"I Thirst" -- John 19:28-29"

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Emmett, Idaho
21 March Anno Domini 2001
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"I am poured out like water,
and all My bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax,
it is melted within My breast." Psalm 22:14

Dear Baptized,

The soul adrift upon the face of the deep longs for that which satisfies, and amazingly, what is needed, is omnipresent. Truly God is present in all places, and while this is most certainly true, still the soul of man hungers and searches for Him. How could this be that God is present everywhere and the soul that is without God is dead and dying?

We gain a hint of this impossible situation of ours in several familiar lines of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's masterpiece "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." In that ballad the lone sailor, who slew the albatross that hovered over the face of the deep and near the ship, was tormented by what he had done. The fallen sailor and the vessel he inhabited were dying of thirst in the middle of a great body of water. He declared:

"Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink."

At first we may not have understood how this could be. However, when we know the circumstances of the ship and the sailor, we understand completely. The sailor was surrounded by the ocean's salt water and he had no fresh water to drink. From the cross-beam on the ship's mast, the dying sailor could look down upon the scene of death below him and view a desiccated vessel and an ocean of water, and yet, not see a single drop to drink. Thus, he could say through parched lips, "I thirst."

Leaving the fictional ballad and visiting the historical account, we behold Jesus and hear His next Word spoken while nailed to the leafless tree outside the gates of the city. From the cross-beam of Golgotha's staff, the Savior looks down upon the dead and dying world below Him and speaks those same words. Jesus, Who is the Water of Life, makes the same declaration. "I thirst." How can this be? Dear baptized, listen to Him!

John 19:28-29 -"After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), ‘I thirst.' A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to His mouth."

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

The Incarnate Son of God says "I thirst" in order to fulfill the Scripture. But let us be clear about this and bear in mind that this was neither an isolated, mechanical act nor an item on the Savior's itinerary dictated by Psalm 22. In other words, it is not, "Well let's see, I have everything done on the Divine checklist except say the words, I thirst. So, I will say them in order to fulfill the Word." Indeed, not! For Jesus truly did thirst with a thirst that no one else has every experienced and this fulfillment of Scripture is a statement of that fact. Jesus said "I thirst" because He had a thirst that permeated His Body and seared His Soul, and because He had more to say.

As we consider the Biblical record, there is no incident recorded when Jesus drank anything after the Passover when Jesus "took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you; for this is My Blood of the new Testament which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom'" (Matthew 26:27-29).

From there Jesus goes to the Garden of Gethsemane where the only cup before Him is the one that contains all your sins, you Christian - your sins of thought, word and deed - sins of omission and commission - sins of weakness and will; and not your sins "only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). As Jesus beholds that cup of sin, death and Divine wrath, He states to His sinful, sleepy disciples: "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death" (Matthew 26:38) and He petitions His holy, righteous Father: "‘Father, if Thou art willing, removed this cup from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done.' And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:42 & 44). In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus' soul was being wrung for you and His Body began to be dehydrated for you. Is it any wonder that we will hear Him say, "I thirst" ?

Jesus is taken prisoner and hauled before the officials and the courts of church and state where He is verbally assaulted and physically abused. He does receive a bit of moisture but it was when "they spat in His face" (Matthew 26:67). What a wretched, ugly, awful business this is! The men of this world spat in the face of God! Man would not put up with this degrading act when committed by another man. What, in the world, would God do? Behold, He takes it without a word, bearing every disgusting transgression of man in His Soul and in His Body. Jesus is mocked and slapped. The Christ is cursed and struck. He is taunted and hit. In His soul, Jesus was being parched for you, and in His Body, He continued to suffer the loss of water for you. Is it any wonder that from the cross we will hear Him say, "I thirst" ?

The Roman governor orders Jesus to be scourged. The infliction of this cruel form of punishment, sometimes termed the forty lashes less one, could kill. The scourge would lay open the back of the victim and blood would flow and result in further dehydration. So badly was the Christ hurt in this scourging that, though He started to carry His cross to Golgotha, He was not able to finish the death march because "as they were marching out, they came upon a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; this man they compelled to carry His cross" (Matthew 27:32). The scourging of Jesus the Christ resulted in a further loss of water and Blood, and once again, "they spat on Him" (Matthew 27:30). Do you understand why, from the cursed tree we hear Jesus say, "I thirst" ?

"And they brought Him to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). And they offered Him wine mingled with myrrh; but He did not take it. And they crucified Him" (Mark 15:22-

23). Crucifixion causes a raging thirst as the shock and pain and suffering and the loss of blood combine to bring forth a tremendous desire for water. Jesus has now shed His precious Blood from His back at the scourging, from His head at the coronation with the crown of thorns, and from His hands and feet when the Roman nails pierced Him. During His crucifixion, Jesus suffers spiritual thirst as He endures the consequences of the hellish fires, of being forsaken by God and of bearing your awful sentence for sins and for Sin. Even after His sin-atoning death, the Water of Life and the Blood of Jesus poured forth when "one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out Blood and Water" (John 19:34). Dear baptized - those of you who have been cleansed by the water and the Word - those of you who have washed your "robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14), "listen to Him" as He speaks from the cross, "I thirst."

Jesus has taken your thirst upon Himself and said from the cross, "I thirst" ...
... and He says this because He has promised that "whoever drinks of the Water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:13-14).

The Water of Life said, "I thirst" ...
... in order that we may join the psalmist and say, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:2) and that we may be among those who are blessed and satisfied, namely "those who hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Matthew 5:6).

The Righteous One said, "I thirst" ...
... so that you might never have to thirst a single instant in hell, but instead, may drink deeply of and from "the LORD, the Fountain of Living Water" (Jeremiah 17:13).

The Fountain of Living Water said, "I thirst" ...
... in order that you might be one of those whom John saw in Paradise. Of them the apostle whom Jesus loved wrote: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev. 7:16-17).

"Behold! The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) said, "I thirst" for another reason, namely, that we might "Listen to Him." For He has more to say and what He will say needs to be heard by both the world and the church. His mouth and lips and tongue are parched and dry. He needs water for what He will say next. He is capable of uttering a single word and does so by saying, "dipso," that is, "I thirst." For the words that follow, He needs to have His mouth moistened that He may be heard.

"A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to His mouth." There is no compassion here. Those in charge of this gruesome form or execution will moisten the mouth but surely the acidic vinegar would also burn, thus adding to the pain. These vultures have kept this elixir at hand so that they might be able to hear what the dying said. There are also bystanders who are interested in what Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews might have to say. Indeed, everyone at the foot of the cross ought to hear what He will say.

Hyssop, as it was prescribed by the LORD to daub the blood of the lamb on the lintel and doorposts

on the first Passover during the days preceding the exodus, is here enlisted to swab the mouth of Jesus. And just what does our Lord say? I invite you to enter into His Presence next Wednesday evening that you might continue to ... "Listen to Him." Amen.