

## John 19:17-18, 26-30

*...carrying the cross by himself, Jesus went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them....*

*When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.*

*After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), 'I am thirsty.' A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

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Thirst

What do you thirst for?

Long for with all your heart?

Would do just about anything for?

When I was a teenager, my family drove through Arizona to see the Grand Canyon. We'd come a long way from the Midwest, and we were crammed in with all of our luggage, hurtling down a strip of highway across the desert. There was no air conditioning, back then in the dark ages, so our car windows were down just a crack, open enough to let in some air, but rolled up high enough to keep out all the sand and dust. We were Minnesotans, not really prepared for the heat, not understanding desert life – how vast it is, how far you might go before you can get more water. And we had *none* to drink.

I was parched. I remember clearly how it felt, watching the road markers roll by, one after another, noting each tenth-mile interval as they stretched on endlessly, me -- the kid --straining to see some place where we might stop and find something to drink. I was so thirsty.

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Maybe that's why I found it so compelling, years later, when I was talking with women about their school experiences – something I probably took for granted. One elderly woman taught me what it had been like to actually be able to go to school, in a time when girls had very few educational options. She said this: “It was like a cup of cold water to a thirsty girl.”

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What would be a cup of cold water to *your* thirsty girl, boy, man, woman –to your thirsty soul?

For me, the thing I most thirsted for has been different at different times of my life. When I was having great difficulty having children, being able to birth a baby was my great thirst. Another time, when a job had ended very badly, my thirst was to reclaim my sense of self, to no longer wake each morning feeling ashamed. At a time of sadness as deep as an abyss, I thirsted for the tears to stop flowing.

At all these times, at some deep, deep level, I thirsted for someone who cares for me, values me, would miss me if I were gone, sees me for who I really am and thinks I'm okay –or maybe even thinks I'm marvelous! Someone or something to give me the strength --when I don't seem to have it myself -- to go on.

For I have found, when I have that thirst quenched -- my sense of myself, my dignity, value, worth affirmed -- then I thirst for those same things for others, too. For this world to be a kinder place, a less cruel place, where some don't have to walk miles for their water, where employees don't have to wait to get a sip of water until the boss allows it.

I thirst for justice –the thing Jesus talked of when he urged us to hunger and thirst for righteousness -- right relations with one another and God – and, said Jesus, we would receive everything else as well. Something powerful *does* happen when we live for more than ourselves. Life does have a deeper meaning, for which we all thirst, don't we?

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But are all these thirsts - all these yearnings to be known and loved, all these hopes for a life with more meaning – are they all just “pie in the sky,” the stuff of dreams, not reality? Look what happened to Jesus: who did talk about love and justice; who did say that God loves us endlessly, without bounds; who did say God forgives us not just once or twice, but over and over and over again; who did proclaim that God offers us all that we need, like endless water to thirsty souls....

Jesus, who promised just the thing that we want so much –it only got him killed. The world heard all those promises, and sucker-punched him. Roman soldiers beat him

up. They killed him. And Jesus' friends - the ones he promised to always love - they scattered, so afraid that they would be the next ones attacked.

And today, when the moment comes on Good Friday, when Jesus is being crucified on a cross, when it is he who is just thirsty, just wants a cup of cold water, all he gets is vinegar.

Oh what we humans can do to each other! When we have the chance to relieve another's pain, we only further it. You may have done that to someone. Someone has probably done that to you.

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So today's question, the one that hangs in the balance as surely as Jesus hangs on the cross, is this one: Is today the end of the story? Is that the end of Jesus's story? Did Jesus live his whole life, teaching about God's unending love and compassion, about forgiveness and new life, about justice for all, just to end up thirsting for a cup of cold water, and then it is over?

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Here is what I have come to in my searching. Here is what I have come to trust: Jesus lives his whole life wanting us to know that God thirsts for us, yearns for you, wants you to know that you are valued, that you are marvelous, that you were made in the very image of God, and that when God saw you created, God said, It was very, very good.

All of us fail. We fail miserably. We even sometimes hand the very ones we love bitter vinegar when they ask for just a cup of cold water.

But God's Love is stronger. It outlasts anything. It goes to any lengths to try to reach us. It never ends.

Hear these words of Jesus today, that landed him on the cross: I love you. I yearn for you. I thirst for you. I just want you to know new life and love.

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Some part of you must have glimpsed this -- somewhere --or you would not have walked in this door. Somewhere, something nudged you to come: a memory of your grandmother or a child, a song you heard or a breath-taking sight you saw, and you sensed that there *is* a deep power of Love at work in this universe, a power some of us call "God." Something has made you thirsty to drink in a bit more of that hope and love. Me, too.

This place – King's Chapel – is never just a gathering of all strong, firm believers. It's always also been a place where people have had the freedom to doubt and question, also. It's a place to ask real questions, to use both our heads and hearts.

So we stumble in even when we're very unsure, trusting there might be someone here, maybe in another pew, who has a little bit of advice or wisdom to share. This is a place where we know we may disagree, but sense nonetheless that *some* little word, some note of music, some sight of beauty in this space, might be – for a moment – a taste of cold water for our thirsty souls.

This is not a place of blind faith, but a place where our eyes are open and we look squarely at the world and its problems; we look squarely at the horror of Jesus on the cross; we look right at our own failings. And after looking at all that, we still insist: that's not all there is. There *is* a deeper meaning to life for which I yearn, for which I thirst, and I want that – I will *thirst* for that. It's worth searching for.

God is worth searching for.

This is a place where we look right at the crucifixion on Good Friday and look beyond it to Sunday's resurrection and hope.

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For what do you thirst today? What do you miss in your life?

Love Unending says to you: I thirst *for you*. You, God's precious child.