

How God Uses People

by Jim Cymbala

Jesus promises to satisfy the deepest longings of those who are thirsty, and to give them rivers of living water that will flow out of their innermost being.

Duration: 38:26

Scripture: Isaiah 55:2, Matthew 6:33, John 7:37-39

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher laments the fact that the lifestyles of churchgoers in America are not much different from those who do not believe in God. He emphasizes that people often pursue material possessions and worldly desires, thinking that they will bring happiness, but they ultimately leave them feeling empty. The preacher encourages the audience to find joy in God and not in worldly things, as only Jesus can truly satisfy. He concludes by inviting anyone who is thirsty for a deeper spiritual experience to come to Jesus and experience the life-changing power of the gospel.

Transcript

I want to talk to you today briefly about the promise. Last week we talked about something from 2 Peter and Jude about trouble within the Christian church that was prophesied would happen. Today is something for all of us, but especially for those of you who don't know much about Christianity or have gone to church but might have been diverted away from the simple truth of the gospel as it is in Jesus Christ.

The name of this message is The Promise. No man who ever walked on this earth ever made such an outlandish promise as what I'm going to read to you. Buddha never came close to anything like this.

Muhammad, any other religious leader that ever walked the face of the planet. No one ever said this. We're going to analyze it carefully.

I hope while we do it, it helps you read your Bible better. A lot of us are going through reading through the New Testament along the lines of a special New Testament with a different sequence that we've been reading since January 1st. We're in the book of John now as we read through that.

You keep reading one chapter a day, but in John 7 we come across this. On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever

believes in me, as scripture has said, rivers, notice plural, rivers of living water, whatever that is, will flow from within them.

Notice not in them, but from within them and out to other people. By this, John says, he meant the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time, the Spirit had not been given like he would later be given.

Why not? Since Jesus had not yet been glorified. That's so deep. Let's go back.

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood amongst a lot of people and cried out in a loud voice, said is not really appropriate there because he cried out in a loud voice, let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow out from within them, flow from within them. By this, he meant the Spirit, capital S, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.

Up to that time, the Holy Spirit had not been given since Jesus had not yet been glorified. When we do work in my office, people who work with me know that when anything is handed to me, a letter, an invitation, a proposal from some part of the staff, I go through, learned over a lot of years, I go through a series of quick questions in my mind. For example, Phayla, she knows that if she's going to bring something to me, she knows exactly what I'm going to ask and send her back to get an answer, which delays me then in answering the question because I don't have enough information.

So she knows now, in fact, she's gotten better than me at it, which is very annoying at times. She knows to ask the W's and the H's, where, what, when, who, why, how, how long, how much, money, time, how much, how long, and so on and so forth. Because before you can understand to say yes or no or to consider anything, it's like when you counsel someone.

You don't want to know their problem, you have to find out a lot of other things before you can even look at the problem. So let's do that with this passage. Let's start with where and when.

Jesus is gone to Jerusalem. He did not live in Jerusalem, but he's there because of a feast or a festival. What festival is it? John tells us earlier, it's the festival or the feast of tabernacles, which took seven days to celebrate.

The Hasidim on Eastern Parkway, the Lubavitchers, and also the ones, Hasidim, ultra-Orthodox who live in Williamsburg, they celebrate this still in some way, shape, or form by getting booths, making booths of branches or some kind of covering because the feast of tabernacles was the seven-day festival that celebrated the 40 years that Israel was protected by God in the wilderness on their way from Egypt to the promised land. So the festival of tabernacles was, you see, they built no houses, they lived out in the open, in tents or whatever, and what did they eat? What God supplied. What did he supply? He supplied bread and he led them where water was, or sometimes water came miraculously out of a rock when they were in a place that was parched and dry.

This celebration had been going on for centuries, over and over again, the feast of tabernacles. You come to Jerusalem and you live in some kind of booth or covering outside. Now they do it for just a certain amount of time, very few do it for 24-7, but you spend time out there as a remembrance.

