

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Festival of Pentecost  
May 24, 2026  
Sermon by Pastor Jon D. Buchholz  
***Drink deeply. Pour abundantly.***

—John 7:37-39

Picture some poor fellow stumbling across the open desert under the blazing sun. His canteen is empty. His throat is parched.

He makes his way over a little ridge in the desert, and he can't believe his eyes! Spread out in front of him is an oasis. A spring is bubbling up crystal clear water out of the ground. There's a beautiful pool of water surrounded by trees, shade, a little patch of grass. Is he delirious? Is it just a mirage? Are his eyes playing tricks on him? No, it's real! He makes his way down the embankment to the shore of the shimmering pool. He puts his hand out and touches the water. It's cool and refreshing. He splashes the water with his hands. It feels so good! He looks at the water, and he thinks, "It's so beautiful!" He imagines how delicious, how refreshing that water would feel on his parched throat.

The next day a search-and-rescue party looking for the man finds him lying by the pool. He's dead! What happened? Was the water out of reach? No! Was there something in the water that poisoned him? No, the water's fine. The man died of dehydration. He saw the water. He touched the water. He imagined the refreshing water going down his throat. But he never drank the water.

"That's absurd!" you say. "No one who's dying of thirst would ever find an oasis and then not drink from it. No one would just sit on the shore and look at the water and imagine how it tastes."

I agree! Absurd, foolish, whatever you want to call it—but that's what people do spiritually all the time.

It's not a one-to-one comparison, but picture a similar situation in the spiritual realm. People are dying of spiritual thirst. They are plagued with guilt; fighting spiritual battles, wrestling with temptation; they're overwhelmed by anxiety, consumed by what other people think of them, with image and status; they're terrified of death. They look fine on the outside, but on the inside they're dried up and dehydrated, spiritually parched. (We human beings are pretty good at putting on a good front for others and masking how we're really doing. "How are you?" "I'm fine! Everything's good!" when on the inside we're really dying.) So, what's the answer? They know about Jesus. They've heard about Jesus. They can imagine life with Jesus and how good it could be. But they don't *drink* from Jesus. They don't drink and take in the refreshing, living, life-giving water that Jesus gives us to drink.

That's Jesus' invitation: *On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and called out, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink!"* What does it mean to drink from Jesus? Remember back to Jesus' visit with the woman at Jacob's well. Jesus said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water" (John 4:10). To drink from Jesus is to receive what Jesus gives us and to find spiritual refreshment. The gifts of forgiveness, eternal life, immortality—those gifts from Jesus don't just fall out of the sky and land on people. No, Jesus dispenses living water, spiritual refreshment when he pours out his Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit works through the gospel. That's it. That's the only way our faith is fed and strengthened, that's the only way we get closer to Jesus, whenever the Good News is proclaimed and the sacraments are ministered. When we hear his voice, when we listen to his Word, then he gives us his Spirit, and his Spirit fills us. Through the means of grace, the gospel in word and sacrament, Jesus gives us to drink from the life-giving fountain. "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

But, here's the question: Is it possible to hear the Word of God, read the Word of God, use the Word of God but not drink from the living water Jesus gives us for our refreshment? I'm sorry to say that the answer is "Yes." In fact, it's a sin that I'm guilty of all too often. I read God's Word in my daily Bible reading, and instead of drinking it in, savoring in, being refreshed by it, I mark it off my daily to-do list without appropriating it, taking it to heart, and quenching the thirst of my thirsty soul. That's a sin I find myself needing to repent of all too frequently; maybe you do too. The same thing can happen when we hear God's Word preached or taught. We can sit and mark time, counting the minutes until the service or the Bible class is over, thinking about what we're going to do next. Instead of pausing and reflecting on the fact that the words we are hearing from Scripture are the very words of God, and they are life!

Often we don't drink deeply of Jesus and fill our souls with his life-giving gospel because a lot of days we're just not that thirsty for what Jesus is pouring. And we're not that thirsty for the living water Jesus gives because we are happy and satisfied and filled with a lot of other things. Not bad things, just other, less important things. Fun times. Fun toys. Fun friends. Life is full, life is fun. We know we should avoid sinful things that will cause us to fall into sin and temptation. But often the things that keep us from drinking deeply of Jesus are perfectly good things, not wrong things.

