

Illus    Years ago, Denise dropped me off on a mountain in Jim Thorpe to mountain bike down the 18 mile long Uranium Trail. I had a map, it was a beautiful crisp October day, and I was in the mecca of northeastern mountain biking. I was naively envisioning a meandering, pine-strewn trail which would bring me right back in town. So with no water bottle, no flat tire repair kit, no cell phone, and at 3 in the afternoon I started pedaling. After 2 miles without finding the first trail marker, I realized I had started at the wrong trailhead. The correct one was 1 mile up the mountain road. Slight panic is now settling in, as the sun is heading toward the horizon. But undeterred, I pedaled faster. After all, I will soon be gliding down the trail. But instead of an easy trail, I am grinding over what is called baby head rock, to the point where I was doing more walking than riding. Then the downhill started, with 2 foot drops, so steep I was constantly on the edge of going over the handlebars. By this point, I am going over the little I know about surviving plummeting temps and bears. At the halfway point the trail dumped out onto the Lehigh River trail. The easy part, except I was more thirsty than I had ever been in my life. I contemplated drinking from the Lehigh River, but scum floated on the surface like a solid blanket for 50 feet out. Instead I tried putting twigs and pebbles in my mouth. Pedaling away, I wondered if I would make it. I made it across the bridge into Jim Thorpe, and heard the hiss of a punctured rear tire. My legs were shaking as I walked the last ½ mile, I could barely climb the two stories of stairs to our room at the Inn. I was nauseous, weak, feverish, dehydrated and promising to never ride a bike without water again!

In looking at these 5 statements of Jesus, we are seeing 7 sermons for the ages  
The first one He gave was a cry for His Father to forgive and bring His mercy to bear  
And we see His Father answering that prayer and suddenly a hardened, career criminal goes from cursing Christ, to suddenly rebuking the other criminal and asking Jesus for forgiveness  
We will soon see the Roman death squad confessing Christ, and later, many in that crowd as well as many of the priests will place their trust in Jesus  
In His third statement He demonstrates His care and providence for His mother, but in doing that, He shows the incredible depths of His love for His spiritual family  
And then noon came, and with it three hours of darkness as His Father began to pour out on His Son the ocean of guilt of our sins  
For three hours, the height of the suffering of Jesus, the Father's face of blessing and favor was turned away and instead, the curse of His wrath and judgment was directed to the Son  
In utter reality, Jesus experienced the full might of hell  
He was forsaken so that we might not be, experienced hell so we wouldn't have to  
And one of the utterly terrible parts of the suffering of Christ was thirst!

**PP 1-His Thirst Proved His Humanity**

It's hard for most of us to understand the horror of thirst or the importance of water to those especially who live in desert areas  
Water rarely finds its way onto our top 100 things we thank God for  
But in the Bible times, wars were waged when a well was dug or a spring was discovered  
It was water, not oil that went a long way in determining the value of a piece of land

Remember, it was thirst that incited Israel's rebellion against Moses in the wilderness  
Streams and fountains were metaphors in their songs to illustrate joy, happiness and grace  
In Ezekiel, water and rivers were symbols of God's salvation and Jesus picked the theme up as  
**PP (John 7:37-38)** He spoke of the eternal life He offered  
Water and thirst are themes all through the Bible

So we need to pay close attention to this 5<sup>th</sup> statement, and look for what He was saying  
Can you imagine standing there that Friday on Golgotha, the hill in the shape of a skull?  
Below you spreads the city of Jerusalem, now lit with their lamps and torches against the  
unexpected, lingering mid-day darkness  
The city is filled with almost 3 million Jews, who are noisily celebrating the 8 day long Feast of  
Unleavened Bread, which starts with the Passover  
They were remembering God's triumph over Egypt, when He freed His people from slavery  
How ironic since thousands of Roman soldiers would have been called in from nearby garrisons  
for security against the ever-present zealots  
The Jews were still in bondage and God had come to deliver them, this time not from Egypt, or  
Rome, but the cruel, merciless bondage of sin  
The Son of God, Jesus, was saving them right at that moment, from on top of that terrible hill  
While below Him, the priests' silver trumpets had blared, signaling the sacrifice of the lambs  
That atonement was only temporary, and God had provided a better Lamb, His Son  
Jesus wouldn't cover sins temporarily, He would take them permanently and give life to sinners  
And He was impaled on that cross, mere minutes from dying  
You know He is, because now, His every breath is a huge effort as His body heaves to breathe

