

# John 7:37-44

by St. John Chrysostom

---

*St. John Chrysostom's sermon emphasizes the importance of thirsting for righteousness and the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 26:27, Matthew 5:20, John 7:37, John 7:39, Romans 12:19

**Topics:** "Living Water", "Holy Spirit"

---

## Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the invitation of Jesus to those who thirst for spiritual fulfillment, emphasizing the importance of coming to Him with eagerness and desire to receive the living water of faith. He explains that the Scriptures point to the abundance of grace that believers will receive, symbolized by rivers of living water flowing from their hearts, and the necessity of believing in Christ for this fulfillment. Chrysostom also delves into the significance of the Holy Spirit, highlighting the transition from the Prophets' era to the Apostles' era where the Holy Spirit was abundantly given after Jesus' glorification on the Cross.

---

## Transcript

In the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

1. They who come to the divine preaching and give heed to the faith, must manifest the desire of thirsty men for water, and kindle in themselves a similar longing; so will they be able also very carefully to retain what is said. For as thirsty men, when they have taken a bowl, eagerly drain it and then desist, so too they who hear the divine oracles if they receive them thirsting, will never be weary until they have drunk them up. For to show that men ought ever to thirst and hunger, Blessed, It says, are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness Matthew 5:6; and here Christ says, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. What He says is of this kind, I draw no man to Me by necessity and constraint; but if any has great zeal, if any is inflamed with desire, him I call.

But why has the Evangelist remarked that it was on the last day, that great day? For both the first day and the last were great, while the intermediate days they spent rather in enjoyment. Wherefore then says he, in the last day? Because on that day they were all collected together. For on the first day He came not, and told the reason to His brethren, nor yet on the second and third days says He anything of this kind, lest His words should come to nought, the hearers being about to run into indulgence.

But on the last day when they were returning home He gives them supplies for their salvation, and cries aloud, partly by this showing to us His boldness, and partly for the greatness of the multitude. And to show that He spoke not of material drink, He adds, He that believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. By belly he here means the heart, as also in another place It says, And Your Law in the midst of my belly. Psalm 40:10; Theodotion But where has the Scripture said, that rivers of living water shall flow from his belly?

Nowhere. What then means, He that believes in Me, as the Scripture says? Here we must place a stop, so that the, rivers shall flow from his belly, may be an assertion of Christ. For because many said, This is the Christ; and, When the Christ comes will He do more miracles? He shows that it behooves to have a correct knowledge, and to be convinced not so much from the miracles as from the Scriptures. Many, in fact, who even saw Him working marvels received Him not as Christ, and were ready to say, Do not the Scriptures say that Christ comes of the seed of David? and on this they continually dwelt.

He then, desiring to show that He did not shun the proof from the Scriptures, again refers them to the Scriptures. He had said before, Search the Scriptures John 5:39; and again, It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be taught of God John 6:45; and, Moses accuses you John 5:45; and here, As the Scripture has said, rivers shall flow from his belly, alluding to the largeness and abundance of grace. As in another place He says, A well of water springing up unto eternal life John 4:14, that is to say, he shall possess much grace; and elsewhere He calls it, eternal life, but here, living water.

He calls that living which ever works; for the grace of the Spirit, when it has entered into the mind and has been established, springs up more than any fountain, fails not, becomes not empty, stays not. To signify therefore at once its unfailing supply and unlimited operation, He has called it a well and rivers, not one river but numberless; and in the former case He has represented its abundance by the expression, springing. And one may clearly perceive what is meant, if he will consider the wisdom of Stephen, the tongue of Peter, the vehemence of Paul, how nothing bare, nothing withstood them, not the anger of multitudes, not the risings up of tyrants, not the plots of devils, not daily deaths, but as rivers borne along with a great rushing sound, so they went on their way hurrying all things with them.

John 7:39

But this spoke He of the Spirit, which they that believe in Him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given.

