



CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

God Thirsts to be Thirsted For - Good Friday- 4_15_2022

I speak to you tonight as a sinner to sinners, as the beloved of God to God's beloved, as one called to bear witness to those called to bear witness. Amen.

I want to begin tonight by taking us back from the narrative that we have just read. The incredible layers of the narrative from the Gospel of John, the wonderful promises given through Hebrews, and even what we read in Isaiah. I want to take you back and stress an important point of interpretation, a lens through which we need to read everything tonight, and particularly what we read today in the Gospel of John. This lens is, in my opinion, key to understanding the significance of good Friday.

And that lens is this: that there is no point in the gospels where we only see the humanity of Jesus. There are some preachers and some traditions of thought within the Christian faith that like to talk about the human side of Jesus that we see when suddenly He does something that seems all too human. In the Gospel of John chapter two, for example, when He talks back to His mother. Or in John 11 when He weeps. Or in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, when seeing the hypocrisy of the money changers, He makes a whip of cords and whips them out of the temple. Or any moment in which Jesus seemed to be less than holy and pure and elevated.

But I want to suggest to you something completely different. And this represents the core of the promises of God in Christianity. And this is that there is never a moment in which the humanity of Jesus is not also a revelation of the divinity of Jesus. Because in Jesus Christ, you have the incarnation of God fully then revealed in the context of a particular person. And it's in that human contradictions that all the paradoxes we find in the Cross, in all of the times in which you see Him going through the kinds of sufferings and the kinds of oppression, in all the betrayals, in all the loneliness, in all the prayer, in all the moments in which He cried out for righteousness, in all of those moments you find not simply a human experiencing all too human sorrow, but you find God.

God is perfectly revealed in Jesus. Although we speak of Jesus as the Son of God and God as the Father, this does not mean that there is a biological or patriarchal relationship between the two. Jesus is God, perfectly generated by God, the Father. God from God, light from light, true God from true God. The difference with Jesus is where the infinite love of God, which stands at the center

of all that is to be, all of that infinite love when it is transposed into the key of a human being, it becomes suffering and sacrifice and loss that seeks the best for another.

So when Jesus suffers, when Jesus gives Himself, when Jesus weeps, it is as if God is weeping because God *is* weeping. And this is good news for us because as much as we would like to somehow find our way to God based on our only human resources, the good news of Christianity is that God has come to us as Christ, Jesus. And in that coming has assumed and transformed and redeemed everything that human beings experience. So there is no moment in your life when God is truly absent. God might feel absent when you are oppressed. God might feel absent when you are betrayed. God might feel absent when you are tired. God might feel absent when you're angry. God might feel absent when you're sad, but truly God is present in Christ for the atonement that Jesus brings to this world is the perfect meeting of divinity and humanity in one person. Jesus is God's reconciliation entering time and space. And the moment in which we are saved happened in the moment He was born and carried through His death and all the way to His resurrection and Ascension. In all of these things, we find Jesus. In all of these things, we find our own human experience assumed, transformed, and redeemed.

Now all of this is incredibly important I think for us to keep in mind as we read this incredible Gospel of John. And now that I have focused for a moment on the forest, I want to focus now on one tree that kept on captivating me over the past few weeks. And that tree is the moment in which we read that Jesus says I am thirsty, or to use older language, I thirst. *Dipsao* is the Greek. The state of being, I thirst. And as I was thinking about this passage, it struck me that we read that this was something that was happening in order to fulfill the scriptures. What does it mean that Jesus experiences thirst? What does it mean for this thirst to be a kind of fulfillment of the scriptures?

We have many instances of the human thirst for God and the scriptures. "As a deer pants for the streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." So we read in Psalm 42 and in John chapter seven, Jesus Himself, "If anyone is thirsty, let them come to me and drink." However, all of these depictions of thirst in the scriptures speak about thirst in an either physical or spiritual dimension as something that is merely a kind of craving that a human has for God.

Today's gospel, God Himself is experiencing thirst. And that means that God, who is infinite in love, is willing to experience lack for us. God is willing to be thirsty for us. God's thirst is not merely the human thirst that a dying man who is being executed and going through shock and experiencing all the things that you experience when you lose blood and move toward death. All of those

things, that thirst is human, but in the same instance, you have a revelation that God is experiencing thirst for you.

Saint Augustine writing sometime in the late fourth century, early fifth century on this gospel passage said this: "God thirsts to be thirsted for." He writes, "He who was asking for a drink, was thirsting for the faith of the people themselves." And on the Cross, when Jesus says I thirst, this was his way of saying according to Augustine, give me what you are.

Tonight, I want to leave you with three points about thirst. The first is that God is thirsty for you. God loves you. God has crossed into this world to redeem this world and to love you through and through so that when you experience any lack or any suffering, God is with you and Christ. And whenever you lean into that love that gives of itself for another, it's as if a cosmic choir rejoices.

The second is that God's thirst is the gift of God's self to you. For standing behind that decision to enter the human condition and to experience the suffering that comes from love, Jesus gave himself. And so standing behind that thirst is the gift of Jesus, the gift of God's self, and the only response we can give is ourself in return.

And finally, I want to say that God trusts us with God's thirst. And by this, I mean that there is a kind of unconditioned nature to the fact that Jesus said, I thirst. And thirst, like love, like trust has to be unconditional. There's never a moment when you're a little bit thirsty, you're either thirsty or you're not, and there's never a moment where love is not unconditioned. It's either unconditioned love or it's not. If it's not unconditioned, it's not love.

The same goes with trust. Trust must be without conditions. Trust exacts, a cost. And we come into things disarmed. God trusts us with God's thirst because at the end of the day, we will draw close to Jesus not only by being thirsty in return for His thirst for us, but also by sharing in His thirst for the world.

When she was a young woman, traveling to India to do mission work, Mother Teresa was reading a spiritual autobiography and she came across this passage today, and she was captivated by the thirst of Jesus. And if you go today into the Missionaries of Charity, you'll see next to every crucifix that they have up in their beautiful places the words "I thirst." This is what she writes, "Until, you know deep inside that Jesus thirsts for you, you can't begin to know who He wants you to be and who He wants you to be for Him."

This Good Friday, may you come to see the Christ who was willing to take on suffering for you, the Christ who is willing to be thirsty for you. May you lean into that thirst and lose yourself into that love and the heavenly chorus, the cosmic chorus will sing.

