Affirming our Faith through the Apostles' Creed
I Believe in the Holy Spirit

Text: John 7:37-39 -- On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" 39 Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Introduction: Well, we're headed down the backstretch in our series **"Affirming Our Faith through the Apostles' Creed."** This morning we're going to look at the FIRST OF SIX concluding statements (*I believe in the Holy Spirit*) that takes everything we've talked about previously and brings it home to us in some very personal ways. It makes a lot of sense that we would look at what the Bible tells us about the third person of the Holy Trinity because **He's the One who makes all this truth applicable to our lives. The Holy Spirit enables us to not only understand God's Word, but believe it and live in obedience to it**. Recently I read this illustration of what the Holy Spirit does for us compared to what an air traffic controller did for a passenger with no flight experience who attempted to land a plane at a Florida airport. **It was Tuesday, May 10, 2022, when the passenger called Air Traffic Control at the Fort Pierce, Florida airport and said, "I've got a serious situation here. My pilot has gone incoherent. I have no idea how to fly the airplane." At that very moment an air traffic controller named Robert Morgan was outside the tower reading a book on a break. His co-worker yelled, "There's a passenger flying a plane that's not a pilot and the pilot is incapacitated and now they need you to help them try and land the plane." Morgan was the man for the job. In addition to his 20 years in tower control, he is also a flight instructor with around 1,200 hours under his belt. Morgan told reporters, "I knew the plane was flying, I also knew I had to keep him calm, point him to the runway and tell him how to reduce the power so he could descend to land." Then Morgan proceeded to walk the first-time pilot step-by-step through the landing procedure for the Cessna Grand Caravan. Once the plan had safely landed, Morgan even ran out to the tarmac and joyfully embraced his student. He later said, "It felt really good to help somebody and he told me that he couldn't wait to get home and hug his pregnant wife."** In a very real sense, *the Holy Spirit acts like our air traffic flight controller. He enables us to navigate through the best and worst that life can throw at us so that we not only arrive safely home in heaven, but help others to do so as well.*

In the text that I've chosen for this message, we discover that Jesus speaks His words on the last day (*the eighth day*) of **the Feast of Booths** (*also called the Feast of Tabernacles or Ingathering*). **It was a yearly celebration that was meant to remind the Jews of the days their forefathers spent in the wilderness living in makeshift shelters and especially focusing on God's gracious provision of water to sustain them**. By New Testament times it had become a custom during the feast for **a procession of priests to visit the Pool of Siloam** and return with a golden pitcher of water which was then poured out as an offering of thanksgiving to God. All the while a choir would chant **Isaiah 12:3 -- "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation**." When the procession arrived at the temple, a designated priest would climb the altar steps and pour the water onto it while the crowd circled him and continued singing. **On the seventh day of the feast this procession took place seven times, but on the eighth day, no water was drawn or poured out on the altar**.

Now as we think about this feast, one of the questions we have to ask ourselves is, "**Since everything Jesus did was with purpose, why did He, as an uninvited teacher, wait until this moment on the eighth day to stand before the people and with a loud voice issue His invitation ... "If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink**?" The answer is that the time had come for Jesus to publically proclaim who He really was. It was as if He said, "***Listen ... I am the rock that brought forth water in the wilderness*** (**1 Corinthians 10:4 -- they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them and that rock was Christ**)***. I am the true source of living water. Come to me, believe in me, and I will give you living water from heaven***." This living water, we're told in **verse 39** is a reference to **the Holy Spirit** who, at the moment we believe, comes into our lives to satisfy our deep spiritual thirsts ... a process that will continue until we go home to heaven. Now join me as we attempt to answer **four questions related to the Holy Spirit that are addressed here in John 7:37-39.**

First, who can receive the Holy Spirit? This is an easy one to answer, because it tells us in **verse 37**. Jesus said, "**If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink**." ***Anyone*** is the key word. This includes you, me, your spouse, your sons and daughters, neighbors, friends, co-workers and even your enemies. It includes people in America (Democrats, Republicans, Independents, Socialists and the Disenfranchised) and people all around the world. You get the point right? Anyone means anyone! ***Now let me say a couple of things about Jesus' invitation***. **(1) It seems to me that the Bible teaches that all people thirst for something**. Our problem isn't that we are ignorant of the fact that our lives are empty and out of synch, though it is possible for people to live in some form of