Our forefathers were in Egypt, were in the wilderness, and God supplied for them when there was no physical way that we could keep going. What did God supply? He supplied manna from heaven and water

for the most part, and then other things that they were sent for meat and other things that he sent for them and to them. That's where Jesus was and when he said it.

He was in Jerusalem. When he did it was not just during the festival, it was on the last great day of the festival. And reading Edersheim on the history of Jewish people and their customs or a good commentary, you will find out that the custom was on the seventh day, the last day, the great day of the feast, the priests dressed in white would go outside of the temple environs and go to a pool and they would get water in large vases or jugs, jars, and they would march with instruments playing, and they would march with this water as a symbol of the water that God supplied, and they would march with pomp and ceremony, and they would come into the temple enclosure, and then as an offering to God, they would pour out the water before him as a remembrance.

You gave us water when we were thirsty. You gave our forefathers that which satisfies. On that day, the last day of the feast, Jesus must have been sitting and watching with the throng, and when he said, and he saw those priests come and pour out that water, imagine the courage, the boldness, what word can I use? A man, let's say six foot, six foot one tall, dressed like everybody else, steps forward and begins to cry out, anyone who is thirsty, let him come to me and drink because anyone who believes in me out of his belly will flow, innermost being will flow out.

Rivers, not a little drink, not just satisfied yourself, rivers will flow out of you to other people. It's just ludicrous. No wonder the religious authorities who didn't believe in said we got to kill him.

No wonder some called him a fanatic and a madman. How could some man claim to be the answer to everybody on the planet as to satisfying their innermost need? What man ever claimed that? Not I'll lead you, not I'll teach you. No, I will satisfy you.

Not I will give you something to satisfy. I am your satisfaction. When you have me, you have everything that you need.

I mean, we did the where and the when, and now we did the who. Jesus, not yet 33 years old, on the last day of the feast, that feast of tabernacles stood and said, imagine the all-inclusiveness of this. Listen, anyone who's thirsty in the Brooklyn tabernacle, in Brooklyn, in New York state, in Europe, in Asia, anyone who's thirsty, you have to come to me and drink because if you put your faith in me, you'll not only be satisfied, there'll be an overflow of what I give you, and it'll come out and be a blessing to others.

Certainly, Jesus either is the son of God or he's the most prominent religious charlatan that ever walked on earth because he makes a promise here, which is startling. So what did he say? He said that he would bring satisfaction to the inner aching of people, the inner emptiness of people that nothing else can satisfy, not money, not pleasure, not success, not sex, not family, not a husband, not a wife, not your children, not a new car, not anything in this world can satisfy. He said, if you're thirsty, if you've tried all that other stuff and you're still unfulfilled and you're still feeling lack, something's missing, something's not together in my life.

If you feel that way, then you can come to me. Notice the qualifications here before we delve into this. As we delve into this, notice the qualifications.

Not if anyone has a college degree, if anybody's white, if anybody's black, if anyone's Asian, if anyone's lived a good life. No, no, no, he doesn't say any of that. He says the only qualification is, are you thirsty?

Anybody not satisfied? Anybody feeling a lack of fulfillment? Anybody at night wondering why you're alive? Anybody scared to death of death? If anybody's like that, come to me.

If you're not thirsty, there's no invitation for you. That's the only qualification, thirstiness, not satisfied. So what is he talking about? He's talking about the fact that since we are all made by God and for God, there is something in us that will never be fulfilled except by God.

If we were made by God and for God, unless we have a relationship with God and communion with this God who made us, there will always be a scratch that we can't get to, an itch that we can't scratch. It doesn't matter what else you do. It cannot get in there and bring fulfillment.

That's why Jesus said, is there anybody unsatisfied? You met Mr. Wonderful and you said, I'm going to get married. And after six months of marriage, you realize that doesn't satisfy that longing. You love your husband.

Later on, you have children. Then you say, if I only have children, oh, when I have children. And now you have the children.

Oh, do you have the children? Yeah. And then you find out that the children don't satisfy it. No, if I can only get to America, I live someplace else in hard conditions, but if I can only get to America and then it happens that God permits you to come to America or whatever country you want to go to.

