

March Communion - Evening Service

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 March 2023

Preacher: Rev. Iain Thompson

[0 : 0 0] We're going to turn back to John chapter 7, and we can read again the verses of 37 and 38.

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. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

We live in a very busy world, and there's a vast diversity of human activity.

And the things that interest one person won't be the things that interest another person. Because people live in different circumstances, and people have different goals.

But there's one guiding principle which animates everyone, and that's the desire for happiness. From the businessman to the servant, the desire and the pursuit of happiness is what keeps them going.

[1 : 2 6] But the depressing fact is that although everybody desires happiness, very few people find it. Is that because happiness is beyond the possibility of receiving it?

Well, there's such a thing as real happiness. God is quite happy with himself. He is the ever-blessed God.

God is quite happy with himself.

But we mustn't think that it's placed entirely outwith our reach here in this world. There are people on this earth who have real peace in their souls.

They have real joy, even although they might be going through great trials and tribulations. Nothing can take away their sense of peace and satisfaction that they have.

[2 : 5 9] They have an inward, inexhaustible source of enjoyment. It's like a fountain of living water that's springing up within them.

So if the desire for happiness usually leads to useless labor for many of the people in this world and finishes in disappointment for many of the people of this world, the reason for that is because they're looking in the wrong place for the happiness that they desire.

They're looking to the things of this world. And they're looking to the people of this world rather than looking to God because God is the only one that can supply this happiness.

few people will find it. And the simple answer to that is that they're seeking it in the wrong places.

God brings this charge against his people in the days of Jeremiah. He brings two evils against them.

[4 : 2 2] The first is they have forsaken me. And the second is they have hewn out for themselves broken cisterns that can contain no water.

And we can ask ourselves, where do we fit in there? Have we received true satisfaction and happiness in this world?

And if not, is it as a result of us having forsaken God and hewn out for ourselves broken cisterns?

In other words, seeking to quench this deep down thirst and desire for happiness that we have within ourselves with the things of this world.

God makes it clear to us they are broken cisterns. They will never quench your thirst, your desire for happiness. Because first of all, you have forsaken me.

[5 : 29] And now you're seeking happiness in the wrong places. Because they have completely mistaken views of God. And that's why people don't find this happiness.

This satisfaction, this peace and sense of joy that lies within the hearts of those who have found it. The reason that not everybody has it is because they're looking in the wrong place.

They're wasting their energy. And chasing after shadows. Ask yourselves, everything that you're in pursuit of, if you receive it, will you bring it with you into the next world?

And you'll find, obviously, you can't take any of the things that you've pursued in this world in your search for happiness into the next world.

Because you've been pursuing the wrong things. And you've been seeking happiness in the wrong places. Because you've been seeking happiness in the wrong places.

[7 : 10] In the wrong place. Now God is the fountain of living water. He is the author of happiness. He is the one who can give us true satisfaction.

Because we were created in order to have fellowship with God. So that we would live in perfect harmony with Him. And experience God's blessing upon us throughout the ages of eternity.

But we forfeited that right by sinning against Him. And the only way that we're going to receive the blessings that our souls thirst for is to come back to Him.

And He's made it possible for us to come back to Him. And this is what Jesus means in this passage that we want to look at. When He stood up on the last day of the feast and cried out, He said, If anyone thirsts, Let him come to me and drink.

Because whosoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. He makes the claim that the happiness that we're in pursuit of lies within Him.

[8 : 37] Because He is God manifest in the flesh. He is the one who can reconcile us to God and bring us back into fellowship with God.

And that's what we were celebrating this morning. This is why it's called Communion. Because we're reminding ourselves of the communion that we can have with God as a result of the death that Christ died in order to secure that blessing for us.

To satisfy this deep down thirst that lies within our souls in pursuit of happiness. And Jesus makes the claim, I have the answer for you.

I can quench that thirst. And if any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink. And that's the invitation that He's giving to you here this evening.

That if you haven't yet found what your souls are yearning and thirsting for, then Jesus is the answer to your problems. He is the only answer to your problems.

