

What do we thirst for?

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Let us turn to **John 7: 37-39**.

John 7: 37-39

- 37 Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.
38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'
39 But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

We know that when the Lord Jesus met the Jews, there were different categories of people: Some were curious about Him; others were hostile; some wanted to follow Him; others were doubtful. There were different groups of people.

So it is also today. God has created all of us. We live in different parts of the world; we go through different experiences, but in our hearts, we are also very different people. Some long for God and they want to follow His ways. Others do not. Others prefer to follow the world and seek for the things of this world. Most are preoccupied with themselves; what they like and what they prefer.

So, it is good for us as we seek to appreciate who the Lord Jesus is, to consider how we respond to Him.

The Lord Jesus said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink." He said "If". This tells us that it is not something that will always be true. Not all of us are thirsty. "If you are thirsty... come to Me and drink." Many are not thirsty for the Lord Jesus.

So we need to consider: Are we thirsty for the Lord Jesus? And if we are not, what would that mean? He says, "If anyone is thirsty". This tells us that all are invited. No one is excluded: Whether young or old, whether you are from the east or the west, north or south, anyone of us can thirst for the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we must not excuse ourselves and say, "I am not in that category. There are those who can pursue after God, there are those who can seek for God and be very eager and earnest, but I am not like that. I was not born like that. I did not come from such an environment and upbringing, so I do not have such a thirst."

The Lord Jesus says: "If anyone is thirsty..." Anyone of us can be thirsty. Will we be thirsty? So are we thirsty?

The implication is: that is our choice. Will we be thirsty or not?

In the physical realm, we become thirsty when we are lacking in water. If you do not drink for a long period of time, you become thirsty. Well, in the spiritual realm, we can choose to be thirsty. We can choose to want to come to God, long for Him, long for the Lord Jesus Christ, want to receive life from Him: We want to drink from what He can give to us. We can be thirsty by choice.

He says: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me..." "...let him come": It is an invitation. We can come and He welcomes us. The question is: Will we? Will we come to Him?

He says: "...come to Me..."

Many people are going to the wrong places. They go to many other sources which they think can bring them satisfaction and meaning and happiness in life. They do not properly come to the Lord Jesus.

And He says: "...come to Me and drink." It is also true that there are many people who may come to the Lord Jesus but they do not drink. They come and they look at Him; they can say many things about Him; they can know many things about Him; they can even tell other people about Him but they have not come to Him to drink from Him. And so they would not find life.

How should we respond?

Well, if we look at nature, there is something which can help us to appreciate how we should respond.

Psalms 42: 1-2

- 1 As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God.
- 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?

The deer pants for the water brooks. Without the water brooks, without water, the deer will die of thirst. It needs the water. It must seek for the water. So when it is very thirsty, it pants for the water brooks and it may sometimes have to travel long distances before it can find the water brooks. But it will not give up because it needs the water, it must have the water. So it pants for the water brooks.

This is a Psalm that is often quoted and many people have appreciated the analogy that we also must be like that. We must pant for God. "My soul pants for You, O God."

Do we long for God just like the deer longs so much for the water brooks? It needs the water, it looks for it and it will persevere until it finds it. It will seek for the water until it finds the water.

Do we seek God so earnestly?

Many of us often take God for granted: "He is always there. I do not really need to seek Him. I may once in a while talk to Him. I may learn something about Him. When I have more time, I will try to find out more."

But for the deer, it is not like that. It is life and death. It must have the water. Do we also recognize that? We need God. It is life and death. Can we just live on our own, go our own way? No. If we really understand how God has created us, what we are capable of and what we are not, then we will seek for God because He is the only One who can truly give us that life to sustain us.

"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?" So we can say this is a meaningful response in our seeking for God. We should thirst for God, long for Him, seek Him, want to be close to Him and nurture a deep fellowship with Him.

If we look at the context in **Psalms 42**, you will realize that the writer expresses this in the context of great difficulties, pain and suffering. In **verse 3**, we read: 'My tears have been my food day and night, While *they* say to me all day long, "Where is your God?'. It is in the midst of distress, difficulty and pain that there is this cry for God, longing for God because God can help in that situation. In the midst of such despair, difficulty and pain, the writer can find relief and peace and freedom through God's presence, God's help, God's undertaking.

Do we come to God in our times of difficulty? Do we appreciate that we need Him or do we instead find other ways to solve our problems? Do we first and foremost come to God and ask Him to help us? He is our Creator and He is our Saviour. He is our Provider. Do we first and foremost seek Him and ask Him to help us in our difficulties? And if we do so sincerely and we truly want to know Him and follow Him, then the Lord in His grace will help us. Even in times when our motives are not so pure, God in His grace may still help us in our distress and in our need.

However, what happens when your problems are solved? When you no longer go through such difficult times, what happens to your thirst for God? Is it still there?

