**Stewardship Sunday – Christ’s Love, Our Calling – August 26, 2012 – Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY**

**Based on Isaiah 55:1-5 written by Pastor Paul Horn**

**“Come, all you who are thirsty! Come to the waters!”**

*“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. 2 Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. 3 Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. 4 See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander of the peoples. 5 Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor.”*

I’m really thirsty… but I don’t know which of these to choose… I have here a bottle of *Gatorade*, *Powerade*, and this water. And I fairly hungry… I have here a *Snickers* bar, but this jar of peanuts is probably better for me. And I could use a quick pick-me-up… I could drink this cup of coffee, but on the other hand, this all natural *Isagenix* whey protein shake is probably better for me…

Are you thirsty? Are you hungry? The LORD isn’t asking about your stomach – he’s wondering about your soul. Is there an emptiness that needs to be filled? Is there a lack of peace? Is there comfort that needs to be given? Is there something missing in your life and you just can’t quite put your finger on it? Then listen to his invitation!

**Vs1-2 “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Listen, listen to me and eat what is good and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.”** Oh, I’m listening all right! That sounds much better than a *Snickers* or a cup of coffee!

Jesus knows that we get spiritually thirsty. Because his love for us is so great, Jesus paid for the gift of life. That’s why he calls to us so many times in this lesson from Isaiah. 10 times Jesus calls out to us, inviting us to take advantage of this free meal and in it to find peace and refreshment and hope and comfort. But sadly, we don’t always listen to Jesus’ invitation. Too often we try so hard to find other ways to quench our thirst...

This week Tuesday is the 263rd anniversary of the birth of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Goethe was a German author who penned a play entitled *Faust*. Faust is a scholar who despairs at the arrogance of religion, humanitarian efforts and scientific endeavors. He turns to magic for knowledge and power but is not satisfied, so he makes a bet with the devil. In exchange for his soul, the devil will give Faust power and knowledge in this life. For the rest of his life the devil offers Faust whatever he desires. But Faust discovers that he is still always chasing, never satisfied, and for what… the cost of his soul.

We don’t need the devil to make a contract with us to entice us with the things of this world and keep us on the treadmill so that we’re never satisfied. He does that already… and we do it to ourselves naturally. By nature we are predisposed to chase after the passions and pleasures and knowledge of the winds of this world – always striving for peace, for fulfillment in this life, always looking for comfort but never finding it, at least not any that lasts.

When you’re sad or depressed, what is that you typically do to lift yourself out of that funk? Some do nothing at all and wallow in their self-pity. Others look to the bottom of a bottle. Still others love to complain to others how hard their life is. They don’t hear Jesus calling to them, “Come, eat and drink the comfort that is found in my Word, and you will find rest for your soul.” There was another public shooting last week – this one in New York City, a drug resistant super bacteria is hitting nursing homes and hospitals, forest fires, hurricanes, Israel threatening war with Iran – where do you find peace in all of this? By switching off the news, and busying yourself with mindless activities: movies, TV, video games, *Facebook* – so that you don’t have to think… is that where you find peace? When all the while Jesus is calling to you, “Come, eat and drink, and I will give you peace - peace that this world cannot give.” How do you find peace amid the stress of raising your children or caring for an aging parent or ailing spouse? How often do you pour yourself a generous drink from God’s Word? How do you help your children and teenagers deal with the pressures that they are facing at school? How often do you pour them a glass of the revitalizing waters of Jesus’ Word?

Jesus calls out to us, **“Come, you who are thirsty. Come and drink the water. You will find rest**.” But so often we busy ourselves so that we don’t take the time to drink from his Word. We don’t take the time to gather with others around his life giving Word. We don’t take the opportunity to eat and drink his holy supper, and we starve ourselves. We become dehydrated spiritually. And it’s no wonder then that we lack patience, grow anxious and worry, are quick to become angry and full of self-pity. Like Faust we keep chasing after the things of this world to find peace and happiness and comfort but we’re always lacking. How long can go without drinking the water of God’s Word? What will happen to our souls if we continue to ignore his gracious invitation?

