

Thorn-Crowned Devotions

Week Five

The Mission

This week we focus on the humanness of the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the one statement, *“I am thirsty.”* This statement found in John 19:28 could not be true of God, unless he had also become a man. Whenever this word is used in the New Testament or by the Greek translators of the Old Testament, it refers to a need that humans have, but not God.

There are two kinds of thirst, *literal* thirst and thirst as a *symbol* for something else. We already have encountered both types in the Gospel of John and Jesus statements in John 4:13 – 14,

¹³Jesus replied, “Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. ¹⁴But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.”

In the first instance, Jesus used the word in its *literal sense*, for something that requires *water* to satisfy. This need is very common among human beings. The Samaritan woman was so intrigued by Jesus offer, that she was enticed into inquiring about “living water.”

It was then that Jesus went back to the concept he had introduced in *v.10* of living water which would give *eternal life*. We find later in John 7:39,

³⁹ (When he said “living water,” he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.)

It was this kind of thirst quenching water, the real need and longing of mankind that Jesus came to provide. It could only be provided by Jesus entering into “his glory.”

This would only be provided to us through Jesus suffering the pangs of thirst upon the cross.

The Scripture Fulfilled

John tells us that Jesus knew his mission was completed. Next week we will see him stated plainly in the sixth thorn crowned message (19:30). Today we should focus on the second statement in 19:28, “to fulfill Scripture.” Gerald Borchert in the new American commentary on the Gospel of John raises two important questions:

- (1) What Scripture was intended? and
- (2) To what was the fulfillment referring?

There is a Scripture that predicted this exact scenario. Psalm 69:21 says,

*They gave me poison for food,
and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.*

This Psalm is certainly a messianic psalm, that is, while it may echo some aspects of the psalmist’s life, it is really speaking prophetically of the coming Messiah (*see also Psalm 22 and 110*). He was “hated without a cause” (69:4; *John 15:25*). His own brothers, disciples, had deserted him (69:8). Jesus certainly had a “passion” for the temple (69:9; *John 2:17*). For this he was reproached by those who were turning the Temple into a place of merchandise. When he asked for something to drink, they gave him sour wine (69:21; *John 19:29*).

The fulfillment of this Scripture was to a large degree out of Jesus’ hands. He could declare his thirst, but that was no guarantee that anyone would offer him anything. The Gospel of Mark seems to indicate that the offer of sour wine was not a humanitarian gesture, a mark of compassion, but more a desire to prolong his suffering in order to satisfy the curiosity of whether Elijah would rescue him or not. Here John seems to present the manner in which it is presented as similar to someone who would give a patient in a hospital the opportunity to suck on a sponge when they could not drink. The action of Jesus calling, “I am thirsty,” and of someone offering him “sour wine” fulfills one of many Scriptures about the Messiah.

Like Us

The physical, bodily sufferings of Jesus remind us the son of God was born as a human being in order to help us.

¹⁴Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death.¹⁵Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.

Hebrews 2:14–15 (NLT)

Jesus had to be born in order to die in our place and thus free us from the penalty for sin — death. He knew this before the world was created. He knew all his earthly life that he would give his life a sacrifice for sin. He loved us enough to do that. When as the high priest he offered that sacrifice, he took away the penalty for our sins.

Having loved us that much, he is prepared to do everything necessary to help us now when we are suffering and our faith is being tested.

¹⁷Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people.¹⁸Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.

Hebrews 2:17–18 (NLT)

What help do you need from the Lord today? Perhaps it is the wisdom to avoid the temptations of sin and overcome the traps of the devil (*James 1:5*). Maybe it is God's grace to endure physical pain that will not go away (*2 Corinthians 12:8 – 9*). If you will ask, He will understand and will help, because He's been there.

Sour Wine

What was it that they offered Jesus on the cross? Actually, He was given something to drink twice in those six horrible hours.

At the beginning of the crucifixion, they offered him a mixture of *wine* (*oinos*) mixed with *myrrh* (*Mark 15:23, Matthew 27:34* describes it as *gall* referring to its bitter taste). This Jesus tasted, but refused to drink. They will not offer this to him again.

Towards the end, either when he calls, “*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachani,*” or when he says, “*I am thirsty,*” they offer him something different. It also had been offered before (*Luke 23:36*) and been rejected, but now he takes some of it.

What was it? The word *oxos* is translated as “*sour wine*” or “*wine vinegar.*” Both drinks are made from the same substance, grapes. Wine can either be new wine which is a very low alcohol content or the better wine which has a greater natural content up to 12 to 14% alcohol. Wine would be a much more potent sedative that would have tended to cloud Jesus’ mind on the cross.

Over time wine turns to vinegar. In the process, the alcohol and the wine is converted to acetic acid by a naturally occurring bacteria. Depending upon how far the process had gone, the resulting drink was a great thirst quencher. The Roman soldiers gathered around the cross would’ve had this drink available to quench their own thirst. Likely any passerby who was traveling through Jerusalem would have had this drink with them.

When they offered in the last moments of his life, they knew that he would not be able to drink it. Instead they soaked a sponge with it and put it up so that he could suck on it as best he could in order to quench his thirst. Anyone who has ever been in the hospital and unable to drink, perhaps while recovering from surgery, would be familiar with this process and the comfort that it would bring.

Why not take a moment and thank the Lord that he was willing to suffer on our behalf in order to identify with us.

Despised & Rejected

As we close out a week of considering the humanity of Jesus Christ reflected in his statement, “I am thirsty,” I want us to consider a passage from the prophet Isaiah which speaks to what this man who loved us so much went through. I would encourage you to begin reading in *Isaiah 52:13 — 53:12*.

In this reading, we see what happened to Jesus on the last day of his earthly life, the day he went to the cross. His face was disfigured because of the sufferings he endured (*52:14*).

Never beautiful or majestic in his appearance, now on the cross in the midst of sorrows people turn their backs and averted their gaze so as to not look upon the horror that came upon him (*53:2 – 3*).

His hands and feet were pierced, his back was brutally beaten. He did not deserve this punishment, but the truth of Scripture is we did (*53:5 – 6*).

The Gospel accounts are clear that Jesus was innocent of wrongdoing,

¹³ Then Pilate called together the leading priests and other religious leaders, along with the people, ¹⁴ and he announced his verdict. “You brought this man to me, accusing him of leading a revolt. I have examined him thoroughly on this point in your presence and find him innocent. ¹⁵ Herod came to the same conclusion and sent him back to us. Nothing this man has done calls for the death penalty. ¹⁶ So I will have him flogged, and then I will release him.”

Luke 23:13–16 (NLT)

An innocent man, the only really sinless one since Adam was first created, walked among us and died in our place. He died without descendants (*Isaiah 53:8*), but now he has many (*53:10*). As Jesus now looks back on his sufferings, he is satisfied and has made it possible for us to be righteous not by our sufferings, but because we trust Him.