You're there, it is around April, almost 3 pm and the day had grown hot, and dehydration for  
Him was a deadly threat  
Jesus is experiencing the symptoms of serious dehydration, already weakened by 12 hours of  
trials and torture  
Painful cramps are traveling through Him in waves, fever, splitting headache, dropping blood  
pressure as the heart begins to pump harder  
His body can no longer sweat to cool itself and His kidneys are beginning to shut down  
His lips are cracked, tongue swollen, dried eyes trying blink some moisture into them  
Friends, we are told that this level of thirst is one of the worst parts of crucifixion  
It's been described as a fire that burns in the mouth, in the Swedish language, the words for *thirst*  
and *fire* are related

In the midst of this agony, He unsticks His tongue and utters "***I thirst***", and with that one Greek  
word blows apart the heresies that emerged about His humanity  
The New Testament battled one of them which taught that all matter was corrupt and evil, so  
God, a being of pure spirit, could never had had a body of flesh  
In reality, Jesus was a phantom Who didn't leave footprints when He walked, and Who never  
really actually suffered any pain  
Liberal Christians and movements today tend to forget Christ's deity, or deny it outright  
Christ was a man, they insist, and the supernatural can be explained through natural causes  
But evangelicals like us, we tend to suppress His humanity, considering Him so much God that  
He could hardly be human enough to really relate to us

We're not always very good at engaging with the level of suffering  
This is one reason we organize mission trips, to put humanity and compassion into the gospel  
I didn't grasp the ravages of poverty as I sat through pre-trip classes for a trip to Haiti years ago  
Not until I sat in a little country church outside Cap Haitien, holding a 3 year old little boy on my  
lap, whose distended stomach betrayed an impending death from malnutrition  
This was the Son of God and the Son of Man on the cross, fully God and fully human  
His thirst proves His humanity and His experience of terrible suffering

Have you been misjudged, He was too  
Have you suffered terrible physical pain, so did He  
Have your friends abandoned you when you needed them, His did too  
Have you felt deserted by God, not only did He feel it, He was

**PP** *"Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."* Hebrews 2:17

## **PP 2-His Thirst Proved His Faithfulness**

Have you ever asked why Jesus didn't just create a quenching stream of water in His mouth?  
Here is the Creator of water, Who by His Word filled oceans, lakes and rivers and brought water  
from a rock for Israel, yet when thirst was raging like a fire in His mouth, He did nothing  
For that matter, He Who is called the Balm of Gilead did not soothe the pain of those nails, and  
the Great Physician didn't heal His own whipped back  
Neither did the Bread from Heaven turn a rock into a loaf of bread during His 40 day fast  
Why did the giver of living water suffer thirst, an incredible irony?

John answers it, *"After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), 'I thirst.'"* 19:28

This was the plan of the Father, the will of the Father laid out thousands years earlier

**PP** King David wrote 1,000 years earlier of His thirst: *"I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched."* Psalm 69:3a

**PP** A few verses later David wrote, *"They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink."* 69:21

And this was exactly what happened: *"A jar full of sour wine stood there..."* John 19:29a

They gave Him sour wine, which was there because it was sometimes used, if given enough, to constrict the victim's larynx so he couldn't cry out

If you had the power of creating water, and you are suffering the agony of dehydrating thirst, can you appreciate the temptation of taking matters into your own hands?