[9 : 51] Because you can pursue it in all the different avenues that you've already pursued it in. And find that they will disappoint. And they will not give you the satisfaction that you desire.

Now, here's a subject that ought to be the interest of every person in this world. But the sad thing is that very few people in this world are interested in what Jesus had to say.

And very few people will pursue what Jesus is offering. But for those who do take an interest, and for those who will pursue what Jesus is offering, they will find that they will not be disappointed.

Disappointment. Very disappointed, rather. That he is the one who will live up to everything that he has claimed to be. Now, he made this cry on the last day of the feast.

They were celebrating the great feast where it was the feast of tabernacles.

[11 : 08] And this was the last day, the eighth day. And when the sacrifices were offered up in the morning, the priests would come in with this golden vessel full of water and wine that would be poured out onto the sacrifice.

And when this took place, other priests would be playing musical instruments whilst others would be singing praise to God. So there was a big ceremonial display taking place when Jesus spoke these words.

The priests had started the music and started the singing whilst other priests came in with this golden vessel to pour out the water and the wine onto the morning sacrifice.

And those who witnessed it and experienced it felt that there was nothing like the rejoicing that they experienced at that part of the ceremony.

Now, it's immediately after that takes place that Jesus stands up and cries out, If any man thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

[12 : 36] And you can almost envisage the experience that the people that came up to the temple to worship experienced.

They had heard the music and the singing whilst this great ceremony was taking place. And once it's happened, the place falls into total silence.

And all of a sudden they hear Jesus crying out, If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink. And that would have arrested their thoughts and made them think, What's this man talking about?

And he was making effectual what they were seeing with their eyes. Like all the rituals that were being performed under the Old Testament dispensation, they were all pointing to a spiritual meaning.

The sacrifice was pointing to the sacrifice of Christ. And when this water and wine was poured onto the sacrifice, it was signifying that this sacrifice can give you life-giving water.

[14 : 03] The wine that we drank of this morning bringing before us the blood that was shed. The death that was died by Christ in order that he might give us life in our souls.

And that's connected to the invitation that he's giving here. If you're really desiring life, then start considering the spiritual realities that these sacrifices are bringing before your very eyes.

that this death, this sacrifice that's been offered up will be the means of bringing life to your souls. And if any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink so that you can have life for your souls.

So we could ask the question, Well, who was he speaking to? who are invited to come and drink of what Jesus is offering?

Well, he's inviting everybody that's got a desire for happiness in their souls. Who does that include?

[15 : 24] Well, I think that probably includes everyone. Because that's what everybody desires in their lives. They want happiness. And all the activity that they engage in in their lives is in pursuit of happiness.

So the invitation is to everyone. Because everybody thirsts. Everybody's thirsting for this life, this satisfaction, this happiness, this joy that Jesus can give to them.

So the invitation is as wide as the whole of humanity. That's who he invites to come. So you're not left out.

Unless you can claim that you're fully satisfied with everything that you find within yourself. And everything that you possess. If you can make that claim, then this invitation isn't for you.

But I don't think there would be anybody that would make that claim that he's arrived, that he's found everything that he's ever sought, and that he's no longer seeking anything else.

[16 : 41] Because he's fully satisfied with himself and with everything that he has. There's nobody on the earth, if they're honest with themselves, that can make that claim.

So the invitation is for everyone. What are they invited to? Well, our Lord invites the thirsty ones to come to him as the fountain of living water, from which they may drink and then quench the thirst that lies within their souls.

So that they might find true happiness and be fully satisfied that they have found in Christ everything that their souls have always yearned for.

this is what you're invited to. You're invited to come to one who will satisfy your greatest needs.

when our Lord here represents himself as the fountain which can quench this thirst for happiness, he's claiming to be able to make you happy.

[18 : 07] and no matter how miserable you might be, he can supply the grace that will meet all of your needs.

That's the claim that he's making. if any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink. And whosoever believes in him, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water because he will send his Holy Spirit into their hearts and they will be brought to life, life that goes far above anything that we've lived in this world.

