

“Spotlight” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Pentecost Day – May 28, 2023

- I. **John 7:38-39** – ³⁸ Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ ³⁹ Now this He said about the Spirit
- II. **Temptations can make us discontent with who we are** and what we have...
 - a. The 19th century philosopher Søren Kierkegaard told the following parable:
 - i. There once was a lily who lived a happy life beside a little stream.
 - ii. This beautiful little flower, in its simple surroundings, was content and carefree.
 - iii. Until the day when the bird showed up.
 - iv. Now this feathered visitor was a showoff... A braggart and teller of tales... It would swoop in and fill the lily’s head full of stories of better places and far more beautiful flowers.
 - v. Each story was crafted to give the message that, in comparison to other flowers, and other places, this poor lily was a nobody... A failed lily... Simple and silly... Painfully lacking.
 - vi. Following each visit from the bird, the lily worried more... It couldn’t sleep... It stopped being happy.... It felt hopeless because it seemed it could never measure up.
 1. The beautiful little flower, once content, now realized, in comparison with others out there in the wide world, it was ugly, flawed, and stuck in this dumb place.
 - vii. But the bird was there to help... The bird had the answer...
 - viii. So together they formulated a plan, and early one morning, the bird landed beside the lily and began pecking away at the soil around its roots.
 1. Once the bird freed the lily from its home, it picked it up and flew off to the better place.
 2. The better place was where all the lilies were more beautiful... where life was fuller... and the flower told itself, “I will be worthy of the name, lily!”
 - ix. The sad thing was, they never made it.
 - x. High in the sky, without any soil... but finally free from its old home... the lily withered... and the lily died.¹
 - b. I wish the story ended on a happier note, but what is the moral of the story?
 - c. Maybe some of you can relate as people around you tempt you to think that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence... or that your life can be better because of worldly things... or that you need your time in the spotlight.
 - i. Sure, for some of you it seems like a stretch being tempted to measure up to other people’s standards or to be popular...

- ii. Yet, the sin and pride in all of us wants attention – wants to be valued – wants others to think well of us.
 - 1. Not that being valued or receiving attention is bad... however, if we are seeking it in the wrong places, we end up like the lily... withering and dying without our true source of water.

III. **Jesus is at a Jewish festival in the city of Jerusalem.**

- i. Imagine someone walking into a big crowd or big gathering and yelling out... “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” (vss 37-38)
- ii. What would you think?
 - 1. This guy is not well!
 - 2. He’s telling us to go to Him for a drink – and that whoever “believes” in Him will have an unending source of water... living water.
 - 3. Who in the world would put the spotlight on themselves like that?
 - 4. Earlier in this chapter, verse 12 says, “And there was much muttering about Him among the people. While some said, ‘He is a good man,’ others said, ‘No, He is leading the people astray.’” (John 7:12)
 - 5. So the questions of who Jesus is and what authority does He have in my life still stand.
- b. I pray that Jesus is the ultimate authority in our lives, because it’s far too easy to seek out other gods like attention, money, sex, drugs & alcohol, careers & education, and worldly things rather than “believe in Jesus,” so that “out of our hearts will flow rivers of living water.”

IV. **Jesus alone deserves the spotlight.**

- a. I know that Pentecost Day is all about the Holy Spirit coming upon those people gathered in Jerusalem...
- b. The power of the Holy Spirit unleashed upon the world as Jesus ascended into heaven ten days prior.
- c. Jesus said that He had to leave (ascend to heaven) so that the Helper, the Holy Spirit could come.
 - i. Jesus says in John 16:7, “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper [the Holy Spirit] will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.”
 - ii. God’s plan was to first send the Son... who would be tried and unjustly executed on a cross... as a sacrifice to pay for our sins. (1 Corinthians 15:3)
 - iii. In a miraculous blessing, death did not win the day – as Jesus rose again... which was for our forgiveness (Romans 4:25)

- iv. And here's the best part, we receive all these blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation by grace through faith.
 - 1. In other words, when we believe or trust in Jesus as our Savior and Lord, He gives us all the blessings He won...
- d. However, this is where the Holy Spirit comes into the picture – because when the Holy Spirit came into the world on Pentecost Day, He began to convert people's hearts... to open their eyes to Jesus... The Holy Spirit brings us to faith.
 - i. Without the Holy Spirit coming into the world and working through God's Word, through Baptism and other ways of sharing the Good News of our salvation through Jesus – we would never know Jesus!
 - ii. Again, I know that today is about the Holy Spirit coming to us, but the Holy Spirit's job is to put the spotlight on Jesus as our Savior.
 - iii. The Holy Spirit wants nothing more than for you to believe in and know Jesus and Him crucified (Philippians 3:10)
- V. **Today is a great blessing because we see the fruit of the Holy Spirit.**
 - a. Several young people confirm their faith in Jesus today, as they were all baptized and brought up in the Word of God.
 - b. So for our confirmands, and for all the people listening in today... Don't fall for the world's temptations to put the spotlight on you.
 - i. We will always want love and attention, and that isn't bad, but when we let people on social media or those around us take away from our self-worth – God is sad.
 - ii. He's sad because He says, "You are Mine! I called you by name!" (Isaiah 43:1) – and what person or random post online could possibly take away from who GOD says you are?
 - iii. You are special without the world's spotlight – because God says you are... He calls you valuable and loved... right where you are...
 - c. Thanks be to God that He gives us value outside of the world's standards... because we are free to put the spotlight on Jesus, just like the Holy Spirit does. Amen.

¹ Søren Kierkegaard, *Provocations: Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard* (Plough Publishing House, 2014), Pages 139-140