No big thing about America. And then you get there. I'm here.

Let me kiss the ground. And then after six months, you're like, no, America is not the answer either. Do you see what Jesus is getting at? A lot of us here in this room, some still trying to do it.

All of us at once tried to do it. We try to fill that emptiness and that lack of fulfillment with all the toys that are around. We buy and we get, and then we find out, oh, I got that new thing.

I got the new phone. Everyone has one, but I don't have one. I don't have a six.

I only have the five. Does anyone here have the six? Raise your hand if you have the six. You do? Is that it right there? I can't stand you, brother, because I only have the five.

People who work with me have the six. I only have the five. But guess what? You can have the eight and it still won't satisfy you.

Can we say amen to that? Doesn't satisfy. Doesn't satisfy. No, if I only can get the bonus, if I only can get that promotion, we try to fill what only God can fill with the stuff that passes away.

Am I wrong or right here? The whole world's doing that. That's why some of the wealthiest, most successful people are the most miserable. They have to turn to drugs or philandering or all kinds of other things.

What? To satisfy the fact that I have it, but I don't have it. I got what I thought was the answer, and guess what? I got it, and that's not the answer. And you think experience would teach us? Don't you think experience would teach us? But no, this is the deception of the human mind.

We seek after things. We finally get them. They don't satisfy, but we seek after more things.

But we just learned that didn't satisfy. The next thing won't satisfy. People are trading in their wives, trading in their cars, trading in their houses, just something.

What will scratch this itch that I have inside of me? And Jesus told everyone, if anyone's thirsty, are you not satisfied? You got to come to me. I'll give you something that will satisfy. Come on, let's say amen to that.

I am God's supply for you to be satisfied, and that can happen to Christians. Christians can start to learn, unfortunately, how to be not satisfied with Jesus alone. What the Bible teaches us, it's found in the Old Testament.

A man who wants silver will not be satisfied by silver, and a man who seeks after gold will not be satisfied with gold. Do we need silver and gold at times? Yes, but here's what the Bible teaches us. If you only have silver and gold and not Jesus, you will never be satisfied.

If you have Jesus and hardly any silver and gold, you will be satisfied and have peace and have joy. So this is what the Lord is talking to us about here that is definitely for everyone in the world who's thirsting and doesn't know about him, but it's also for us believers. Because as we lose communion with him, as we lose our trust in him, as we lose our closeness with him, we begin to try to scratch that itch with all the stuff that the world is going after.

Is it not just lamentably sad that right now in America, the lifestyles of people who go to churches are not one iota different for the most part than the people who don't go to church and don't even believe in God. Pursue the same things, watch the same things, run after the same things. I have 50 pairs of sneakers.

I'm not happy, but if I get the new one, then I'll be happy. Then you get the new one. No, now you need the new, new one.

And isn't that the way it goes? Everything you grab for when you have it, it doesn't satisfy. And we drift away from the Lord. And one of the signs of drifting away from the Lord is we stop delighting ourselves in God.

He no longer is our joy. Things become our joy, money, fame, education, whatever, political cause. That's my goal.

And when you get it, you're empty, as Jesus points out. So here's what he's saying as I wrap this up. He's saying, is there anybody who's dissatisfied? What does thirst mean? Thirst means you don't have something you need.

In this case, literally, physically, water. But he's using this as a metaphor, a picture. Is there anybody not satisfied and is lacking in peace? Come to me and I'll give you peace.

Those of you who are not Christians or walking with the Lord today, you could never fool us who are Christians, because we've been there and done that. It's all pretense. Oh, no, I'm happy.

I don't need God. I don't need anything. You're not telling the truth.

Because we were there. How many remember before Jesus trying to fill that emptiness with everything you could find and it didn't make it? Come on. But you couldn't tell anyone you were too proud.

I was too proud. I'm not going to tell anybody I'm empty, that I don't have peace. I'm not talking about feeling good when things are going good.

That's not peace. Peace that Jesus gives you through the Spirit is it doesn't matter what's going on around you. You have peace that passes all understanding.

