

GOOD FRIDAY + + +

| SETH FLICK

It's a beautiful song to sing on Good Friday. You have two things that you can focus on, right? You can focus on that which is broken, or you can focus on that which is put on Jesus on the cross. And I wonder, when we look at life right now, how much of our focus is on that which is broken and trying to hide the brokenness, and we forget about what's on the cross.

Just think about how much time we spend trying to clean up all the pieces, or trying to push them away behind us and hide them, so it looks like everything's okay, life's fine, I got it under control, but really, we're just trying to piece together little broken pieces, and we're not even looking at the big picture, the more important thing in our life. The more and more we do that, the more desperate we become, the thirstier we get for significance and purpose and meaning, because we've shifted our focus away from Jesus who gives us our purpose, and we focus on the things that are broken that we want to just try to be able to fix, and we just can't do that.

So we get thirstier, and we get thirstier, and we get thirstier. There's a bunch of things that Jesus says from the cross, there are seven sayings, and most of the sayings are these huge statements that get reconciled on like a big world stage when he says, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing." Is the "them" Adam and Eve thousands of years ago? Is the "them" the people that have caused them to be stricken, smitten, and afflicted? Is the "them" that he's talking about you and me? Is the "them" people that haven't even been born yet? Yes, all of those, a big, huge world problem Jesus is speaking into.

And he says, "It is finished." What's the "it"? Well, maybe this is your first time ever coming to church, and you happen into a Good Friday service. The "it" is this amazing, terrible debt of sin that we've created. Sin is where God has said, this is what life is supposed to look like, and it's going to be good for you. And we say, no, thank you. I'd rather try to figure out all the pieces of my life by myself. And as much as we're doing that, we end up trying to take other people's pieces to make our life a little bit better. So we take from them, and we take from others, and we create this giant debt that we cannot solve.

Because we can't solve that debt, there's a wrath against that. There's punishment for that, for stealing from God. But what Jesus does on that cross is he takes the wrath that was meant for you and for me because of what we've done, and he takes it away from us so that we can't pick up anymore. With his work on the cross, he says, "It is finished." The payment, that debt has been made. It's been cleared. It's all done. It is for everybody of all time. This is like a big, huge, cosmic resolution to a big problem, but it's really hard to get to those really big, big things if you don't go through something that you and I know.

That's this thing from Jesus on the cross. In John 19:28, he says, "I thirst." That's just such a human thing for him to say, but it's so confusing because according to his divinity, this is the same Jesus through whom all water was created and all of humanity was created to be able to consume that

water. But now, according to his human nature and the one person who is Jesus, because you can't separate the divine and the human, he says, "I don't have enough of that. I thirst."

I think it's good here that we connect with Jesus in this thirst. You'll find that this concept of us thirsting for something runs throughout the true story of the scriptures. As we look at what's in this story, we need to figure out two different things. There are some things that you and I thirst for, and then there's what Jesus thirsts for. So what does it mean when I say "I thirst," and what does it mean when Jesus says "I thirst"? That's what we're going to walk through tonight.

The story of thirst in the scripture can be picked up all throughout the woven, intricate story, the tapestry of the Old Testament. There's a part of the story where God's people were enslaved in Egypt and then they're made free and they start following the Lord's command and they follow Moses. Do the people enjoy that? No. In Exodus chapter 17, they look to Moses and say, "Why'd you bring us out of Egypt to wander in this desert where we will die of thirst?"

It's not just the story that happens that's woven into the Old Testament. It makes its way into the New Testament as well. Jesus in John chapter four meets a woman at a well and she's thirsty and he needs a drink as well. He knows that this theme of being thirsty is something that she needs to explore in her life. They begin to talk about the Messiah who is to come and how this Messiah, even she knows, it's going to be good, even for her. He says, "Maybe you should go and talk to your husband about this."

She then discloses that she had a thirst in her life and she began to fill it with so many other things. Not one husband, but when that didn't fill the need that she had for her thirst, she had a second one after that, then a third, then a fourth and then a fifth. The person that she was living with at that moment, when Jesus was speaking with her, wasn't even her husband. You can see a woman who is trying her hardest to find purpose and meaning in life because she thirsted so deeply. She was trying to quench that thirst with another person and another person, and she was still coming up dry.