2. How then did the Prophets prophesy and work those ten thousand wonders? For the Apostles cast not out devils by the Spirit, but by power received from Him; as He says Himself, If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? Matthew 12:27 And this He said, signifying that before the Crucifixion not all cast out devils by the Spirit, but that some did so by the power received from Him. So when He was about to send them, He said, Receive the Holy Ghost John 20:22; and again, The Holy Ghost came upon them Acts 19:6, and then they wrought miracles. But when He was sending them, the Scripture said not, that He gave to them the Holy Ghost, but that He gave to them power, saying, Cleanse the lepers, cast out devils, raise the dead, freely you have received, freely give. Matthew 10:1-8 But in the case of the Prophets, all allow that the Gift was that of the Holy Spirit. But this Grace was stinted and departed and failed from off the earth, from the day in which it was said, Your house is left unto you desolate Matthew 23:38; and even before that day its dearth had begun, for there was no longer any prophet among them, nor did Grace visit their holy things. Since then the Holy Ghost had been withheld,

but was for the future to be shed forth abundantly, and since the beginning of this imparting was after the Crucifixion, not only as to its abundance, but also as to the increased greatness of the gifts, (for the Gift was more marvelous, as when It says, You know not what Spirit you are of Luke 9:55; and again, For you have not received the Spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of adoption Romans 8:15; and the men of old possessed the Spirit themselves, but imparted It not to others, while the Apostles filled tens of thousands with It,) since then, I say, they were to receive this Gift, but It was not yet given, for this cause he adds, The Holy Ghost was not yet. Since then the Lord spoke of this grace, the Evangelist has said, For the Holy Ghost was not yet, that is, was not yet given,

Because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Calling the Cross, glory. For since we were enemies, and had sinned, and fallen short of the gift of God, and were haters of God, and since grace was a proof of our reconciliation, and since a gift is not given to those who are hated, but to friends and those who have been well-pleasing; it was therefore necessary that the Sacrifice should first be offered for us, that the enmity (against God) which was in our flesh should be done away, that we should become friends of God, and so receive the Gift. For if this was done with respect to the promise made to Abraham, much more with respect to grace. And this Paul has declared, saying, If they which are of the Law be heirs, faith is made void -- because the Law works wrath. Romans 4:14-15 What he says, is of this kind: God promised that He would give the earth to Abraham and to his seed: but his descendants were unworthy of the promise, and of their own deeds could not be well-pleasing unto God. On this account came in faith, an easy action, that it might draw grace unto it, and that the promise might not fail. And It says,

Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure. Romans 4:16 Wherefore it is by grace, since by their own labors they prevailed not.

But wherefore after saying, according to the Scriptures, did He not add the testimony? Because their mind was corrupt; for,

John 7:40-42

Some said, This is the Prophet. Others said, He deceives the people; others said, Christ comes not from Galilee, but from the village of Bethlehem.

Others said, When Christ comes, no man knows whence He is John 7:27; and there was a difference of opinion, as might be expected in a confused multitude; for not attentively did they listen to His words, nor for the sake of learning. Wherefore He makes them no answer; yet they said, Does Christ come out of Galilee? And He had praised, as being an Israelite indeed, Nathanael, who had said in a more forcible and striking manner, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? John 1:46 But then these men, and they who said to Nicodemus, Search and look, for out of Galilee arises no prophet John 7:52, said it not seeking to learn, but merely to overturn the opinion concerning Christ. Nathanael said this, being a lover of the truth, and knowing exactly all the ancient histories; but they looked only to one thing, and that was to remove the opinion that He was the Christ, on which account He revealed nothing to them. For they who even contradicted themselves, and said at one time, No man knows whence He comes, at another, From Bethlehem, would manifestly even if they had been informed have opposed Him. For be it that they knew not the place of His birth, that He was from Bethlehem, because of His dwelling in Nazareth, (yet this cannot be allowed, for He was not born there,) were they ignorant of His race also, that He was of the house and lineage of David? How then said they, Does not Christ come of the seed of David? John 7:42

Because they wished to conceal even this fact by that question, saying all that they said with malicious intent. Why did they not come to Him and say, Since we admire you in other respects, and you bid us believe you according to the Scriptures, tell us how it is that the Scriptures say that Christ must come from Bethlehem, when you have come from Galilee? But they said nothing of the kind, but all in malice. And to show that they spoke not enquiringly, nor as desiring to learn, the Evangelist straightway has added, that,

John 7:44

Some of them would have taken Him, but no man laid his hand upon Him.

