did. Maybe that's really where knowledge leads to pride is when people really don't know as much as they think they do.

And so this was when one of them, "the teacher of Israel" as he's called in chapter 3, (vs10), stood up to defend Jesus. Nicodemus, who had come to the Lord at night, (and may still have been somewhat on the fence about our Lord), questioned what they were doing in verse 51. He speaks, (and this took some courage on his part, I think, but he said), "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he's doing, does it?"

No, it didn't; but the council was in no mood to listen to reason. The majority were angry and responded scornfully. "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee." (vs52).

Well following that, the chapter ends, "Everyone went to his home." (vs53). Which is too bad, there should have been more discussion because they were in error. Prophets did come from Galilee. Now they may have spoken hastily, they may have spoken out of frustration without giving much thought to the statement that they were making, but still, they were absolutely wrong: Jonah and Nahum were prophets from Galilee. And there's no reason why God could not raise up prophets from Galilee. Elijah, who is among many of the Jews, the favorite prophet; Elijah was from Gilead, on the east side of the Jordan River and outside of Judea.

Their statement here reflects the belief that pure religion was in Judea and Jerusalem, 'This is where it's really found, not outside of it.' But again, it showed their own ignorance of the facts regarding the Lord's life and birth—that He was born in Bethlehem, He was from Judea. But also, if they had studied the Bible carefully, they would have known that the Messiah would also be in Galilee; that He would minister in Galilee. Isaiah chapter 9, verses 1 and 2, is the prophesy of Galileans, "who walk in darkness, will see a great light" (vs2).

The reality was that Jesus met all of the biblical criteria for the Messiah. But like those in the crowd who rejected Christ, these Pharisees were blinded by ignorance, unbelief, and pride. Jesus said in verse 17, that 'If anyone is willing to do God's will, he or

she will know the truth about Him.' These men were not willing to do God's will. They were not willing to submit to Him and to the revelation that had been given by Him and of Him. They were not willing to believe in Him.

And yet, it was to people like these that Jesus came and offered 'rivers of living water to anyone who is thirsty'—even to a Pharisee. The proud as well as the discouraged; whoever is thirsty.

And that is a singularly amazing thing, that He, the Son of God, the Christ, our Creator, would *ask* us to receive His priceless gift, that He would *cry out* for people to come to Him. It is we who ought to be crying out to Him, pleading that He show mercy and receive us.

Who is it who does the asking in the world? It's not the rich man who pleads with people to take a share of his wealth—it's the poor who beg the rich for gifts. But here, the King of Kings stands and "cries out" to people to receive His gift, the greatest gift and wealth of all, eternal life—and on easy terms, "Come and drink."

As Spurgeon pointed out, 'That's not a difficult action. Drinking is peculiarly the commonplace act of sinners. So drink, He says. Surely you can do that. A baby can drink. A sick man, a wounded deer, or even a little chick can drink. That's all Christ asks us to do. Come to Him, believe in Him. And don't delay.'

Something else I saw in the museum in Nuremberg were paintings and artwork with skulls, which might have the Latin words, "memento mori", (which is translated, "Remember you must die.") That's a common feature in Renaissance art. In fact a common thing for scholars in that age and during the Middle Ages, was to have a skull on their desk. That wasn't being morbid or to be scary but to remind them of reality. It was to promote clarity and remind them that every day counts.

Our days are limited. That's why I say, "Don't delay!" While you still have today, come to Christ. Drink from Him. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for sinners. Eternal refreshment is in Him. Forgiveness is in Him. Eternal life is in Him—and it is given

to all who come and *drink*, who *believe* in Him. May God help you to do that if you haven't.

And you who have, rejoice! There are rivers of living water in you. May you, and may I, let that come out and be seen.

Father, all of us who have put our faith in Your Son can say we've been purchased by Christ, and we are clothed with that perfect righteousness, that spotless righteousness that we sang of. And we're fully accepted by You, we can't become more accepted by You than we are presently, at the moment of faith, fully and completely—and forever.

We recognize we need to grow, and we need to develop, and we need to have the fruit of the Spirit manifested in our lives like rivers of living water pouring out from us. LORD, do that work in us, and make us people that bring great glory to You for the blessings that You've given to us. We thank You for that.

Now the LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. In Christ's name, Amen.

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