He came to give us life and he came to give us a life that is far more abundant than its blessings, than any of the blessings that we experience in the life that we live in the world.

That's what he's claiming. I can make you happy. I can quench your deep down thirst. I can give you living water that will give you to realize the purpose of life.

That will give you to experience and enjoy the life that God intended to give to you. Now, I mentioned earlier that some who seek to find happiness and seek to find it in God will never find it.

[19 : 45] God. Why is that? Well, the reason for that is because they've already determined within themselves what God is like.

And they've already determined within themselves what they need God to give them in order for them to be happy. so they're believing in a God of their own imagination.

And they're believing that if this God were to give them the things that they desire that they would be perfectly happy. Well, supposing he gave you the things that you desire, let me assure you, you would not be happy because the things that you desire are not the things that God desires for you.

And if you're coming to God to rubber stamp what you've already determined will make you happy, let me assure you, you're never going to come to the true God and you're never going to receive happiness in the things that you desire because the things that you desire are far removed from what God has desired to give you because he knows better what's going to give you satisfaction than you do yourself.

And that's why people who all over the world worship all the false gods that are being worshipped all over the world, but the more serious thing is that there are people in the Christian church all over the world that aren't worshipping the true God.

[21 : 31] And they're not coming to God to allow God to teach them they think they already know. And they're just merely coming to the God that they claim to believe is the God of the Bible to rubber stamp what they've already decided.

Well, God will not allow you to worship him in a false manner. God is not going to give you the things that you desire, but he's going to give you the things that he will enlighten your mind on is the things that are necessary for you to receive in order that you might have life in your souls and in order that you might have the happiness that you're in pursuit of, but pursuing you in the wrong direction because you've got a God of your own imagination.

Now, Jesus is the true God. He is the Word of God enfleshed. Because God is a spirit and we can't see God with the natural eyes, God made it simple for us because we were required to believe in his Word, but he went a step further than what we would have imagined was possible for him to do.

He enfleshed his Word and he saw and he enabled us to see the living Word, the Word being lived out and acting in a way that God would have us to act.

Because when we look at Jesus, we see what God is like. When we ask the question, what would God do in this situation, we get the answer in looking at what Jesus did in that situation.

[23 : 35] And that's what we see God is really like. Because God reveals himself to us through Jesus Christ. And that's the only way that we can come back to the living and the true God.

A lot of people think it depends upon our own religious devotions. They might be regular in their church attendance. And they might think because they've accumulated a lot of knowledge of what the Bible teaches that they're really in pursuit of God, but they're not.

Because God has made it clear that the only way that we can come back to him is in and through Jesus Christ. Jesus made the claim, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one will come to the Father except through me. So when Jesus makes this claim that he's able to give us living water, what our souls are really thirsting for, then he's giving us the truth.

Because there's no other way that we can be reconciled to God except through Jesus Christ. And he is the only one who is in possession of revealing God to us.

[24 : 59] On another occasion he thanked the Father that he had hidden these things from the wise and the prudent. in other words, those people who think they know better than God, God is hidden from them.

Even if they claim to pursue him, they will never find him. Because they're not coming to him in the way that he has directed in and through Jesus Christ.

And he went on to thank him that he was in possession of that knowledge to reveal to reveal it to those who would come as little children, who would humble themselves.

And that's how we must come. We must acknowledge we don't have the answer. We don't know better than God knows.

And we need to realize that we are like little infants when it comes to spiritual things. And that we have to just throw ourselves on the mercy of God as an infant who will cling on to his mother for drink, for protection, for clothing, and so forth.

[26 : 18] We need to come as little children. And if we don't consider ourselves as weak and as needy as little children, then we will never find God because that's the way that we need to come.

And if we come in that way to the Lord Jesus Christ, he will receive us as little children into his bosom and he will bless us.

And when he makes the claim that he's able to give us this river of living water, then he's making a faithful and a true claim that he is the one who is in possession of giving us the happiness that our souls are thirsting for.

Because you see, when God made man, he made him in his own image. and he made him with an intellect that was far higher than the creatures.

