

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Living Water Fourth Week of Lent Saturday, April 6, 2019 Jer 11:18-20; **Jn 7:40-53** (Metaphorically it means an experience in which one's thirst for God is completely slaked.)

“Look and see that no prophet arises from Galilee.”

Now today's reading and yesterday's reading are from chapter 7 of John's Gospel, which I recommend you go home and read in its entirety, because the lectionary leaves out all sorts of verses. Now why this is, I do not know. Now chapter 7 is not easy to understand, but leaving out versus, all kinds of them, doesn't make it any easier, in my judgment.

So the background of this episode is the feast of Tabernacles, and in the feast of Tabernacles there is a ritual in which the historical event or the tradition that is in Scripture about **the waters of Meribah is recounted**, how the people were thirsting and Moses hit the rock and water flowed. Now I don't know how to understand this story, but **it became very significant in the history of the Jewish people** and the text in Exodus actually says, “and the rock followed them,” whatever that's supposed to mean.

So on this day in this feast of Tabernacles, which took up I suppose about a week, there is a **procession to Siloam**, to the well at Siloam, and the living waters are taken from this. **Living water means a spring**, so literally it means a spring, but then **metaphorically it means an experience in which one's thirst is completely slaked**. So spiritually speaking, it means that one experiences God in such a way that one is no longer longing, one's longing has been satisfied and accomplished, you might say. So this is living water.

Now when **Jesus spoke to the woman at the well he said, “If you only knew who is asking for water, you would ask him and he would give you living water.”** And John has Jesus say earlier in this chapter, the part that was not read yesterday, that “from his heart shall come forth living water.” And it says this is a quotation, although I don't know from where. I can't find it. But

the idea is that living water is metaphorical for an experience of God, and now Jesus is saying well, I will give you that. He tells the woman at the well I will give you that. He tells the people here. And in fact right before this gospel reading he says, **“Is anyone thirsty? Let him come to me and I will give water and you will never thirst again.”** That’s very similar to what he told the woman at the well, only at the well he added, “that will well up into eternal life.” So these are the themes now that this chapter is dealing with: **the theme of living water, the theme of Tabernacles, which is the whole idea of the tradition of the people that they are trying to keep alive in these ceremonies.**

And Jesus comes up secretly at first and then starts to speak openly, and he causes consternation. The crowd doesn’t know what to think. Some say well, “When the Messiah comes will the Messiah do any more than this man has done?” And others say, well, “It can’t be the Messiah because he comes from Galilee,” and so on. So this argument starts up, and the Pharisees become very upset and go to the temple guards and to the priests and say you better do something because the people are being led astray, **the people think this man is the Christ, the Messiah or the prophet, and he can’t be.** Why can’t he be? Well he can’t be **because he doesn’t follow the Torah according to their interpretation.**

So this is what is building up now, this period of great consternation and division and controversy and murmuring, and it’s the setting for the passion. Tomorrow we begin passion week; **we begin entering more intimately into the experience of Jesus in being misunderstood, in being misquoted, in being accused of all kinds of things that have nothing to do with what he said or did, and eventually his complete betrayal and trial and condemnation.**