Am I right, ladies and gentlemen? Peace that passes all understanding. Listen, even when you have to wipe away a tear because of the loss of a loved one, you still have peace underneath it all. Or how about joy? Is anybody here thirsty for joy? You don't need a comedian to make you laugh.

You don't need a drug to get you high. You have to smoke weed. What is all that for? All that for and getting a drink to get numb or get a tingle or a drug to get a high or a low, heroin, crack up, whatever, weed, just get zoned out.

What is all that? I want to escape who I really am. I'm so unhappy that I can't just be who I am now. I got to escape to another state.

Oh, but when you have Jesus, you don't need to get high or low. He gives you joy, unspeakable, full of glory. Listen, you get happy just sometimes waking up in the morning.

You put your feet on the ground and you feel a hallelujah. Come on, let's say amen to that. Some of you might be saying, I don't know what you're talking about.

You're exaggerating. You're religious, fanatic. Listen, I say to you this, oh, taste and see that the Lord is good.

Don't judge me if you've never experienced what I've experienced. How about this as I close? How about all the millions of people, millions and millions over the centuries, millions who have been empty, put their trust in Jesus, came, experienced what I'm talking about, and their lives were changed. Is that all in an accident? For some people, it happens simultaneously.

Nobody psyched them, nobody conned them, nobody played them. They didn't go into two years of training like cults do. No, when you have Jesus, you find out this is what I was made for.

I thought I was made to play basketball or play football or do this and all that, and those things all have a place in your life. But no, they'll never satisfy. You know what Alexander the Great said, right? Alexander the Great was the greatest man, some think the most dominant man in the history of mankind in a geopolitical sense because he conquered everything.

Everywhere Alexander went, the Greek leader, he went and back prior to the Roman Empire, he went everywhere. He went all the way over to India. He went everywhere he went, Egypt.

Every place he went, he conquered. He was unconquerable, and you know what happened? When he conquered the known world of his time, he cried because there was nothing left to conquer. His whole high, his whole thing in life was, I conquer.

I want to hear my name. I want to be the ruler of it, and now there's no place else to rule, and he cried because you're empty even with possessing all the land. We did the when, the where, we talked about who, we talked about what, and we talked about what he said, and we talked about to whom.

Oh, one last thought on that. To whom I said that the qualifications are only one, anyone thirsty, but notice that other little word, not thirsty. I want to call everyone, I want to call thirsty, it's anybody who's thirsty.

No, but pastor Simbala, I used to serve him, now I don't. Anyone who's thirsty, you come. No, you don't know what I've done in my life.

Anyone who's thirsty, anyone, but I'm so weak. Anyone who's thirsty, are you thirsty? Then you can come. He'll help you.

The enemy puts in your minds, no, I'm not good enough. I've done too much wrong. I'm too weak.

I'm too old. I'm too young. I'm the wrong race.

I'm not intelligent enough. Jesus said this, anyone in the universe who's thirsty, just come to me, just come to me. Instead of emptiness, because remember, you can be a millionaire, a billionaire, and be empty as can be.

A man who once went to this church, went to be with the Lord, he once met one of the most prominent wealthy people in the country, whose names all of you would know. He went to do some work for the gentleman, and the gentleman wanted to talk to him, and just said to him, this wealthy, wealthy, prominent person, said, don't go yet. Can I show you where I live here? My arrangement here, the floors that I take up here? Yeah, whatever.

So he's showing them all around like toys, like a little boy showing, here's my new wagon, here's my new gun that I bought, here's my new thing. He said, don't leave, stay. Let's just talk.

So then he just talked. My friend wasn't interested in hearing anything, and he said, you know what? No one knows how empty my life is. You know what my biggest fun thing is? I invite a couple of guys I grew up with, and we watch Monday night football, and we boil hot dogs, and eat them without the rolls.

And I can't marry anyone, anyone who says they love me, I got to get a prenup, because who knows? Anyone cares for me, they're after my money. I don't trust any woman. He's not going to admit that to anyone, a person, a woman won't admit that to anyone, but without Jesus, you're just empty for what God wanted you to be.

