

Jesus' Exit Strategy

John 7:32-39

- One of the important lessons we hopefully learned from the wars in both Vietnam and Iraq is the importance of having an exit strategy. Having an exit strategy means two things: 1) You have a goal or objective and will recognize it when you reach it and 2) you have a plan for how to extricate yourself from the conflict once you achieve your objective.
- Without a proper exit strategy, you run the risk of floundering aimlessly hoping you will eventually hit a mark that you don't even know or else being stuck on a perpetual treadmill without knowing how to get off.
- In today's passage, Jesus begins to hint at his exit strategy for his ministry. We know that his ultimate goal was to die for our sins. But then what?

Jesus' plan was to perpetuate the message of the Gospel by empowering us with the Holy Spirit.

- 32 – muttering, arrest attempt (but see 45ff);
- 33-34 – Jesus revelation
- 35-36 – misunderstanding
- 37 – similar to Woman at Well and Bread of Life, Jesus invites his listeners to believe in him. “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink” conjures up images of Isaiah 55 “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat!” We can all understand the imagery of being desperately thirsty and how much we crave and embrace a cold drink of water. Jesus is not asking for mere intellectual assent. He wants wholehearted personal involvement.
- We all know what it is to be spiritually thirsty as well. Have you come to Jesus to drink? Not just a sip or a taste but flung yourself headlong into his stream to soak him up? I've said this before but it bears repeating, there can be no ½ way with Jesus.
- 38 – Next Jesus says something new and intriguing. Shows his hand a little. Not quoting any one specific OT Scripture here but appears to be summarizing two OT concepts wrapped up in the imagery of Living Water.
- 1) The work of God WITHIN those who believe – purifying, sanctifying, strengthening. *Psalm 1* “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that

yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. (Psalm 1:1-3 ESV); Isaiah 58:11 “And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

- 2) The work of God THROUGH those who believe. The Living Water is not intended exclusively for the benefit of the believer. God wants to bless others through you – “Out of his heart...”; *Prov.4:23 “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”*
- Phrase “Living Water” only used a few times in Scripture:
 - *Jeremiah 2:13 “they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters,”;*
 - *(Jeremiah 17:13 ESV) “O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you shall be put to shame; those who turn away from you shall be written in the earth, for they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living water.*
 - *John 4:10 – Woman at the Well, Jesus speaks of “living water” that he would give to all who ask.*
 - *Revelation 7:17 “For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”*
- In saying “Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water,” Jesus is revealing his grand exit strategy, the way that he will ensure his life and ministry would carry on for thousands of years to come, that his message would be carried to the ends of the earth...it's US. We are his exit strategy.
- But not just us in our feeble human strength. Him living IN us and THROUGH us by His Spirit as John goes on to point out in (39).
- When John says, “for as yet the Spirit had not been given,” not saying there had been no work of the Spirit up to this time. We see the work of the Spirit throughout the OT: present from the very beginning – hovering over the face of the waters in Gen. 1:2, active in the work of Creation, working through the prophets to bring the message of the Lord; We even see Him actively at work in the lives of specific believers – Joshua, David, Ezekiel, Daniel, Micah.
- What this verse must mean, then, is that the Spirit had not yet been given in the full and powerful way that was promised for the New Covenant age.
 - *Ezekiel 37:14 And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land.*
 - *“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the*

male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. (Joel 2:28-29 ESV)

- Promised by Jesus in John 14, 15, 16.
- The difference is this – in the OT, the Spirit would come upon a specific individual, for a specific period of time, to fulfill a specific purpose. But under the new covenant, the Spirit indwells and empowers all believers all the time and for every good purpose.
- So think about the implications – Jesus strategy was to die and return to the Father so that we could be saved and then to continue to bless the world by living in and through us.
- So as we prepare to enter a New Year, it is always good to do some self-evaluation. 1) How is your water level? Are you drinking and being refreshed daily from the Lord's presence in your life? Are you growing – closer, stronger, more obedient, more pure? Are you hearing His voice of guidance? Are you seeing the Fruit of the Spirit manifested in your life?
- 2) How much water is flowing out of you? Jesus said rivers of Living Water would flow out of our hearts. That the Spirit would not just fill us for our own sake, but so that we can also be a blessing to others. Would you consider your life to be a blessing to others? Are you allowing the Spirit to work through you to reach out to them? To touch their lives with the grace of God? To love them with the love of the Lord?
- As we approach a New Year, let us tap in to the power of the Holy Spirit in ways that we never have before. Let's strive as a church to let Him empower us to Reach UP – to grow closer, stronger, more committed to Him. Let's allow Him to empower us to Reach IN – growing more interdependent on one another within the Body of Christ. Let's allow Him to empower us to Reach OUT – continually seeking out ways to impact the world for Jesus Christ, one life at a time.
- Let's be Living Water people.