

They say one of the fruits of the Spirit is the searching of Scripture. There is a difference between the searching of Scripture and reading the Bible for the sake of being able to say, "I read the Bible today." There is a difference between the searching of Scripture and memorizing favorite verses of Scripture. There is nothing wrong with those, but if we are to grow in our walk with God it is important to search the Scriptures with the hope of figuring out what God is trying to say, and what message we need to hear. Very often it is a journey between what we think the Bible says, and what is actually in Scripture. I like to think of it as an adventure. For example; this morning's text says,

After this Jesus knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the scripture), "I thirst."

John 19:28, RSV

Immediately, I thought I knew what this Scripture was all about. **(pause)** Have any of y'all ever done that? Have any of y'all ever read a passage of Scripture and thought, "I know this passage. I know what is going on in this verse." **(pause)** John 19:28 was one of those verses for me.

I immediately thought about the doctors, nurses, firefighters, police and all of the other first responders in the Bahamas following hurricane Dorian. I thought of the first responders on the scene for hours, days and weeks following the attacks on 9-11. They had very little sleep, probably very little to eat and the trauma and stress of what they saw must have been a terrible load to bear. It must have been very hard. Then I thought about life guards working at the beach or the Denton pool. Church, y'all help me out. Which life guard would you want watching your kids or grandkids at the beach? Do you want the life guard who is hung over from being up late and partying all night, or do you want the life guard who is well rested and alert? **(pause for response)** I want the well rested life guard who is paying attention. My first thought is this passage is about taking care of ourselves so we can take care of others.

Then I thought about how Jesus is fully human and fully God. God was not created. God has always been. Since before the beginning of time, God was there. Human beings can and do die. Jesus Christ died on the cross. That proves Jesus was fully human. But the fact is, Jesus rose from the grave. This is proof Jesus is also fully God since God was not created and cannot be destroyed.

I gotta tell ya, I thought I had this one all figured out. I really did. And ya know, I really try to be a good pastor. I don't always get it right, but I try. So, even though I thought I had this one all figured out, I decided to check my work. I started digging through Scripture to the other times the word thirst is used. I was pleasantly reminded of the passage of Jesus and the woman at the well. Jesus asked this woman for a drink of water to start a conversation. Jesus then proceeds to tell the Samaritan woman, "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 4:10-11, RSV). Then in John 6:35 Jesus says, "I am the bread of life, he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst."

As I read these familiar verses I could not help but wonder if maybe Jesus is saying, "I thirst," for a totally different reason than I thought. How could He who is the bread of life and the giver of living water be thirsty? Had His spiritual spigot have been closed off? Just like last week I found myself thinking, "That don't make no sense!" **(pause)** But I didn't give up. I dug a little deeper. I thought this verse was about Jesus being thirsty, but this verse is about something more. This passage is about the fulfillment of Scripture. Hear these words from Psalm 69 verses 19-21.

Psalm 69:19-21, RSV

¹⁹ Thou knowest my reproach,
and my shame and dishonor;
my foes are all known to thee.

²⁰ Insults have broken my heart,
so that I am in despair.
I looked for pity and there was none;
and for comforters, but I found none.

²¹ They gave me poison for food,
and for my thirst they gave me
vinegar to drink.”

Brothers and sisters, Jesus was thirsty. He was dying on the cross. I cannot imagine there was a square inch of his body that did not itch, burn, hurt or bleed. It is not hard to expect Jesus would have been thirsty, but that is not why Jesus said, “I thirst.” Even in the midst of Jesus’ pain, anguish and despair He still had an eye toward being obedient to God and the fulfillment of God’s Word. The Psalmist wrote, “They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (Psalm 69:21). I don’t know if Jesus wanted Vinegar. I don’t know if the Vinegar somehow helped Jesus body to shut down to end his suffering after the brutal torture Jesus endured. But the bottom line is Jesus fulfilled all of the prophecies about Himself. Jesus was completely obedient, even unto death; a traitor’s on the cross.

As disciples of Jesus Christ we are to try to be as much like Jesus Christ as we can. In Antioch the followers of the way of Jesus Christ were made fun of, and called Christians, or Little Christ’s as a joke (Acts 11:26). What would it look like to be at least as devoted to the way of Jesus Christ as the disciples in Antioch? We call ourselves Christians because we come to church; we believe in God, and we may have even been saved. However, when I think about what happened in Antioch that seems backwards. They were disciples of Jesus Christ first. They were baptized disciples first. Only then, because of the way their lives were changed, were they made fun of for being disciples of Jesus Christ and called Christians. John Wesley was called a Bible moth, and a Methodist because of the methodical way he devoted himself to God. Now I realize we live in the Bible belt where people assume everybody is a Christian. The only difference in this area is do they attend a Baptist Church, or a Methodist Church.

What would it look like to be so devoted to Jesus Christ as to stand out as different or odd in this area? (pause) What would it look like to be obedient enough to God that we call into question the ways we have done church up until now? (pause) How badly do we want to know the answer? (pause) Are we willing to search Scripture - to have your ideas challenged? (pause) How important is it to us to be like Jesus so that when times of trial come we are able to respond obediently so that others might see Christ more clearly? (pause) When was the last time we went on an adventure by searching through Scriptures? My sisters and brothers, where does our obedience end; when it is safe? When it is convenient? Where did it end for Jesus?

In the name of Jesus Christ,
Amen