Yet, as a result of the fall, as a result of us sinning against God, we lost the true knowledge of God. Because prior to the fall, we had a true knowledge of God.

[27 : 46] Adam and Eve knew who God was. we don't know who God is. And we will never know who God is unless we come to Jesus Christ.

Because it's only Jesus that can enlighten our minds as to who God is. And when we come to him, he will reveal to us the true God.

And that's the God that we need. That's the God that we should be pursuing. Not the gods of this world, not the false gods that are being worshipped in all the false religions of the world.

Not even the false idols that we have in our hearts. The things that we imagine is able to give us happiness. The bigger houses, our fast cars, our bigger salaries, and all the things that we imagine will give us happiness, they're going to disappoint us.

Because they're false idols that are promising to give us happiness, but they will not. But when we pursue and come to have a relationship with the true God, we will find the happiness that we're in pursuit of.

[29 : 08] And Jesus is able to give us that happiness. When he created us in his own image, not only did he create within us a mind with an intellect that was able to have fellowship with God, but he also created us with a conscience.

And the conscience was clear for as long as we would have remained in fellowship with God. It would not convict us of wrongdoing, it would give us peace.

but because of our sins, it has come to life and it convicts us of our sins. And what our conscience needs is a sense of pardon.

In order to receive this happiness, we need to know that our sins have been forgiven, and that we have been put right with God.

And that's what Jesus is able to do for us. He can forgive our sins, because he has paid the penalty for our sins.

[30 : 22] And our conscience can be made clear, having our sins forgiven, and having the righteousness of Jesus imputed to us, so that we might be in a right standing before God.

Now, man also has affections, but our affections have been set on the wrong things. If we come to Jesus, he will enable us to set our affections on the things that will endure.

Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven. Seek the things that belong to the kingdom of heaven, heaven. Because if you seek the things that belong to the kingdom of heaven, neither moth nor rust will be able to corrupt them, and no man will be able to steal them out of your hand.

Everything that you've accumulated in this world will be corrupted by rust and by moths, and when death comes, he will steal all of these things out of your grasp.

Although you think you possess a lot, you possess absolutely nothing. Because death will steal everything that you own from you.

[31 : 45] But if we set our affections upon the things that are above where Christ is, neither moth nor rust will be able to corrupt them, and death will not be able to steal them out of our grasp.

Because we will have set our affections upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And because we have done so, we will continue to enjoy happiness in our souls more fully when we leave this world than what we have actually experienced in the world.

no man is weak, but Christ is strong, and he's able to strengthen the inner man.

He assured his disciples when he commissioned them with what would appear to be an impossible task, go and evangelize the whole world, go and spread the gospel to all the nations of this world, God.

And he assured them all power in heaven and on earth are mine, to enable them to fulfill the purpose of their redemption so that they might enjoy life to the full, and going forth to show forth God's praises, and to bring Jesus Christ before a lost world.

[33 : 22] Jesus can meet with us at every point of our need. He is the perfect Savior. So how are we going to receive these blessings from this perfect Savior?

Well, we are to come to him. And not only are we to come to him, we are to drink. We are to drink what he offers us, not what we've already decided that we want, but what he's offering us.

And when we drink what he's offering us, we'll find that what he's offering us really does satisfy this deep down thirst that lies within every man's soul.

So how do we come to him? Well, in order to come to him, we must first believe that he is. Because without faith in him, it is impossible to please him.

So we must believe that Jesus is the one who has the ability to save us, and not only to save us, but to satisfy our greatest need.

[34 : 43] And if we come to him believing in him, we will find that we will not be disappointed. So how do we come to him? Well, we need to exercise our minds.

That's why he's given us minds. And we need to meditate on what he's revealed to us in his word. And not only that, but we need to pray to him to help us to understand what he is revealing to us in his word.

because by nature, we might as well be deaf and dumb and blind. Because we can't understand, we can't see, we can't appreciate what Christ is offering.

And all the miracles that he performed were indicating the greater spiritual miracle that he's able to perform. If we're blind, spiritually, he's able to give us spiritual vision.

