

*It is more profitable to know Jesus than to know about Him.*

**Weekly Edition – January 5, 2018**  
**Gospel According to St. John – Third Year**

## Jesus Goes to the Festival of Tabernacles (Part 7)

<sup>37</sup>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. <sup>38</sup>Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” <sup>39</sup>By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

<sup>40</sup>On hearing his words, some of the people said, “Surely this man is the Prophet.” <sup>41</sup>Others said, “He is the Messiah.”

Still others asked, “How can the Messiah come from Galilee? <sup>42</sup>Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David’s descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?” <sup>43</sup>Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. <sup>44</sup>Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him.

<sup>45</sup>Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and the Pharisees, who asked them, “Why didn’t you bring him in?”

<sup>46</sup>“No one ever spoke the way this man does,” the guards replied.

<sup>47</sup>“You mean he has deceived you also?” the Pharisees retorted. <sup>48</sup>“Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? <sup>49</sup>No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them.”

<sup>50</sup>Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, <sup>51</sup>“Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?”

<sup>52</sup>They replied, “Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee.”

### Reflection 5: The Middle Voice

You say to us Lord, “Whoever believes in Me, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.” The text is ambiguous. Who’s innermost being are You referring to – Yours or those who believe in You? And which innermost being does the living water flow from – Yours or the one who believes on You? John uses an unfamiliar verb form when he quotes You, Lord. He uses a verb in the middle voice. In the English language, we have both an active voice – the imposition of will – and a passive voice – the surrender of will. In English, there is no middle voice; in Greek, there is. The middle voice

indicates the subject is the actor and acts for his or her own benefit. But when the subject is plural, the actors act upon each other, reflexively and for mutual benefit. The use of the middle voice verb introduces this ambiguity, and within this ambiguity is new revelation. Here on the last and great day of the festival You are revealing something entirely new – a portrait of a living organic union of God within me and me within God. Though the Spirit has not yet been given, You prepare us for something never before heard. The Jewish leaders cannot make sense of Your revelation – but the guards who failed to

#### The Gospel of St. John

##### Part I

- Prologue 1:1-14
- First Year 1:15 – 2:22
- Second Year 2:23 – 6:71
- Third Year 7:1 – 12:50

##### Part II

- The Last Discourse 13:1 – 17:26
- The Arrest and Trial 18:1 – 19:16
- Death and Resurrection 19:16 (b) – 21:25

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arrest You do. They explained, "No one before has ever spoken as He does." Our life in You Lord, is not the either/or dichotomy of my will verses Your will, but rather a blending together

of our creative energies: living waters flowing into and out of my innermost being; into and out of Your innermost Being. I not only respond to God; God responds to me.

*Application: Verbs express action or a state of being. The middle voice verb is a marriage between the active and passive voices. How is my experience of Jesus middle-voice like?*

### Reflection 6: Rivers of Living Water

Living water is the most precious thing on earth. It gives life and sustains it. The entirety of marine life species knows no other atmosphere, and from living water all plants are watered and nourished. Yet for all this a river has no conscious awareness of its own benefits. It simply is. Elsewhere, You ask us to consider the birds of the air. They do not plant or harvest or store up in barns, yet Your Father cares for every one of them. And You invite us to consider the lilies of the field that neither labor or spin, but say that even king Solomon, in all his fabulous

royal splendor was not dressed as magnificently as a single blossom. Whoever believes in You, out of him will flow rivers of living water. It just happens. There is no conscious awareness of these rivers – they just bubble up from the interior life of the one who believes in You and flow out of him or her spontaneously, without effort. All You ask of me is that I keep my relationship right with You, and You do all the rest – pouring Your life into me and through me, whether I am consciously aware of it or not. It just happens. Effortlessly.

*Application: Our conscious efforts to be useful to God can often become the thing that blocks the natural flow of God's life through me. Am I trying to hard to be useful in some circumstance in my life right now?*

### Reflection 7: The Holy Spirit

There is a well, hidden deep within the innermost being of every person. In the life of a non-believer it is a dry cistern. But in the life of a believer it springs up continually fresh and new. This well is the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit flows freely out of the life that is surrendered to You, Lord Jesus. The only thing I can bring to You is my right to myself. When I am willing to do Your will, You clean the courtyards of my interior life, even as You cleared the Temple of everything that profaned it. The wellspring of Your Spirit within me is much deeper than my conscious awareness. That is why You tell us the Spirit intercedes for us in groans – in urgent longings

that our vocabulary – no matter how well trained – cannot begin to express. The Psalmist proclaims that You created my inner-most being, knitting me together in my mother's womb. You are familiar with all my ways. Such things are too deep for me to understand. Too wonderful to express in words. You invite each one of us to "come to You." Nothing more. I simply must come, and keep on coming to You, and out of me will flow rivers of living water – the life of Your Spirit springing up from deep within me and flowing out through me. And I will be as unconscious of that flowing river of life as is a little child, laughing, running naked on the grass.

