

**John 19:28**

March 25, 2006 – LENTEN SERVICE 5

## **He Spoke a Word of Need**

✠ **Our Savior needed that drink.**

✠ **We needed that drink even more.**

In the name of Jesus our suffering Savior, dearly redeemed believers:

We Americans rarely experience physical thirst. Sometimes it takes a trip overseas to grasp how blessed we are to be able to go to practically any faucet across America and drink. It wasn't always that way. One town's water that gave me dysentery as a child in South Dakota was later condemned and water hauled in by truck. My mother tells how filling the bathtub in Montana was always a vision of rusty iron that hid the bottom. She was so grateful for the water when we moved to the "mile-high city" of Denver, that she enjoyed countless glasses of just plain water. A more recent lesson was traveling to China last November and having to brush my teeth with bottled water. The people in Wuhan take it for granted that everyone drinks bottled water. But still today only torture victims feel physically what Jesus suffered. Yet His raging physical thirst was just a vapor compared to the thirsting of His soul. When **He Spoke a Word of Need, "I thirst,"** more than we can realize...

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Jesus is certainly not preaching sermons from the cross. His Seven Words so far have gasped from parched lips that refused a drink of wine vinegar when they first reached Golgotha, the place of the skull. (Matthew 27:33f) Hanging from the nails by His gaping wounds, we've heard Him gasp: ***"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*** (Luke 23:34) To the dying thief whose repentance rebuked the other and asked for Jesus to remember Him in His kingdom, Jesus said: ***"I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."*** (Luke 23:43) His thirst had not stopped Him from caring for His mother Mary, ***"Dear woman, here is your son,"*** and to John the only disciple standing by, ***"Here is your mother."*** (John 19:26f) Suffering our hell, we heard Him cry out last week, ***"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"... "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*** (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34)

But now Jesus knows He's nearing the goal. This is why He was born of the virgin Mary. For this reason He had lived and for this reason He would die. He would not be like a bar tender watering down the whiskey or like a restaurant serving very expensive wine filling barely the bottom of your glass. For the hundreds of prophecies God the Holy Spirit had made about the coming Messiah, Jesus was determined to fill them all to the brim, even to the overflowing anguish and suffering of His soul. When we hear John saying, ***"Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled,"*** we have to look back 1000 years to what must have seemed very strange from King David.

***"You know my folly, O God; my guilt is not hidden from you. May those who hope in you not be disgraced because of me, O Lord, the LORD Almighty; may those who seek you not be put to shame because of me, O God of Israel."*** The fear of failing us was making Jesus thirsty too. ***"For I endure scorn for your sake, and shame covers my face....The insults of those who insult you fall on me...."*** For God and for us Jesus endured shame all His life until this most shameful death of all on the cross. Agonizing in His heart to His heavenly Father, Jesus prayed, ***"You know how I am scorned, disgraced and shamed; all my enemies are before you. Scorn has broken my heart and has left me helpless; I looked for sympathy, but there was none, for comforters, but I found none. They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst."*** (Psalm 69:5-12,19-21 NIV) **Our Savior needed that drink.**

But that's not all. We may have missed something that had just happened. I have to wonder how much of this Jesus could even hear: ***"Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, "They divided my***

*garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.” So this is what the soldiers did.* (John 19:24 NIV) Can you imagine how it felt when they tore that undergarment off Jesus’ back. Pilate’s soldiers had replaced it after the brutal scourging with sharp bone and lead that kept on and on until Jesus was nearly dead. The gaping wounds must have stuck to the undergarment as the blood dried on the way out to Calvary. Like tearing off a huge bandage, the soldiers must have opened everything up again. They were so busy enriching themselves on the only possessions Jesus had left that when He said, **“I thirst.”** Though they gave Him some wine vinegar on a sponge, it did not dawn on them...

### † **We needed that drink even more.**

In a way the soldiers remind me of some American college students years ago in the Boundary Waters. At first it was a big joke that no one thought to bring water, only beer. But one of the survivors told me years later that he could still remember how bad the beer tasted on the third and fourth day with nothing else to drink. We make our big plans and rush to get wherever, but fail again and again to take care of our most important problem that reaches way deeper than the cells of our bodies into the depths of our souls. We get depressed and lonely, overworked and under loved, and yet we’re like babies crying – they don’t know why. And it takes a wise parent to realize a little water may be all this little one needs.

Could Jesus in His raging thirst remember another time when water was so vital? Someday I’d like to ask Him if He thought back to that time at Jacob’s well when He asked a Samaritan woman to get Him a drink. John also recorded this back in chapter 4 of his Gospel. The woman was amazed that a Jewish man would even talk to her. But when He mentioned something about being able to give her **“living water,”** she thought never getting thirsty again sounded good. How strange when this Jewish rabbi then told her to get her husband. And to her embarrassed admission of not having one, He boldly revealed that she had been married five times and was now living with a man unmarried. Trying to change the subject and argue denominations did no good because Jesus kept it up until she had to blurt out that when the Messiah came, He would explain everything. The **“living water”** went deep into her soul when Jesus replied: **“I who speak to you am He.”** Despite her immoral reputation, she suddenly had Gospel feet that ran back to get the townspeople to come and meet Jesus.

How many times have we failed to go the extra mile to encourage someone who needs to hear the Gospel of our Lord’s forgiveness? How often have we turned away when someone tried to admonish us about our sins, especially the sins of the heart? How deeply have we drunk of this **“living water”** only to take its thirst quenching power for granted?

Jesus always knew: **We needed that drink even more.** It’s not like we’re in a desert, but more like sinking into the depths of the salt water sea where we can be surrounded like Captain Ahab with “water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink.” The Holy Spirit foretold this through David too in Jesus’ words: **“But I pray to you, O LORD, in the time of your favor; in your great love, O God, answer me with your sure salvation. Rescue me from the mire, do not let me sink; deliver me from those who hate me, from the deep waters. Do not let the floodwaters engulf me or the depths swallow me up or the pit close its mouth over me. Answer me, O LORD, out of the goodness of your love; in your great mercy turn to me. Do not hide your face from your servant; answer me quickly, for I am in trouble. Come near and rescue me; redeem me because of my foes.”** (Psalm 69:13-18 NIV)

When life gets overwhelming and the loneliness unbearable, when your sadness gets heavier than ever because of guilt and sin, remember Jesus: **He Spoke a Word of Need.** Every tear you shed has already streamed down His cheeks. Every wound of body and soul that has pained your heart and mind, He has suffered willingly. Among the griefs and sorrows that He carried for us to the cross, surely our thirsty need for forgiveness and grace was the heaviest. By Word and sacrament He will pour the **“water of life”** into you. But He will not stop at full. In Psalm 23, King David wrote, **“My cup runneth over.”** The overflow of God’s love for you is meant for everyone you know. Let them drink of Jesus’ loving kindness and tender mercy as have we. No better way to thank the Lord than this. Amen.