If we're deaf, if we've heard the gospel being proclaimed since childhood and we're still not hearing the voice of God speaking to us personally, then he can unstop our deafness and he can enable us to hear his voice so that when the minister stands in the pulpit, it's not the minister's voice you're hearing, it's the voice of God to your soul.

[36 : 11] As he speaks directly to you and personally to you, as one who has been redeemed, as one who has been brought to life, as one who has had his vision restored, one who has had his hearing restored, and one who comes to appreciate just what a devastating effect sin has had on our lives love, that has left us so impotent for so long, but when we come to him, he will give us the necessary grace to help us in our time of need.

We must drink what he's offering to us, and we must come believing in him, believing that he's able to meet our greatest needs, us, believing that he's able to enlighten our minds, and give us a true knowledge of God, believing that he's able to forgive us our sins, so that our conscience will no longer bother us, and convict us that we are sinners, because we'll come to understand that we've had the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, so that we are now in our right standing with God, because this is what he's offering us, and this is what our souls are thirsting for, we're thirsting to know God, because as Jesus claimed, this is life eternal, that we might know you, the living and the true God, and Jesus

Christ, whom you have sent forth. Do you know him? Because if you don't know him, you don't have life in your souls, you are still dead in your trespasses and sins, because if you come to Jesus, you will get to know him, because Jesus reveals the true God to us, and once we have that revelation given to us, we find what we've always been searching for, what we've always been thirsting for, and will find that it more than fully satisfies our greatest desires and the best dreams that we ever had concerning God, because Christ will not disappoint any who are willing to come to him, and come on his terms rather than on our terms, and acknowledge we are ignorant, we are impotent, we are like little children helpless, we are sinners who have sinned against you, we are those who are dead in trespasses and sins, but we're coming to you because you've revealed to us that you're a merciful God, and that your delight is to show mercy, and if you come with that prayer,

God, be merciful to me, a sinner, then you will find that God is far more merciful than you ever imagined that he would be, because you will have peace of conscience, and you will have fellowship with the living and the true God, and you will find true satisfaction, true happiness, and true joy, and true peace, which passes all understanding, and only the person that's experienced it, can appreciate what that is, because supposing I stand here until next week, and supposing I continue to pour out words, I will never be able to convince you of the reality that's on offer, unless you accept it for yourselves, so may God grant that he would enable you to do that, let us pray.

Our Father in heaven, we give you thanks for the great gift that you gave to us when you gave us your Son, Jesus Christ, because we learn in your word that the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, and we know that that life is what's on offer in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we believe that that's what every soul in this world is yearning for, so that their thirst might be quenched, and we know that the only way it can be quenched is by coming to put our trust in Jesus, so help us, oh Lord, to exercise faith in yourself, so that we might receive these blessings that go beyond our wildest imagination, and have mercy upon us for our sins and shortcomings, for we ask it in whose precious name,

[41 : 24] Amen. We're going to conclude by singing in Psalm 143 on page 439, page 439, and we're going to sing from verse 6, at the foot of page 439, Lo, I do stretch my hands, to thee my help alone, for thou well understandst all my complaint and moan, my thirsting soul desires and longeth after thee, as thirsty ground requires, with rain refreshed to be.

We're going to sing to the end of verse 8, from verse 6, Lo, I do stretch my hands, to thee my help alone. Lo, I do stretch my hands, to thee my help alone, for thou well understandst all my complaint and moan, my thirsting soul desires and longeth after thee, as thirsty ground requires, with rain refreshed to be.

Lord, let my prayer prevail, to answer it makes me, for lo, my spirit doth fail, I knock thy face in need, lest I be like to those that who in darkness sit, or in that downward goes, into the dreadful pit.

Because I trust in thee, O Lord, cause me to hear thy loving kindness free, when morning doth appear, cause me to know the way, wherein my path should be, for why my soul on high, I do lift up to thee.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, the Father, and fellowship of the Holy Spirit, rest and abide with you all, now and forevermore.

[44 : 58] Amen.