Do you how long a human being can go without food or water? According to SurvivalTopics.com, the longest a person can go without water is 10 days -- without food, it's four to six weeks. Last month William LaFever, age 28, was hiking in the Escalante Desert in southern Utah. After some of his hiking gear was stolen he attempted to walk to Page, Arizona. William travelled an estimated 40 miles in three weeks in some of the most rugged, unforgiving terrain will find anywhere on earth. Thankfully, a helicopter spotted William. When rescuers got to him he was emaciated and could not stand up by himself. The sheriff said, “I feel certain that in another 24hours he would have not been alive.”

Even though we often starve ourselves hiking through the wilderness of life, God finds us. Today he calls to us, **“Listen, and come to me; hear me, so that your soul may live.”**  He lifts our weary heads in his gentle hands and he pours into our parched mouths the refreshing water of his Word – and that water is this, **“I will make an everlasting promise for you, my faithful love promised to David.”**

At first listen we might think, “How is this the refreshing water that I need to comfort my weary soul, to bring peace to my life?” God promised to make an everlasting covenant for us. Typically a covenant contract is signed by two parties, both promising to do something to fulfill the contract. When God draws up his contract, he doesn’t require us to do anything, so only one person signs: God does. By signing it he promises to do everything for us. That’s what’s so refreshing!

The contract he signed was “**his faithful love promised to David.**” 1,000 before Jesus was even born, God promised King David that one of his descendants would sit on his throne and rule forever and ever. (2Samuel 7:12ff) Now, 300 years later, through his prophet Isaiah, the LORD reaffirmed this promise. 700 years after Isaiah, Jesus was born. This promise made to David and here in Isaiah was a promise God made to you and me. We see that promise kept for us in Jesus. Jesus came to bring us peace and comfort and rest. He did everything for us.

Where you and I have failed to drink the water of God’s Word, Jesus did. Think about Jesus’ weekly calendar, how busy he must have been, the demands he faced, people constantly seeking him for healing and teaching. Instead of getting stressed out and looking for peace elsewhere, we find Jesus often taking the time to go to quiet places and pray, but most importantly he took the time to feed on his Father’s promises to him in his Word for strength and peace and comfort. This is where we see God’s love for us. Jesus is the promise God made and kept to David and to you and me. How refreshing!

Where you and I deserved to taste the bitter flames of hell and drink the wine of God’s wrath, Jesus did all of that for us on the cross, drinking the full cup of suffering, of everlasting torment, of the Father’s anger… for us. And then he drank the cup of life again on Easter Sunday. There in the empty tomb we see God’s faithful love promised to David, not to abandon his Holy One to the grave, but to let him see the light of life. (Psalm 16)

This is the milk and the wine and the water God invites us to drink, Christ’s life and his death and resurrection. **“Come, drink, eat, and buy without cost, why spend money on what does not satisfy?”** This water, these blessings that Christ paid for with his life and death and resurrection are absolutely free! He freely washed away your sins through the sprinkling of water. Baptism brings you peace. How refreshing! He freely assures you that all your sins are forgiven through the life-giving water of his Word. The Bible brings you comfort. How refreshing! He freely forgives you through eating and drinking in the Lord’s Supper. Holy Communion brings you rest. How refreshing! That’s why we sing in our liturgy, “Oh taste and see that the Lord is good!”

And so, my friends, when you are frightened by the craziness in this world, when you are stressed out from trying to be a faithful parent, when you are depressed and sad and despairing of life, when you are thirsty, instead of running around trying to find peace and rest and comfort and strength in this world, take God up on his invitation, ““**Come, you who are thirsty, come to the waters. Listen to me, and eat what is good, your soul will delight in the richest of fare**.” (vs1,2) We will feast daily with God. We will eat and drink his Word, which means taking time for yourself every day to read your Bible. We will feast weekly with others – we will gather for worship and Bible study. We will eat and drink at the Lamb’s high feast that he offers us in Holy Communion. There he quenches our thirst. There he satisfies our hunger.

*Gatorade* claims to be the thirst quencher. *Snickers* claims to be the snack that satisfies. Jesus once said, “**Whoever drinks this water I give him will never thirst; it will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.**” (John 4) Jesus’ water gives us eternal rest. We look forward to that day when God will keep his faithful love promised to David and raise us up and bring us to sit at the heavenly banquet table with the Lamb as our host, who will prepare before us a lavish meal, with the finest of foods and richest of drinks, where we will never go hungry, where we will never be thirsty again, where we will find eternal rest, eternal peace and comfort.

**“Come, all you who are thirsty! Come to the waters!”** Amen!