Like a sugary, sweet sports drink that gives you wiiiings and fills us up, when what we really need is a good, refreshing drink of water. Sometimes good things fill us up and keep us from better things—especially from the *one* thing that our soul needs. It's not wrong to enjoy sports, to play sports, to love sports. But when your sports schedule keeps you from drinking deeply from the waters of life, then you will die on the inside, even while you are strong and vibrant and excelling athletically on the outside. It's not wrong to play video games—as long as they're not full of murderous, violent, lustful, worldly junk—but when they consume you and eat up your time, while your soul is dying, then a perfectly innocent pastime will lead you away from Jesus and into the pit of hell. It's good to have friends, but when our friends say, "Let's go to the lake and forget worship," then our good friends are leading us in a bad direction. It's not wrong to work an honest job for an honest wage. But when your perfectly good job keeps you out of God's house and away from Word and Sacrament, then all you are doing is selling your soul for minimum wage. And that is about as foolish as it can get.

Jesus holds out something way better. Come to him and drink deeply. Drink in his Word, and let it refresh your soul. Receive his body and blood in Holy Communion, eat, drink, and be satisfied. Be filled with the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit produces in you the fruit of his Spirit. Your life will abound with love for God and for others, with joy, with peace that transcends all understanding, with patience, with kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Your life belongs to God. Your time belongs to him. Your body belongs to him. Your purpose, meaning, and fulfillment of your life are all wrapped up in him, because the life you live in the body you no longer live for yourself but for him, who loved you and gave himself for you (Galatians 2:20). Drink deeply of Jesus, and you will be enriched by his Spirit, so that you can grasp life that is truly life. Drink deeply of Christ.

Then when you have drunk deeply of Christ, pour abundantly. Pour abundantly into the lives of others.

Do you know the easiest way is to pour abundantly? It is to overflow with the grace and riches of Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us, "*As the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from deep within the person who believes in me.*" When your own cup is overflowing, it is second nature to pour into the lives of those around you. When we are parched and dry and spiritually thirsty ourselves, we have nothing to give, nothing to pour. Without Jesus, we have no well to draw from. With Jesus abounding and overflowing in our lives, we ourselves become vessels of living water through whom Christ flows to others. It's a simple equation; When you drink deeply of the living water, and you are filled with the Holy Spirit, then you are ready to pour abundantly.

Maybe it looks like this: You get to know your neighbor, and your neighbor learns that you are Christian, a disciple of Jesus, so he asks you a spiritual question. Maybe confides some personal struggles he's wrestling with. He's looking for answers, and he comes to you for answers. And because you are overflowing with living water, you're ready to give an answer. You share the Good News of Jesus, forgiveness, eternal life. You pour abundantly, and the Spirit flows freely through you and through the words he gives you to speak.

Or maybe it looks like this: Your coworkers watch you when you're on the job. You don't talk like the other employees do. You don't use filthy language to make yourself look cool. You don't talk bad about the boss when she's not around. You work hard all the time, not just when people are watching, because in your own heart you know that you're working for the Lord, not for men. You approach your work with joy and faithfulness, even when it's hard and the job is by every account miserable. But it becomes obvious that you have a different spirit—the Holy Spirit, who lives in you—and that the Holy Spirit who lives in you completely changes your attitude, your work ethic, your whole approach to life. And because you've drunk deeply of the love of God in Christ and are filled with his Spirit, you are able to pour abundantly into the lives of all around you.

Our Savior Jesus drank deeply. On the cross he suffered the torments of hell, and he drank the bitter cup of suffering to the dregs for us and for our salvation. He has poured his Spirit into our hearts, the Spirit who on this day of Pentecost cries out, "*Abba, Father!*" As Christians, disciples of Jesus, followers of our Savior, we drink deeply of his grace and find refreshment in his Word and Sacrament. Then we can in turn pour his grace abundantly into every life we touch.

Drink deeply of Christ! Pour abundantly of his Spirit! Amen.