This, if nothing else, might have been sufficient to cause compunction in them, but they felt it not, as the Prophet says, They were cleft asunder, and were not pricked in heart. Psalm 35:15, Septuagint

3. Such a thing is malice! It will give way to nothing, it looks to one thing only, and that is, to destroy the person against whom it plots. But what says the Scripture? Whoever digs a pit for his neighbor, shall fall into it himself. Proverbs 26:27 Which was the case then. For they desired to kill Him, to stop, as they thought, His preaching; the result was the opposite. For the preaching flourishes by the grace of Christ, while all that was theirs is quenched and perished; they have lost their country, their freedom, their security, their worship, they have been deprived of all their prosperity, and have become slaves and captives.

Knowing then this, let us never plot against others, aware that by so doing we whet the sword against ourselves, and inflict upon ourselves the deeper wound. Hath any one grieved you, and desires thou to avenge yourself on him? Avenge not yourself; so shall you be able to be avenged; but if you avenge yourself, you are not avenged. Think not that this is a riddle, but a true saying. How, and in what way? Because if you avenge not yourself on him, you make God his enemy; but if you avenge yourself, no longer so.

Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord. Romans 12:19 For if we have servants, and they having quarreled with each other, do not give place to us for judgment and for punishment, but take it upon themselves; though they come to us ten thousand times, we not only shall not avenge them, but shall even be angry with them, saying, Thou runaway, you flogging-post, you ought to have submitted all to us, but since you have prevented us and avenged yourself, trouble us no farther; much more shall God, who has bidden us commit all unto Him, say this.

For how can it be otherwise than absurd, when we demand from our servants so much minding of wisdom and obedience, but will not yield to our Master in those matters in which we desire our domestics to yield to us? This I say because of your readiness to inflict punishment one upon another. The truly wise man ought not to do this even, but to pardon and forgive offenses, though there were not that great reward proposed, the receiving in return forgiveness. For, tell me, if you condemn one who has sinned, wherefore do you sin yourself, and fall into the same fault?

Hath he insulted? Insult not thou again, or you have insulted yourself. Hath he struck? Strike not thou again, for then there is no difference between you. Hath he vexed you? Vex him not again, for the profit is nothing, and you will in your turn be placed on an equality with those who have wronged you. Thus, if you bear with meekness and gentleness, you shall be able to reprove your enemy, to shame him, to weary him of being angry. No man cures evil with evil, but evil with good.

These rules of wisdom give some of the heathen; now if there be such wisdom among the foolish heathen, let us be ashamed to show ourselves inferior to them. Many of them have been injured, and have borne it; many have been maliciously accused, and not defended themselves; have been plotted against, and have repaid by benefits. And there is no small fear lest some of them be found in their lives to be greater than we, and so render our punishment severer. For when we who have partaken of the Spirit, we who look for the Kingdom, who follow wisdom for the sake of heavenly things, who fear (not) hell, and are bidden to become angels, who enjoy the Mysteries; when we reach not to the virtue unto which they have attained, what pardon shall we have?

If we must go beyond the Jews, (for, Unless your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven Matthew 5:20) much more the heathen; if the Pharisees, much more the unbelievers. Since if when we go not beyond the righteousness of the Jews, the Kingdom is shut against us, how shall we be able to attain unto it when we prove ourselves worse than the heathen? Let us then cast out all bitterness, and wrath, and anger.

To speak the same things, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe, Philippians 3:1 For physicians also often use the same remedy, and we will not cease from sounding the same things in your ears, reminding, teaching, exhorting, for great is the tumult of worldly things, and it causes in us forgetfulness, and we have need of continual teaching. Let us then, in order that we meet not together in this place uselessly and in vain, exhibit the proof which is by works, that so we may obtain the good things to come, through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom and with whom, to the Father and the Holy Ghost be glory, now and ever and world without end. Amen.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-john-chrysostom/john-737-44/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**