

Stay Thirsty!

A sermon on Isaiah 55:1-5,10,11

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I believe it was Anthony J. D'Angelo who said, "In your thirst for knowledge, be sure not to drown in all the information." Isn't that true? Sometimes, you're so eager to learn, and yet, there's always more information out there than what you need, sometimes you're struggling to swim through it all and might find yourself drowning in too much.

You know, many could look at the Bible and see a book full of a wealth of knowledge, graciously supplied by our all-knowing God. And it could look intimidating. I could drown in all the tough concepts and difficult teachings God shares in his Word. But God has given it to us for our learning, to grow in our knowledge of him and of his love for us.

Do you have what D'Angelo calls the "thirst for knowledge"? On this Christian Education Sunday, are you thirsty for learning from God's Word?

In our verses from Isaiah here, God lays out the bounty of his Word as if in a marketplace. Can you imagine it? I would think it's something very similar to our Farmer's Market. You have all these vendors, with their stands, selling their produce...for a price. And it might even be a great deal...but not compared to that one table. The vendor is selling the richest of fare, like the honeycrisp of apples, or the fillet mignon of steaks, or the halibut (or bluefin tuna, depends on who you're talking to) of fish, the types of food that make your mouth water just by thinking about them. It's the best of the best, and you know what the price is? Free. Absolutely no costs.

That is what God is offering us in his Word. Hear again his invitation, "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy, and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live."

It's like a rich banquet he lays before us, the precious truths of his Word, course after course of the teachings of the Bible, and he wants us to eat our fill. It's all free. He wants us to come back for seconds and thirds. I think this would be one time where gluttony would be ok. God wants us to listen, to give ear, to hear the main dish, the good news of our salvation through Jesus, his life, death and resurrection because through that richest of fare, our faith is nourished. Our souls live.

Or, like for today, Christian Education Sunday, he wants us to gorge ourselves on his Word, to have that constant yearning and hunger, day after day, to be in his Word, to hear it, to study it, to learn it, to meditate on it, to put it into practice every day of your life...every single one of you. He doesn't want you to walk away from his stand or the banquet table hungry or thirsty.

So how are you doing? How are you doing in your life of a Christian education? You see, we put so much of an emphasis on our children being in God's Word, learning their Bible history, and for good

reason. They have a young faith, and they need to hear of God's grace throughout the story of salvation again and again to feed their faith and to grow their faith.

But are they the only ones? Does God say, "Once you reach this age, like after you're confirmed, you're done learning from the Bible"? That your education is complete? I'll tell you, there's a pastor I know who put it to me this way before, "When I know everything the Bible has to teach me, I'll stop reading it." He's read his entire Bible all the way through over 25 times.

So, how are you doing? Are you drinking deeply from the well of God's Word, or are you merely getting a small tasting of the rich fare God offers in his Word? Or, in other words, are you still thirsty?

"But Pastor, I'm here almost every Sunday. I stay awake during your sermons, and I don't complain that sometimes they're over 20 minutes long, and I get a lot out of them. That's good enough, right?"

Is it? If you drank only one cup of water every other day, and that was it, would that be ok? Wouldn't you be dehydrating your body, threatening your very life? Can't the same be said about your spiritual life, if all you're giving to your faith is fifteen to twenty minutes of God's Word every week? Is that really satisfying?

"But Pastor, I feel like there's really nothing new in the Bible for me anyways. A lot of those stories for me are just review, anyways. We should put the focus and emphasis on educating the kids."

And I wouldn't disagree with an emphasis on Christian education for the youth. But isn't it a little embarrassing when the children can spout off Bible passages without a problem, but you might not even be able to name all Ten Commandments? Or, you might know what the Trinity is or the difference between objective and subjective justification, but yet you struggle to explain how, even though God tells us not to judge the speck in our neighbor's eye when the 2x4 is sticking out of ours, yet at the same time he tells us to judge sin. Or you struggle in conversations with friends when they ask you to tell them what you believe about infant baptism or closed communion or homosexuality or premarital cohabitation or evolution because, to be quite frank, you just aren't quite sure what God says.

Are you thirsty? Is your spiritual body running on empty? Because, you see, Satan works hard to lull you and I into a false sense of security, that yes, I've read through the Bible, or at least portions of it, so yeah, I'm good, I don't really need it that much anymore. Sunday mornings are good enough. I don't need Bible Class. I don't need personal Bible study. My thirst is quenched.