That's where Jesus meets her and says, "I'm the living water. You don't need those men. You need this man." She is a good example of when we find someone in the story of scripture trying to quench her thirst with something that actually isn't going to do it, but Jesus has a better way.

I believe there are about five ways that just about all of us try to quench our thirst. On a day like Good Friday, where we are being confronted by our own mortality, confronted by our own sin, convicted by putting Jesus up on this cross, it's good to explore those five things because the goal of Good Friday is that whatever it is that you've thirsted for so deeply that it's affected your life, that it's caused your life to fall into shambles, to broken pieces on the bottom of the floor, those are to be left here. Those were put up on the cross. Those things that have struggled you and burdened you were killed by Jesus 2,000 years ago. So church, there is no reason why you need to leave this place tonight with the brokenness that you had to come in with.

How about those five thirsts that we have? The first one is a thirst for control. It started with the story of Adam and Eve. Satan starts telling the story like, "Hey, don't you want to be like God? Don't you want to have control over your life? I mean, he's probably not doing it the way that you would want to do it. So if you go ahead and eat from that fruit of that tree of knowledge of good and evil, you will be like God."

This is how sin comes into the world—with our efforts to control our broken lives. And we do it a little bit, right? Sometimes in very innocuous ways, like controlling the thermostat. So then we're like, we're not quite God, but we're God-ish, God-adjacent, controlling the temperature that surrounds us. Not a big deal. But then we control what we watch on TV and what we listen to in the car on the radio.

Then we try to control parents. We try to control our children so that they end up how we want them, which may not be how God wants them. How's control going for us as a society? Do you know what the other side of control is? The more you try to exert control, the more anxiety you'll have because you're going to lose it.

If you want to see a diagnosis of how control is going in your life, in terms of pieces, just look at the high level of anxiety you have in proportion to the amount of control you're trying to exert. You will find that control is a giant illusion. You have very little to no control over what happens in this kingdom. Yet we still try because we're thirsty for meaning, thirsty for purpose to exert as much control as possible in this kingdom.

What does Jesus say? He says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then all of the rest of these things that you're concerned about, that you have anxiety about, that you want to control, those things will be added to you." How's that thirst for control going? In my life, it is not working out very well.

That's not the only thirst we have. If the thirst for control isn't working out, then we usually shift to a thirst for pleasure. It's like a temporary escape from anxiety and the difficulty and the struggles and the burden. Let's look at another biblical character—Solomon. Solomon had all the ladies. And when I say all the ladies, I mean like all the ladies. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines.

If there was ever a ladies' man, it was Solomon. How did that pursuit of pleasure benefit him? The scriptures say he received annually 666 units of gold every single year through tribute and taxes, about 25 tons of gold every single year. This guy had fat stacks. He had everything he wanted—money, power, projects like a beautiful temple, ladies.

Yet when you read through the book of Ecclesiastes, he looks on all those things that maybe we chase and says, "This is all meaningless." He calls it vanity, a mist that is here today and gone tomorrow. In other works of Solomon, he says, "The man who has money will never have enough," because somebody who is pursuing pleasure will get it for an instant and chase it for a lifetime. The pursuit of pleasure actually creates more thirst.

How's that going for you? What you brought in with your thirst for pleasure—endless scrolling, addictions, gambling, pornography, drugs, booze, beer—how is that going with putting your life back together? How is that going with trying to satisfy your search for meaning and purpose? For me, the shift needs to be away from pleasure and back towards Jesus and his righteousness because Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they'll be satisfied." This is what he says in the Sermon on the Mount.

Thirst for control, not working out very well for us. Thirst for pleasure, not working out very well for us. But there's a third one where we get angry because things aren't working out very well and we don't

want to feel angry because we know that anger we're feeling is probably not righteous anger. So what do we do? We have a thirst for justice, yes, but justice without mercy.

As an example, you can see the Pharisees in Mark chapter three; a man is brought to Jesus who has a withered hand. Back in this day, if you have any kind of extremity not working very well, two things happened: according to Deuteronomy, you cannot worship in the temple, and how are you going to make a living or provide for your family?

