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Sermon 410 - John 19:28-29

I Am Thirsty

My wife and I went to a new doctor the other day, and we were kind of nervous meeting what could be our new primary care physician. We had done our research and found that not only is this man a doctor but he is also a lawyer, and that sounded pretty remarkable and good enough for us. But though you knew credentials you still didn't know how he would be. He walks in and right away we get a good impression. We begin small talk and I learn his daughter goes to the University of Texas in Austin. And I just so happen to be a huge Longhorns fan. From there we commiserate about the sorry state of the Football program, talk about Colt McCoy and how he should have gotten more of shot on the Redskins. I tell him I think there is conflict with the head coach Grudem and he says there's something there. We're on the same page for college football, and after spending some time in the South there is something to that. And the rest is history. We have found a doctor because we made a connection.

And what I want to talk about is that *there is tremendous power in a person who gets it.* Get's what? Well whatever you are feeling basically. Maybe for you, you connect over the Blackhawks. Or maybe over a certain brand of clothing, coffee, or restaurant. Maybe you bond over kids, or over pets, emotions or experiences. There are so many connections to be made. Reminds me of a C.S. Lewis quote, he said, "Friendship ... is born at the moment when one man says to another "What! You too?"

To take things a bit further a conversation is being made of the difference between Sympathy and Empathy. I've heard Dr. Brene Brown speak who has written books like, "I thought it was just me, but it isn't" And I wanted to share with a video she produced illustrating the difference between Sympathy and Empathy. So empathy again, is perceiving what they perceive. Empathy is therefore a very powerful emotion you can give to someone else.

While it is very powerful to have this empathetic exchange between people, how much more powerful isn't it when we connect to God in an empathetic way. And that is what we want to dive in and discuss today. How specifically Jesus connects to us empathetically. Now a bit about Jesus, little bit of doctrine to guide our discussion. First we know that he is fully God, as it says, "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." So he is 100% God. But then there is the other side of the nature of Christ. He had human ancestry, born of Mary, he is identified as the Son of man, made like us in every way, and as we heard in our first lesson, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin." (Hebrews 4:15)

And the incredible implications of his humanity is that he relates to us. We don't have to explain to him our troubles at work. As a carpenter who worked with wood, and I guess wood can be hard to work with, he knew the challenges. We don't have to explain to him the heart break of people who disappoint us. His own family didn't believe he was the Messiah, and his disciples didn't seem to pick up what he was putting down even though he was the master

teacher. We don't have to wonder if he understands physical pain and ailments. We see him hanging on the cross and we know he relates to physical suffering.

So let us identify some more the hope we have in Jesus humanity. We are in this series Words of Life from a dying man. Jesus hangs on a cross for about 6 hours, and with his final statements, as he breathes his last he gives such life and hope to us. Today's words are written from the disciple John who was one of the only ones there standing at the foot of the cross. We read. So there it is. One simple greek word that communicates I am thirsty. Dipso. May God bless our discussion of this word.

I have a brother in law who is a personal trainer and I got a kick out of a Facebook post he was tagged in. It said, "I now have a very clear understanding of Coach Don Weston's SAPEX training . He kicked my butt and rearranged my hairdo .. whew!" And knowing my brother in law quite well I knew he could do this. For it was just months ago visiting in FL I asked if we could have a session together. And he agreed. What happened next was not pretty at all. In fact I was done with the session, and a lady I'd never met said to me, "I enjoyed watching you get tortured." Uhh thanks? Does anyone know what I'm talking about worked with a personal trainer, or perhaps a physical therapist after surgery. I took my first spin class, another experience I won't soon forget. In all these instances it looks like there is something being done to you, when in reality it is something you signed up to do.