For many people, they long for God, they cry out to God in times of pain and distress and difficulty. But when that is over, they may not even remember to thank God. They may not even remember how desperate they were, how much they had asked God for help. They are just glad that the problem is over.

Is this how we treat God? In our times of need, He is the one we long for. When we do not need, we forget and so we then turn to the world. We focus on ourselves and what is interesting and attractive to us in this world.

This is something that we need to consider for ourselves: What kind of relationship do we establish with God? Is He the God of our need in times of difficulty, or is He the God of our lives in every situation, whatever happens? However things may turn out in our lives, is He always our God, that we thirst for Him, that we long for Him, that we want Him, that we will follow Him?

Why is it that in times of difficulties, we can quite readily recognize we need God and we come to Him; and why is it in other times we may not?

Ponder over it and consider: What is the reason for that? Why is it many people can establish quite a meaningful relationship with God in times of difficulty and they are prayerful, they find fellowship with God, they are thankful; but when things are no longer difficult, their fellowship with God begins to dim? Their seeking after God becomes less intense and gradually, they may no longer appreciate who God is. Why is that so?

There is something very important for us to recognize in our relationship with God: Why do we love God? Why do we come to Him? Can we develop such that we will always love God, we will always pursue after Him, we will always seek Him, we will always appreciate fellowship with Him? How can we nurture this kind of relationship with God?

The answer lies in **Matthew 5: 6**.

Matthew 5: 6

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied..."

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness..." What is our hunger? What is our thirst? What do we thirst for?

For many people, they thirst for God because God can help them in their difficulties. If this is the way you approach life, and you come to God basically because you have some problem and some need, then when that problem and need changes and is no longer there, or not so pressing or serious, so too will your thirsting for God change because your thirsting for God is dependent upon how great your need is.

This is a very sad thing.

We should long for God, thirst for God because God is good. We should **hunger and thirst for righteousness**, moral goodness, what is truly good in the moral realm, and we now come to God, we long for Him, we thirst after Him because God is morally perfectly good. For this reason, we thirst for Him, we long for Him, we want to know Him, we want to be taught by Him, we want Him to deal with us in whatever way He sees fit, and we want Him to work in our lives, so that we can become like Him.

If this is your motivation, then you will find that whether life is easy or difficult, you will love God. Whether you have a need or you do not, you will thirst for God, you want to know Him more and more deeply. You will want to nurture your fellowship with Him.

This is an issue of utmost importance that we must all ponder about: What kind of relationship do we have with God?

Do we come to God because of some benefit that we can receive? Do we come to Him because He is the most powerful person who can help us? Many people came to the Lord Jesus for that reason. They saw He could perform miracles. He had great power. If He could be their King, it would be so good.

So do we worship this God because He is so powerful – He is the Creator of the universe and so we worship Him? It is right for us to worship God, the Creator of the universe, but it is critical that we worship Him with the consciousness that He is morally perfect and we love Him because of that. We do not love God primarily because He is the Creator of all things, but we love Him because not only is He the Creator of all things but also He is morally perfectly good.

And this is manifested in the most dramatic and deepest way in the cross. If we appreciate the cross properly, we will never forget God.

Do we really understand what God went through in order to save us? If we understand that, will we ever forget Him, will we ever not be grateful to Him? Will we want to follow the world and seek the things of the world?

Certainly, we will not. We will love Him each day, each moment, as long as we live and throughout eternity because our basis is correct: God is morally perfect and we love Him because of that.

So: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." If we want true satisfaction, true fulfilment in our lives, true meaning that lasts forever, that is the only way: Hunger and thirst for righteousness and because of that, hunger and thirst for God because God is absolute righteousness, absolute moral goodness.

So therefore, the Lord Jesus said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink." All of us are invited to come to Him, but be careful how we come to Him. What are we thirsty about? What are we coming to Him for? What do we want to drink?

The world offers us many other drinks and they will kill us, but in the meantime, we may enjoy it. There are many drinks in the world that are enjoyable, tasty and many people are involved in absorbing the drinks of this world. But in time to come, we realize, often too late, that we are killed by the things that we are absorbing from the world.

What God gives to us is what brings life but it may not be very obvious to us at times because what God gives to us, while it gives us life, may at times be unpleasant, at times painful and we may shrink from it and we do not want it.

But if we learn to appreciate who He is and we learn to submit to His ways and we love Him and we want to walk with Him, then we will discover that whatever God gives to us if we love Him is truly good and it always will be, and so we will be satisfied.

Let us then, as we come before the Lord, ask Him to help us to evaluate our lives and to consider what is it that we long for.

What do we really want in life? What are we seeking for? What are we thirsting after? We should not live our lives day by day just following our own natural inclinations, but we should evaluate, we should consider what is truly meaningful and worthwhile to pursue.

Our time on earth is very short. Soon, we will not be here. But how we develop now has eternal consequences.

Let us, as we appreciate what God has done for us, learn to respond well so that our time on earth will be well spent and we will develop well in preparation for eternity.