*Application: There is something so compelling about Jesus that I am wildly attracted to. What draws me to Jesus and draws me back again when I have strayed?*

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### Reflection 8: The Spirit had Not Been Given

John says something utterly stunning – “Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.” The Holy Spirit is not a new invention – it has always existed. In the beginning it hovered over the waters of creation. Throughout the age of the patriarchs and prophets it rested upon men at certain times. Just as nuclear power has always existed in creation, but only in our day are men able to harness that power and use it. So the Spirit has always been a power, but only after Your death and resurrection, on the day of Pentecost, was the Spirit given to all who believe on You. Before Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was a power, but after

He is a Person – Your resurrected presence among us. It took Your life and death to release the floodgates of the Holy Spirit's power to me and all men. Immediately in the aftermath of Your stunning pronouncement, some believe You are the long-awaited prophet Moses had promised. Others thought You to be the Anointed One of God and there was a wrangle about whether the Anointed One must come from Bethlehem or not. In the glow of the most remarkable promise ever given to anyone in all recorded history, God's amazing love for us is lost in a theological debate.

*Application: Is there something that I cling to in my theological understanding of God that prevents me from fully realizing the power of the Holy Spirit in my life?*

### Reflection 9: Living Waters

On another occasion the Pharisees wanted to know when the kingdom of God would come. You replied by telling them, “The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you.” Now on the last and great day of this Festival You go further. You explain that it wells up from within us. You proclaim that those who believe in You put on a new identity as one puts on a clean change of clothing. God's kingdom would not come as the Roman Empire had come, nor would it be something that can be visibly observed like the ruling council of the Sanhedrin. Nor was it something distant and far removed. The kingdom of God is very near to us;

it is within us. When I truly put on Christ as a believer, the old has past away. The old way of identifying myself is being replaced with a new identity in You, Lord Jesus. Out of the one who believes in You flows Your very life. You place Your nature in me and my old nature dies an unceremonious death. The reign of God's kingdom is not something out there in the vastness of time and space – it wells up from within me and pours out in ways both big and small – in new attitudes, new capacities to forgive, or to show mercy, or in acts of kindness. The kingdom of God is the reign of God's spirit on the earth, and that reign springs from the heart of every believer as living waters.

*Application: What of my old nature is presently being put to death in Jesus Christ? Am I willing to allow Christ to nail it to His Cross, or am I resisting in a futile effort to cling to the old life?*

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### Reflection 10: Flowing Rivers

If the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, and if it is within us, then what are the tell-tail signs of Your kingdom and how can I know if Your life is within me? Elsewhere You say that those who believe on You will be known by their fruit. You counsel that no one can bear fruit on their own – we must remain in You even as You remain in us. Here You describe that fruit as rivers of living water. Elsewhere You describe it as a farmer who scattered seed which grows and produces crop whether the farmer works or rests. In other words, the living water is more like the seed – it does not depend upon me and my efforts, but it springs up from the ground simply because I remain in You and You remain in me. It is the middle voice verb tense – a

cooperation of my spirit with Yours and Yours with mine. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Where these are present in my life, I can be sure Your kingdom reigns. Where jealousy, envy, discord, bitterness, anger, selfish ambition and other sour fruits are present, then I am surely living outside of Your kingdom. These reveal that I have fused my middle voice to a different spirit – the one called the liar and father of lies. This river flows from an altogether different source – one that has no regard for You or Your Holy Spirit. What is surprising is that for all my bluster, there is never really a solo voice. I am either cooperating with Your Spirit or with another.

**Application:** How do I discern which source I am connected to – the Living Waters of our Lord or the other source?

### Reflection 11: The Blindness of the Pharisees

The Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest You, but they returned empty. The temple guards, like the crowd, were amazed at Your teaching. At this the Pharisees were furious. They railed at the guards saying that the mob knew nothing of the law. They had become what Isaiah had prophesied about a thousand years before: “So then, the word of the Lord to them will become: Do this, do that, a rule for this, a rule for that; a little here, a little there— so that as they go they will fall backward; they will be injured and snared and captured.” The law had become their god and an instrument of their power. The

light of God had been extinguished in their hearts. These guards could discern the difference between the darkness of the religious rulers and Your light. They did not arrest You this day, because Your hour had not yet come. That hour was merely six months away. When Your hour does come, You will tell the chief priests that it is also their hour – the hour when darkness reigns. The prophecy spoken through Amos will be fulfilled on that day: “Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light.”

**Application:** In one of his letters, the Apostle Paul writes, “the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” In what ways is the Spirit of the Lord ushering me into greater and greater freedom?