This relates to what is happening to Jesus. You may think these are all unspeakable things being done to Jesus, when in reality this is what Jesus is allowing and even calculated, yes this is what Jesus chose to do. This comes across in our first verse that says, "Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." (John 19:28) So he had already fulfilled Scriptures and now he does it again. At the time he chooses he will fulfill Scripture, particularly Psalm 22, "My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death." He is fulfilling this Scripture by communicating his need. It was all part of the plan. One commentator said, "Keep in mind that while the entire crucifixion seemed to onlookers like something that was done to Jesus, it was actually something that Jesus chose to do." (Steven Furtick)

And is it possible that just as there was purpose in his pain, he might have a purpose to our own pain? I believe so. I just want to tell you. *There was purpose in his pain, and he grants purpose to our pain.*

It reminds me of the story of Bethany Hamilton, also known as the Soul Surfer. In 2003 she was 13 years old swimming in Kauai, Hawaii when a tiger shark attacked, and she lost her left arm. In spite of her experience she went back to surfing just a month later, and is a world reknown women's surfer. She had an interesting quote about her experience, "I wouldn't change what happened to me because then I wouldn't have this chance, in front of all of you, to embrace more people than I ever could have with two arms." It's interesting because she is not the only one I've heard this year who had a traumatic, awful experience and yet wouldn't change what happened. All because of the purposes God placed in that pain. Even Joseph had to tell his brothers, You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.

Friends, I'm not sure we ever have to get to that level with all our pain and our experiences here in the sinful world. Some are too bitter. But with the knowledge that God

works all things for the good of those who love him, we still have the assurance our pain is not wasted, it is rather used by God for purposes far beyond what we imagine.

But what did Jesus drink? You know it is interesting this is not the first drink Jesus was offered. Earlier in the account he was also offered wine mixed with myrrh. From the disciple Mark's account, "Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it." Doing a bit of research is considered by some a narcotic, that would have been used to dull the pain. One commentator said it was given to those crucified so the soldiers wouldn't have to listen to their screams. But Jesus refused this drink. And in so doing felt the full weight of the pain and punishment. The second drink he had, and this time consumed dealt only with wine mixed with vinegar. Some have said it was the poorman's wine. So equivalent to Boonsfarm, 3 buck chuck, and boxed wine. But more than this literal cup is the other cup talked about in the Garden of Gethsemane. The cup Jesus asked if possible might be taken away but wasn't.

For *Jesus drinks the cup of God's wrath*. A commentator said, "Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath to the dregs so we would never have to taste it." (Steven Furtick) And he needed to, consider what it says in Romans, "He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:25-26) Yes, what he is drinking that day is so much more than wine vinegar. It is the cup of punishment for the sins of the world. He is drinking in what I deserve for all of my sins, for being an annoying brother, a disrespectful child, a lazy student, a bad friend, for times of greed and lust. He is drinking in what you deserve for any and all of your sins. And *as he is drinking that cup he satisfies our spiritual thirst*.

There is a story in the New Testament a Samaritan woman at a well. And this woman has been searching, she is spiritually thirsty but can't find a drop to drink. Jesus points out her thirst in the dialogue they had when he points out she has had 5 husbands, and she is not married to the man she is currently with. She is looking for love, she is restless to find something or someone who will meet her needs but she cannot find it. But Jesus says to her, "whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:14) So he speaks of forgiveness possible in spite of her sin. He speaks to satisfaction in love that can finally be found because she knows the Savior, standing right in front of her. And he speaks to us.

Because I don't know about you, I am thirsty. I long for something that will fill the desire to be known completely warts and all, and loved entirely. And that satisfying, unending, soul-quenching drink is found in Jesus. He is here for you today. Calling you to the living waters. Calling you to be free of an unfulfilled, restless, longing life - and to find what you need in him. Because we like that Samaritan woman have sin. Maybe our story does include 5 husbands, but it does include sin. And the waters that wash away that sin were found, because Jesus drank from the cup of God's wrath. And yes he drank it down to the dregs. So you and I would never have to drink it.

Reminds me of Apple Cider Vinegar which has to be the worst smelling liquid or one of them that you actually drink. It supposed to have health benefits, I sure hope so for the process it takes to gulp it down. But here we find Jesus drinking our apple cider vinegar, or wine vinegar, and as a result we have been made well. How good is this.

You know I saw a great cat video the other day. I'd like to share with you. So there it is, proving you can train cats if you have the right food. I wonder how long they kept ringing that bell. And you can train most things with food. Dogs put some peanut butter on a play ball, kids tell them they get Cuddles if they do the chores. Spouses ok maybe not all of things. But I have a point which character in the video are you more like. The cat, the needy one, saying give me give me, or the hand actually responding to the request. I know it's a silly video but I will make a spiritual point come with me, come with me.