He comes to Jesus on the Sabbath. The Pharisees actually orchestrate this man coming because they are trying to set Jesus up in a trap. They are searching and thirsting after justice without mercy. Mark chapter three says as soon as Jesus heals the man, the Pharisees leave and begin plotting to kill Jesus.

How is it, keyboard warriors? When you put all the Reddit comments on there and respond to all the Instagram posts, tearing people down, canceling them, do you feel good afterward? I don't know if anybody does, because if that satisfied that deep need, you'd stop. But it doesn't satisfy that thirst, so we keep typing away, breaking the eighth commandment: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." That means not just refraining from speaking bad about them, but protecting their identity, reputation, all of these things.

Yet we have this thirst for justice without mercy. What does Jesus say in the Sermon on the Mount? "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

Anger didn't help us, control didn't help us, pleasure was too fleeting. Maybe we just need a search for human approval. Maybe we have a really deep dad wound or mom wound—that's legitimate. Please get help. Talk to someone at church, someone who loves Jesus. Let us show you a father who actually cares about you.

But that's not what most people do. Most people try to find human approval in ways that don't help anyone, including themselves. They hurt you more and more. Then you begin to look at yourself, not as Jesus has seen you, his redeemed child, but you evaluate your identity based on your performance.

Here's the problem: once you reach a goal you thought would satisfy that thirst—say you'd be satisfied when you become the manager—you hit that and say, "That's not enough." There's another rung higher. You think, "If I just get to Vice President, I'll do whatever it takes. I'll work myself to the bone. I'll neglect my family because I want the approval to get to the VP position." But once you get there, you're still thirsty. In fact, you're thirstier because the rest of your life is broken into a million pieces. You're sacrificing yourself for human approval.

Do you want to know how many leaders in the faith community during Jesus' day acknowledged who he was but were so afraid of losing their peer approval that they didn't say a word about death threats and a death plan for Jesus?

No matter how much applause you get or what position you attain, if you look for human approval, you'll still be incredibly thirsty. Maybe it's time to listen to Jesus who says, "Whoever drinks the water that I give will never thirst."

I don't think anyone's escaped any of those thirsts; I haven't escaped any. But if you have, maybe this last thirst is the one you entertain the most: thirst for escape. Escapism—leaving, walking away from all your responsibilities, turning to someone who won't help in the long term but might help a little in the short term. You give away part of your identity, respect, core beliefs.

The Old Testament is full of examples like these. God's people don't trust the Lord to care for them and turn to the Aramaeans, Egyptians, Assyrians, and others. They worship their gods and think they'll be okay.

How's escaping going for you? Is that satisfying your thirst for life, meaning, or purpose? How about instead of escaping life, you lean in fully to Jesus who says, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I'll give you life." Because that's what he's doing right here.

That leads us to the last piece: what does Jesus thirst for when he says, "I thirst"? Yes, there's a surface-level fulfillment in the Psalms; it says his thirst will be quenched with hyssop. To fulfill all righteousness, he thirsted.

But do you want to know what he really thirsted for? He didn't thirst for approval, control, pleasure, escape, or justice without mercy. The whole point tonight is that he has only one real thirst: it's you.

He sees you trying to clean up your own life, trying to manage your household empty inside. He sees you breaking your back time after time, pursuing many things. He invites you tonight to leave that here and come to him.

If we can say "I thirst" means he thirsts for you, then we can move to "It is finished." The whole thirst process, what we're trying to look for, that thirst we have for sin that's quenched in his blood on the cross, that thirst for separation ("I can do this on my own, God, without you") is reconciled in his suffering on the cross.

That thirst we have for humanity because of our brokenness is satisfied in the fountain of his grace in the blood shed from the cross. If you leave with anything tonight, it's the invitation to leave your thirsts here and know that Jesus thirsts for you. Amen. Amen.

Let's close with prayer. Jesus, we call this night Good Friday. After we hear, see, and experience all that you went through for us, we see this is not good for you, but we call this day Good Friday because it's good for us.

It's good for us to lay down our lives, lay down our burdens, to have those ripped from our arms. It's good for us to know that you thirst for us. And now it's good for us to know that from this moment forward, we thirst for you.