Martin Luther once wrote, "Although all sin is abominable and damnable, it would be better for us to lapse into any other sin than that of contempt and neglect of the Word." Do you get what he's saying? Of course we wouldn't want to fall into any sin, and yet every sin pales in comparison to neglecting God's Word. You know why? What happens to your body without water? Without a continual helping of God's Word, our spiritual bodies are failing. The water of God's Word is what sustains and grows our faith in Jesus. Without it, we would die and end up in the eternal abyss where we would be on fire and have a thirst that could, that would never be quenched.

So, how about it? Are you thirsty?

Jesus was on his way to Galilee, and he passed through Samaria and got into a conversation with a Samaritan woman at a well. This was pretty unusual because the Jews and Samaritans hated each other, so Jesus should have avoided that place all-together.

This woman was a terrible sinner, an adulterer, many times over. Jesus knew it, but he still asked her for a drink. She questioned his motives, but Jesus saw her thirst for forgiveness, and so he offered her something no one else could, the water of life.

You are thirsty, too, aren't you? Your throat is parched by the salty lies of Satan and the acid of your many sins. And there Christ stands at the well. "Come" is his invitation; "all" is the guest list; "free" is the cost.

You know what's free, don't you? Look again at the words of Isaiah, where God says, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David."

God has made an everlasting covenant with us. Do you know what a covenant is? It's an agreement made between two parties, where if one side keeps their part of the deal, then the other side will keep theirs, too. Well, in God's everlasting covenant, there aren't two sides. There's one. It's God making promises to us when he knew we could never keep our end of the deal.

Can you think of some passages talking about that promise? How about this one? In Romans, Paul writes, "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Or this one? The book of Ephesians, "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast."

Or, from 1 John, "This is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

And I know most of you know this one, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

It's the precious covenant, the simple promise of the gospel, that to save you and me from our sins, Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus rose.

Because God loves us, he sent Jesus to pay for all the times we've neglected his Word. Because God loves us, he sacrificed his own Son on the cross to forgive every time we've held God's Word in contempt by devaluing it and thinking we don't need it as much as we really do. Because God loves us, he sent Jesus to quench the thirst we have for our salvation through him, our Living Water.

And what is more, God continues to provide what you need to fill your thirsty soul. He provides his Word. You know, every time we listen to God's Word, every time we read it on our own and study it and learn from it, we eat what is good, and we satisfy our souls on the richest fare. The words of God themselves are the feast.

And when our sinful flesh complains about the plain and sometimes dull proclamation of God's Word, or how it's the same book I went through last time, I can't possibly learn anything new, we must remember that God works in our hearts through his Word. He has not promised to work in any other way to satisfy the deep spiritual needs we have.

And every time you're in God's Word, God's going to expose you to something new. You know, I was blessed to be able to receive a Christian education for 23 years as I went to a Lutheran elementary school, a Lutheran high school, Martin Luther College, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, where I was surrounded by God's Word every day. And I'll tell you, I'm still a student, learning every time I read the Bible and drink deeply from God's Word.

Maybe you haven't had that same blessing. But your opportunity for a Christian education is no different. I thank God that he has gifted us three Sunday School teachers and a music director for our children this year, individuals who are eager to share the living water of God's Word with young, thirsty souls.

I thank God that he's provided mature Christian leaders in this congregation, those who are willing to take on the role of teaching Bible Classes, to help you grow in his faith. I thank God that he's given all of us his precious Word, free of charge, because there, we can drench ourselves with the words of everlasting life. I thank God that in his grace, he's sent us his Son. Because, only in that grace are we forgiven. Only in that grace, can we approach the feast that is God's Word and eat to our heart's content.

And you know what that Word does? Isaiah tells us, "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish...so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty."

God's Word never returns to him empty. I guarantee when you're in God's Word, you're going to find a new treasure hidden there, maybe a turn of phrase you didn't see there the first time. Maybe it'll be a specific passage that was God's way of telling you, I know the difficulties you are going to face today, and here's my comfort, my encouragement, my gracious promise to you. As the rain and snow cannot touch the earth without watering it and producing a harvest for the farmer, so God's Word won't fail to have an effect on you when you spend time in there.

Stay thirsty. Now, that might seem a little contradictory, since we want to be drinking God's Word regularly. But, still, stay thirsty. Have an insatiable thirst for God's Word, for growing in your faith in Jesus that can never be filled. It's in that Word that we have life. It's in that water of his Word that God grows us. So drink up. You won't drown. Drink deeply. And always be wanting more. God freely gives it. Amen.