Aren't we too often like that needy cat. We're needy friends. Hey friend I rang the bell, sent the text, answer me. Hey spouse, I need you to do this for me. Hey co-worker, get on my page here, help me out. Ding, ding, ding. Some of us are walking around life ringing the bell saying to everyone else, "Answer me, attend me. Here I am. My Needs. My priorities!! Hello, I rang the bell!" To take this further, the activity is spawned because of selfishness. It says I'm more important than you, my ways are better, and it's all about me. Selfishness is at the root of sin, and of this we should repent my friends.

And this attitude just loses something when we see Jesus on the cross. Jesus who is the neediest one on Good Friday answering our needs by drinking the cup of God's wrath. Jesus who attended to the needs of his Mom that day, or a thief who needed redemption. This Jesus who was pictured by imagery of hyssop. Did I tell you about this yet? Hyssop the branch that bore the sponge, it doesn't mean much to us, but it was used in the Passover. It was something every Jew would pick up on. The hyssop branches were used to put the blood of the lamb over the doorframe, so that God's wrath would passover them. So here is the greater lamb, and the greater hyssop. The greater lamb shedding more precious blood that spares us of the wrath of God. And instead speaks life, speaks forgiveness, speaks salvation to us. The wrath of God has passed over you forever. There is now no condemnation for you who are in Christ! You forgiven, redeemed, restored, repurposed, redefined, and rejuvenated all because of this needy one meeting your needs.

And so what if you and I transitioned from the ones ringing the bell, to the ones answering the bell for others? Or to get to my point what if we *move from needy to needed*. This I think is something worthy for us to work towards, to continue pursuing.

This passed week I met someone who remembers a simple act of kindness over a year ago. Over a year ago someone walked into Amazing Love, needed a simple meal. So I took that person to Subway. It was a tipping point in their life that led to drastic change. And this person came just a week ago to say, "I am now here to help you." And there are always avenues to help out in the church so we showed where. A simple Subway sandwich was repaid with remembrance and spurred on a new activity of giving back.

You may not be there yet. You may have come perhaps new to Christianity, and by the way welcome if you are new. And all you may be able to do right now is to humbly ask give. God give to me peace, forgiveness, love. God fill me. God give. And I will tell you again. This the Gospel that God gave and did everything for you. That he knows how to fill empty hands with the fullness of spiritual realities, and meet physical needs as well. And I will say again what I've said before, He is way more concerned about what he might give to you than what he will get from you. So if I label my hands. Maybe you are or were at a point where they just were open and said, "Get."

But as faith progresses and we have received it is also ours to give. Because our needs are met to now respond to the needs of others. Here's what Mark recorded, "Whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45) So as Jesus did for us, now we do for others. Maybe one hand is for receiving, but than the other is for giving, for serving. As God answered our bell, we are free and liberated to answer the bell for the needs of others.

And the church actually is a great place to use that giving, serving hand. You know a debate rages inside of any church. And the debate goes like this, whose function is more important a pastor's or the congregations? It's a bit of a false dichotomy because both are supremely important and they need to work together to do anything great. So maybe I'll ask it this way, who can accomplish more for the kingdom? A pastor or the congregation? A pastor is just one person, with one voice, and one set of hands. There will always be a limit to his capacity of service. But the congregation is a myriad of voices, talents, sets of hands, and feet. If we take this giving/serving hand seriously there's no limit to what we might accomplish together. So what might we do or continue to do. Are you serving alongside of us, is there anything God has put in you to extend the kingdom of God with? I know there is. There is so much we have done, and there is still so much we can do together.

But how far should we go in serving and giving. I think Jesus answered that by saying, "I thirst." It identifies that he wasn't just a sympathizer but an empathizer. Someone who lived in our world, who felt our pain, who knows us. All so he could help us, and respond to our greatest need of forgiveness. How low will we be willing to go to serve others? That is what the kingdom of God is built upon. When we stoop down in empathy and love to meet the needs of others. In this God is glorified. In this we reflect what the Son has done for us. May God bless us to do this. Amen.