So now, he said, if you'll come to me and drink, whatever that means, let's analyze that to finalize this. If you'll come to me and drink, out of your belly will flow rivers of living water, out of your innermost being. Notice rivers.

So Jesus said, if you come and you're serious with me, and you put your trust in me, I'm not giving you little drops. I'm not going to just satisfy what you have. You're not going to have a little faucet, and be underneath it trying to drink.

No, there will be rivers. Not a river, not a river. Rivers, plural.

As in Amazon, as in the Nile, as in the Mississippi, as in the Missouri, as in the Orinoco, as in all the rivers of the, you're going to have rivers. Notice, not just satisfying you, there's going to be a flow out of you to help other people who are thirsty. So the sign of a healthy Christian, the sign of a Christian to Jesus is not someone who's just like, oh, I'm satisfied with Jesus.

It goes beyond that. You have not only satisfaction and peace and joy, but rivers are flowing out to other people. Who can I help? Who can I bless? Who can I love in his name? Rivers, rivers flowing out.

How few Christians live with rivers flowing out of them. Most are just trying to get through. But the promise is so great, it's hard for us to believe.

Rivers of living water, if you'll just come to me and drink. So what does that mean? What does come to him mean? Jesus defines it, if anyone believes in me, to come to him is nothing physical to come to him. It's your heart, your soul, your mind trusting in him and saying, Jesus, give me what I long for.

Anyone who comes to him and trusts him and asks, they will find out that his promise is true. Last thought. Now, trust means to lean.

The best metaphor I have found, or one of the better ones, is to lean. Look, look. Now you see this pulpit? If I lean, we're going to have a lot of trouble because this thing is going to go right over and I'm going to go over with it and tumble down those steps.

And that's a picture of what a lot of us do. We lean on people. We lean on our job.

We lean on a boss. We lean on what? We lean on TV programs. We lean on fantasy.

Can you imagine how empty people are? All the hit movies are about fantasy things. Fantasy things. Superman's flying around, Batman, the Fantastic Four, Iron Man, Steel Man, Tin Man, whatever kind of man.

Just think how empty people's lives are and they're arguing and discussing it like it's real, like that's real. Which is your favorite superhero? Jesus is my favorite superhero. That's the only superhero.

What are you talking about? What are you talking about? That's not even real. How can you get satisfaction out of something that's not real? So you can't lean on that stuff. Now look at this.

I'm going to lean on that. Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

I'm going to lean. I'm going to lean. I'm going to just lean on this because this thing ain't moving.

This thing will hold me up in a storm. When my legs get weak or I'm attacked from the outside, I can just lean on God. He never moves.

His throne doesn't shake. Everybody close your eyes. Just close your eyes with me.

I prayed last night and early this morning. Oh Jesus, give me just one person who's not leaning on you. Just give me one young man, one young woman, one person who's trying to scratch an itch they can't get at.

And they're trying to satisfy it with all the baubles and toys and things that nothing else has satisfied them in the past and they thought they were getting what they needed. But that lie comes. No, it's not that.

It's this. And then when you get this, it's that. And when you get that, it's no this.

Now Jesus doesn't say you have to be a great person, a righteous person. He just said, is anybody thirsty? Oh, thank you, Jesus. Thank you.

This is the promise that's almost too good to be true for our natural minds. Anybody thirsty here today? You're a senior. You're 16 years old.

You're 18 years old. Whatever race you are, if you're thirsty, you can come and experience a whole new life. And to those of us who have been going to church, you can go to church.

Remember, Jesus didn't say, if anyone's thirsty, let them come to church. He did not say that. You can go to church and never get to Jesus.

You can even own a Bible and never get to Jesus. You search the word because in it, you think you have eternal life, but it speaks of me. And he said to those people, you refuse to come to me.

You can even read the Bible and not come to Jesus. It's got to be a personal thing. It's got to be an intimate thing.

You got to say, Jesus, I am thirsty. I know you didn't plan for me to live this way. No way.

No way. This is not your plan for my life. I'm thankful for all the physical things you've given me, but inside, I have an emptiness, a longing.