self-denial. The vast majority of us, however, sense that there is an empty space in each of us that longs to be filled with things that will give us meaning and purpose. ***The problem is that we search in all the wrong places to find what we're looking for***. That's what **Jeremiah 2:13** says, "**My people 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**." Thirsty people don't always seek out living water. In fact, often we look to the stuff of this world (*materialism, humanitarianism, hedonism -- even the practice of religion as Israel did*) hoping that it will give us a true sense of fulfillment. Yet it never does because it can't. It doesn't have that ability. This brings me to a second thought: **(2) Blaise Paschal** had it right when he said, **"There is a god-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man that cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus."** Thirsting is not enough. We have to look to the right thing to satisfy it ... and according to Jesus ... it's Him, the One who gives us the Holy Spirit. Only He can fill the void in our lives and meet our deep need for love and meaning (security and significance). **C. S. Lewis**, in **Mere Christianity**, says **"Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably, earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing." I couldn't agree more. We must direct our thirsts to the Lord if we have hope to satisfy them. This is what I had to learn in my life. As a young man, I thirsted for wealth. My family was on the poor side and it seemed to me that those who had it all were the happiest. I believed that until my teen years when God opened my eyes to the huge amount of discontent that was shared by the poor and wealthy alike.**

How can we receive the Holy Spirit? So far, we've established that our Lord is the source of spiritual drink. ***Now let's think about what we must do to receive the Holy Spirit***. What does He say? "**Whoever believes in Me ...**" Personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is the door through which each of us must pass in order to have the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "**I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and fellowship with Him and He with Me** (**Revelation 3:20**)" When we put our faith in Him, Jesus takes us from being children of wrath and places us in His kingdom so that we become children of God. He takes up residence in our lives through the Holy Spirit whom He promised to His followers and sent once He was seated at the right hand of the

Father. **This is what comes of our faith**! To believe is to accept that what the Bible says about the Lord is true and to personally entrust yourself to His saving work on the cross to redeem us. Jesus called it being born again. The penalty of your sin is paid for by His death on the cross, the power of sin is broken so that we can be holy as He is holy and even someday the presence of sin will be removed and death destroyed when we're with the Lord in heaven.

What happens when we receive the Holy Spirit? Jesus described it like this ... **"as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"** While there are many benefits that come from being born again by the Holy Spirit, I would like to point out five for you to think about.

- **We experience God's FORGIVENESS.** This is what Peter the Apostle said would happen in his famous sermon that he preached on Pentecost, the day the church was born. To the Jews who were under heavy conviction of their sin, he said, "**Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off -- for all whom the Lord our God will call**." This invitation was not extended to Jews only but to the rest of us as well (**all who are far off**). When we come to faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit seals us as a guarantee of our inheritance (*of eternal life*), demonstrating that we truly ***have been*** forgiven, ***are*** forgiven and ***will be*** forgiven. Now we can live continually with the knowledge that God will not hold our sins against us. ***That debt has been paid***.
- **We experience God's PRESENCE.** Jesus said that He would be with His followers always (**Matthew 28:20**). He accomplished this by sending the Holy Spirit to permanently live within us. **We are never removed from God's presence in us once we become a Christian. Our bodies become the temple of the Holy Spirit**. Wherever we go and whatever we do, He is here. That, by the way, is a great reason why we never have to be overcome by fear. We know that the omnipotent God of the universe who loves us is with us, watching over us. **I don't have a lot of memories from my very early childhood (before three or four), but one has stayed with me. I remember being with my mom and siblings at a large lake where we could swim. I was too small to go into water by myself, so I just skirted its edge and played in the sand. At one point, however, I walked too far in just as a wave swept in to shore. I immediately went under and felt this weight on top of me that prevented me from lifting my head. For a moment I panicked until I felt the hand of my mother grab and lift me out of the water. I suppose I cried for a bit, but I was also relieved to know that someone was watching out for me**.

This is what the Holy Spirit does for all God's children. After all, **His eyes are on the righteous and HIs ears are attentive to our cry** (**1 Peter 3:12**).