It's easier to resist that impulse to spend money on what you don't need when you don't have any extra, but even more difficult when you do have it

When we have the means to get what our raging desires are moving us to acquire, and to say no, that is ultimate obedience to the will of God

Jesus' burning thirst shows us the depth of submission to God's will

He suffered raging thirst because it was the will of God, written into the Word of God

He was in utter obedience to the Will of His Father, fully dependent on Him

**PP** He had said, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to accomplish His work."*

John 4:34

**PP** Reaffirmed in the garden of Gethsemane, *“not my will, but yours, be done.”* Luke 22:42  
*“I thirst”* shows us that He would submit to His Father’s will to the very end, fulfilling Scripture  
This is faithfulness, it is our example that we must, in His grace and power, follow

### **PP 3-His Thirst Provided Our Satisfaction**

Writing way back in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, Henry Scougal said, *“The soul of man...has in it a raging and inextinguishable thirst.”*

In other words, we have a spiritual thirst built into our souls, and they are designed to drink living water, which in the Scriptures always meant moving water rather than standing Springs rather than cisterns, metaphors for the stale, warm, unsatisfying water of the world  
We are thirsty souls and drinking from the water this world only leaves us parched and spiritually dehydrated

It is no coincidence that Jesus declares His thirst after three hours of desertion by His Father  
Drought and dryness has always been a sign of God’s judgment and curse!

As God poured out on His Son that dark ocean of our sin, Jesus suffered the fierce heat of the Father’s wrath

Never before had Jesus been out of fellowship with His Father, and now, for three hours, He was forsaken, their relationship breached by the stain of guilt

**PP** We likely see in **Psalm 42** a prophecy of this moment in the Son of God, *“As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me continually, “Where is your God?”* 1-3

Living apart from God will dry our souls like a puddle in a desert sun

**PP** This was the experience of both Israel and ourselves who *“have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”* Jeremiah 2:13

It begins with forsakenness, living apart from a relationship with God

And it is quickly followed by digging our own wells of satisfaction and pleasure

Except that they always leak and need constant refilling

When we race after that new technology, we find it only satisfies for a short time

Drugs always have a diminishing return so you have to constantly get more and harder

Pleasure feels good for the moment but leaves you empty afterwards

Some medicate themselves unable to bear the pain of their own emptiness

All these and more are symptoms of a raging thirst in our souls

Friends, we should put a sign over every well that world digs and let it read *“If you drink of this water, you will thirst again.”*

**PP** This is the appeal Christ made to the Samaritan woman in **John 4**, *““Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”* 13-15

But there is another layer to this thirst, and it is one that has an even greater consequence

The thirst that Jesus was suffering was the worst thirst possible, it is the thirst that one has in hell

Isn’t this what we see when Jesus told of the rich man who died and found himself in hades and a

poor man named Lazarus who died and found himself at Abraham's side

**PP** The rich man, *'being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.'* **Luke 16:23-24**

This is what people say in hades, which eventually is thrown into hell: *"I am thirsty"*

**PP** Matthew Henry once wrote: *"The torments of hell are represented by a violent thirst...To that everlasting thirst we had all been condemned, if Christ had not suffered on the cross."*

And again we see that Jesus on that horrible cross is experiencing the full torment of the punishment of hell on our behalf, so that we might not have to

In fact, His is a greater thirst than the worst person in hell will ever experience

The greater the judgment of God one receives the greater the thirst

And no one had the severity of God's judgment poured out on them like Jesus, Who bore the cumulative sin of every person who would ever believe

He took on Himself the thirst of utter forsakenness, of hell, so that anyone who will turn to Him in faith would never have to

**PP** In the promise of eternal life, we see the exact opposite: *"To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment."* **Revelation 21:6**

**PP** In that life, *"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water"* **Revelation 7:16-17**

When you see Jesus on that bloody cross, lips cracked and bleeding, in dehydrated agony

And you hear Him say *'I thirst'*, friends, you are hearing hope and you're about to see it as well

The soldiers heard Him, and they took a thin branch, put a sponge on it and dipped in their sour wine, not because of their mercy, but they wanted to prolong His suffering

That branch was a hyssop branch, and all of a sudden we are taken back to Israel who dipped hyssop branches in the blood of the Passover lambs and painted their doorways

The angel of death with his killing sword would see that blood and pass over that household

The message is clear and unmistakable: Jesus is the Passover lamb of God

He died for us, in place of us, taking our guilt and our blame

He was forsaken so that we would never be forsaken

And He took upon Him the thirst of hell, so that we would never thirst again!

That is the love that Jesus Christ has for you

**PP** As we close, listen well to your invitation to drink of this water: *"The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price."* **Revelation 22:17**

Pray