

There's a cruel irony to this 5<sup>th</sup> word from the cross. The One who inspired the Samaritan woman at the well by saying, *John 4:13–14 (NRSV) "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."* That One said, *"I am thirsty."* The Galilean who grew up with a sea in His sights and taught the crowds, *Matthew 5:6 (NRSV) "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."* That One said, *"I am thirsty."*

It's a simple statement; a very human request. Jesus may not have had anything to drink since the Last Supper. That was a long time ago; that was hard time ago; stress, strain, and pain can create quite a thirst; no wonder Jesus wanted to wet His whistle. *"I am thirsty."*

But for the One Who is the Son of God and the Son of Man, it's never that simple. There's more to this 5<sup>th</sup> word than simply wanting a drink. Paul tells us, *2 Corinthians 5:21 (NRSV) For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* The awful weight of evil was upon Him; He could taste it, and He longed to get that taste out of His mouth! *"I am thirsty."*

### A Bad Taste

---

Jesus' thirst fulfilled the Scripture, *Psalms 69:21 (NRSV) They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.*

Thursday, March 22, 2012 was World Water Day, and it brought to mind our friend, Rev. John Tubuwa and the people of South Sudan. Since his visit, South Sudan held a successful election for independence (success by the way that they attribute to our prayers). Since that election, the scale of atrocity has increased dramatically. On one occasion, John and his family had to run for their lives. They spent days on the run in the bush; those who could run no more or who couldn't run fast enough died. I wonder how many times during those dark days did John cry out to God, *"I am thirsty?"*

That was bad; today is worse; today, the military forces of Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir, a war criminal indicted by the world court for human rights violations, are once again using famine as a weapon of war. Since the people had learned to run when

they heard his helicopters, he is now launching Chinese made long-range rockets into the Nuba region of South Sudan. The people there cannot plant crops; they cannot seek food and water; they dare not emerge from the shelter of caves for fear of the next attack. They are starving, and al-Bashir's forces are preventing human rights organizations from supplying aid to these desperately hungry and thirsty people. If something is not done soon, hundreds, thousand will die; there will be famine in the land.

*"I am thirsty."*

Thankfully, the nations of the world are beginning to notice. Our Congress is considering the Sudan Peace, Security and Accountability Act of 2012. You may have read about the recent protest at the Sudanese embassy in Washington D. C. (an embassy we protested at a few years ago) at which George Clooney and other notables were arrested.

Did you hear what George Clooney's reply was to the police officer's question, "What is your name?" "Brad Pitt."

In the past few weeks, I have contacted our Representative Jim Gerlach, our Senator Pat Toomey, and our President on behalf of South Sudan. I have let them know, *"I am thirsty."* I urge you to do the same. Pick up your phone. They all have 800 numbers; it's a free call that will set people free. Go to their website; send an email. Add your voice to the multitudes who are saying, *"I am thirsty."*

We are Americans, citizens in a representative democracy; we have more power than people in most countries of the world; certainly more power than the people of South Sudan. "With great power comes great responsibility."<sup>1</sup> Wield it well. *Matthew 5:6 (NRSV) "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."* Let the leaders of our nation and the governments of the world know that in South Sudan, *"I am thirsty."*

## 🍷 A Drop to Drink

---

<sup>1</sup> Stan Lee, *Spiderman*. Or, adapted from Franklin Delano Roosevelt's address intended for a Jefferson Day Dinner, 1945. *Nothing to Fear*, ed. by Ben D. Zevin. <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20070107135519AAUe5TB>. March 22, 2012.

*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* relates the experiences of a sailor who has returned from a long sea voyage.... The Mariner's tale begins with his ship departing on its journey. Despite initial good fortune, the ship is driven south off course by a storm and eventually reaches Antarctica. An albatross appears and leads them out of the Antarctic but, even as the albatross is praised by the ship's crew, the Mariner shoots the bird.... The crew is angry with the Mariner, believing the albatross brought the south wind that led them out of the Antarctic. The sailors change their minds when the weather becomes warmer and the mist disappears; however, they made a grave mistake in supporting this crime as it arouses the wrath of spirits who then pursue the ship "from the land of mist and snow"; the south wind that had initially led them from the land of ice now sends the ship into uncharted waters, where it is becalmed.

Day after day, day after day,  
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;  
As idle as a painted ship  
Upon a painted ocean.  
Water, water, every where,  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, every where,  
Nor any drop to drink.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus teaches us, *Matthew 5:6 (NRSV)* "**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.**" But this Beatitude can lead to a bad attitude; we hunger and thirst; we hunger and thirst; and righteousness is nowhere to be seen. "***I am thirsty,***" and not a drop to drink.

Where do we go to quench our thirst? What do we drink? "Living water," or sour wine; does our thirst drive us to God, or do we let it drive us from God? Where do we get that "drop to drink?" A delightful African proverb teaches, "When naked promises you cloth, ask for its name."<sup>3</sup> With what shall we quench our thirst?

Jesus was no ancient mariner; neither was Sojourner Truth, or Martin Luther King Jr.,

---

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Rime\\_of\\_the\\_Ancient\\_Mariner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Rime_of_the_Ancient_Mariner). March 22, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Esther Acolatse, "The Last Words of Jesus: 'I THIRST.'" <http://divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/black-church-studies/stony-roads/last-words-jesus-i-thirst>. March 22, 2012.

or Bishop Desmond Tutu, or Caesar Chavez. In fact, one thing that the most effective agents of social change seem to have in common is that they had "a drop to drink," many drops in fact; they had that "*spring of water gushing up to eternal life*" in their souls. Eternal life gushed from their souls and provided drops to drink for those who hungered and thirsted for righteousness.

Thomas Merton was one of those agents of change, especially with regards to the Vietnam War. He was also a contemplative monk. He wrote, "If the salvation of society depends, in the long run, on the moral and spiritual health of individuals, the subject of contemplation becomes a vastly important one, since contemplation is one of the indications of spiritual maturity. ...You cannot save the world merely with a system. You cannot have peace without charity. You cannot have social order without saints, mystics, and prophets."<sup>4</sup>

With what shall we quench our thirst? If we focus on a particular injustice and seek "a drop to drink" there, our thirst will never be quenched. Our spirit will wither. We will make no difference and may very well end up doing great harm.

Hanging on the cross, with the full weight of evil upon Him, Jesus sought "a drop to drink." "*I am thirsty;*" thirsty for more than a cup of cold water. *Psalm 42:2 (NRSV) My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?*

When we have that awful taste in our mouths, when the sin and evil and corruption in our world is more than we can stomach, get "a drop to drink." "Thirst for the living God." Thirst for God every day. Say your prayers. Read the Bible. Practice your faith! Practice, practice, practice, so that when the time of trial comes (and it will), when the stench of sin and evil turns your stomach, you'll be ready. You'll have a supply of "living water" to quench your thirst and wash that awful taste out of your mouth.

*Matthew 5:6 (NRSV) "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."* You will be filled when you join the One Who is the source of "living water," look to the Living God and say, "Oh God, "*I am thirsty.*" Amen.

---

<sup>4</sup> *A Merton Reader*, ed. by Thomas P. McDonnell, (New York: Image Books, 1989): 375. Email from The Merton Institute. March 22, 2012.