I'm not ashamed to admit it either because millions and millions of people admitted it to you and you changed their life. I want to be one of those people. Or you could be a person who was once serving the Lord, and now you've got caught up trying to fill your heart with things that don't satisfy.

I want to declare to you today in the name of Christ, only Jesus satisfies. Anybody here who I can pray over? And you can just start drinking. You're going to just put a new trust in Jesus.

You're going to fulfill the conditions of this promise. I am thirsty. You said, if anyone is thirsty, let them come.

I'm coming to you today. Change my life. Fix it up.

I am not experiencing the peace and joy that I know you promised in your word. The problem is never with you. It's with me.

So I'm going back. Childlike faith. I'm coming to you, Jesus.

Anybody would like me to pray for them? Just stand up real quick right where you're sitting. Just stand up. This is a house of prayer now.

Come on. We're going to pray. Stand up right where you are.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Just stand up.

Don't look around at anybody else. No one's looking at you. Dim the lights a little bit in the house.

Just, this is not about who's who and what's what. It's Jesus. Just stand up.

Pastor, that was from me. You don't know me, but you said some things that I was like, wow. Wow.

Wow. As you were reading that word and explaining it, I was like, wow, that's exactly what I'm going through. Please don't run and look for things that don't satisfy.

The Old Testament says it like this. Why do you spend money on things that don't satisfy? Why do you run after things that will never satisfy? I love you the most, God says. I'll be the one to fulfill you.

If you're standing, come quickly here to the front. I want to pray over you. Come on, down from the balcony.

It won't take but a couple seconds. Come on. Come.

No one moving except the people coming forward. Please respect what we're doing right now. Come on.

I'll wait. Then we'll pray. Look at me, folks.

Look at me that came forward. Look at me just for a second. There was one little sentence at the end.

Listen to what it said. Jesus spoke this about the spirit, which had not yet been given. Why? He had not yet been glorified.

What does that mean? You got to understand it. Listen. Jesus hadn't died for our sins yet.

Jesus hadn't been risen from the dead. Jesus hadn't ascended right back to heaven. That had to be accomplished first.

He died for your sins, for my sins. Can you say amen to that? Once he did that, then the spirit could be given to those who believe in him. So that's why the cross and the blood come first.

Then the spirit comes. Sin had to be put away. Sin had to be washed, forgiven, pardoned.

Aren't you happy he died for your sins? But the only way you'll experience that is to confess it with me as we pray. Then you can say, hey, I am thirsty, and I have come, and I believe in who you are. You not only promised me fulfillment, you promised me forgiveness and pardon.

Let's pray. Congregation, stay with me. Repeat after me, folks, in the front.

Let's do it the whole church. Whole church, repeat after me to help them, encourage them. Dear God, forgive me of my sins.

Have mercy on me. I've been wrong, but today I come to you because I'm thirsty. Only you can satisfy.

I believe that with all my heart. That's why I'm standing here in the front. I need Jesus to be my everything, to give me peace, to be my joy, to guide me in the way I should go.

I give you my life today. I lean on you. I'm leaning totally on you.

You cannot fail me because I'm leaning totally on you. Everything I need, I know you will supply, but I'm leaning on you, not on money, not on my job, not on my family. I am leaning on you.

Now give me those rivers of the Holy Spirit. Just don't satisfy me. Let it flow out and be a blessing to others because that's your promise, and you never lie.

So I take your promise, and I believe your promise, and I believe in you, and I drink from you today. Be everything I need, all day long, 24-7, 365 days, every year. I love you, Jesus.

I praise you, Jesus. Let's all clap our hands for Jesus. We clap our hands for Jesus.

Let's pray, everybody. Father, thank you for the service. Thank you for the message that you gave us from John.

Thank you that you said, if anyone's thirsty, not just certain people or nice people. You said, if anyone's thirsty. Oh, thank you for your love.

Now, Lord, help these folks to follow through now on what they need to do. Dismiss the rest of the congregation with your blessing. We ask all your blessings now on us in Jesus' name, and everyone said, amen.

Amen. Stand up and hug somebody.

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