- **We experience God's TRUTH.** The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. The Bible says He leads us into all truth. As Christians, we have access to the wisdom of God as it's found in His Word. We have spiritual discernment to know what is right and true and what is wrong and in error. Paul tells us that in the spiritual conflict taking place in the unseen realm, the weapon of choice for Christians is the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. It keeps us anchored to the truth when Satan and his minions seek to deceive us. ***If the Word doesn't make sense to you, it may be because you do not have the Holy Spirit or are not abiding in Him***.
- **We experience God's POWER.** This power that comes from the Spirit of God enables us to live life on ***His*** terms. By the Spirit, we can witness for Him (**Acts 1:8**), be faithful to Him (**Colossians 1:11**) and minister to others for Him (**1 Corinthians 12:7**). **God's power unleashed in our lives should be the norm for our existence**. We abide in the Spirit and the same power that raised Christ from the dead is at work within us.
- **We experience God's LOVE.** Love is the first fruit of the Spirit mentioned in **Galatians 5:22**. It is how we put Jesus on display every day. We demonstrate his love in our treatment of one another. **What I want to say about these five characteristics (*forgiveness, presence, truth, power and love*) is that they should be our regular experience when we're filled with the Spirit and not just an occasional thing we enjoy during a spiritual high. If they're lacking in your life, you've got a spiritual problem and it will only be resolved when you drink deeply again from the living water that Christ offers**.

When do we receive the Holy Spirit? When Jesus spoke these words in **John 7:37-39**, He was still walking the earth. It wasn't until He died, was resurrected and ascended to the Father to sit at His right hand, that Jesus sent the promised Holy Spirit to be with believers on a full-time basis just as He said He would. "**I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away the Helper will not come to you; but if I go I will send HIm to you (John 16:7)**." Today, anyone can receive the Holy Spirit, can experience **GOD'S FORGIVENESS, PRESENCE, TRUTH, POWER AND LOVE**, simply by repenting of one's sin and trusting in Christ for salvation. ***God, in His grace, mercy and love, has made this offer available, but it will not be on the table forever***. There will come a time when we will no longer be able to receive it and every day it gets closer.

Conclusion: In his book, ***The Ragamuffin Gospel***, **Brennan Manning** says that the problem for most Christians is that when it comes to experiencing the power of

the Holy Spirit for ourselves, most of us would prefer to sip from the cup of another rather than drink deeply from our own. He puts it like this, **"...we become unconvicted and unpersuasive travel agents handing out brochures to places we (ourselves) have never visited**." Think about it for a moment. Today, all kinds of books about the Christian life are bestsellers, but ***few believers are courageous enough to drink deeply from the Word of God and the Spirit of God for themselves***. We settle for "***good enough***" Christianity explained to us by others in the know that brings us only a little blessing. BUT LISTEN ... **When you become thirsty, truly thirsty for God, you jettison "good enough" Christianity**. You want more than just a sip but a long and satisfying drink of the Holy Spirit.

So let me wrap this up for us this morning by encouraging those of us who are ready to experience all that the Holy Spirit offers to abandon our spiritual inhibitions and yield ourselves fully to Him. ***Hold nothing back, let God the Holy Spirit invade every area of life***. If for some reason you're not ready to drink deeply of Christ by the Holy Spirit, then at least be honest with God and ask Him to do something to create that kind of thirst in you, and expect Him to answer that prayer.

There once was a man who got lost in the desert. After wandering around for a long time his throat became very dry, and about that time he saw a little shack in the distance. He made his way over to the shack and found a water pump with a small jug of water and a note that read: "Pour all the water into the top of the pump to prime it. If you do this you will get more than enough to satisfy your thirst. But be warned! If you hold back any of the water, you may fail to sufficiently prime the pump and then it will not work, so pour it all in. When you're done, and you've had all you can drink, fill the jug for the next thirsty person to come along." Now the man had a choice to make. If he trusted the note and poured the water in and it worked, he would have more than enough water. Of course, if it didn't work he would still be thirsty and could even die. Or he could choose to drink the water in the jar and get some immediate satisfaction, though it would not last him long. After thinking about it, the man decided to take the risk. He poured the entire jar into the pump and began to work the handle, at first nothing happened but he kept working it and then slowly a steady stream of water started coming out. He drank all he wanted, washed himself, filled his canteen and then the jar to prime the pump for the next thirsty traveler. Lastly, the man added these words to the original note: "*Go ahead. Take a step of faith and prime the pump. Believe me when I say it works*." We have a similar choice to make, don't we? We can hold on to what we already have because we don't believe there are better things in store for us. **Or

we can trust the Lord and give it all up to get what He has promised ... living water that satisfies our deepest longings through the presence of His Holy Spirit. Which will you choose? From my own personal experience may I say, "***Go ahead. Take a step of faith and prime the pump. Believe me when I say it works***!"

NOW JOIN ME AND LET'S DECLARE WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT BY RECITING TOGETHER THE APOSTLES' CREED.

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I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ His only Son, Our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into Hades; The third day He rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.