

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

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THIRST

seeking the love of God

by Drew Downs

One of the great contentions in Christianity is dealing with universality — is Jesus here to save everyone or some — and scripture is conflicted on this. As debates go, this one is a bit obtuse. People pretending to be literal while ignoring other literal interpretations. We ought to show more fidelity to the text. We're reading John in the lectionary, and this evangelist takes great pains to argue that it isn't everyone, but it is, as he says in chapter seven, all who are thirsty.

What the evangelist we call John cares about is that thirstiness is connected with seeking out being sated. And Jesus, the one with access to the living water, is more than just positioned to help, he is intrinsically linked to the process.

This, too, inspires a lot of questions, but these often get in the way of how *relational* this is, and just how much Jesus reflects our needs and our desires.

EASTER

2026

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Pentecost

The early church naturally centered the liturgy of the year around the crucifixion and resurrection, with Easter being the first major feast of the church. After that, however, two other feasts grew quickly, but neither occurs during Holy Week. Pentecost and Epiphany joined Easter as a trinity of liturgy, which quickly marked a thematic journey from Epiphany as the beginning of Jesus's ministry, Easter, as God's intervention to raise Jesus from the dead, and Pentecost, as the passing of the proverbial ministry torch from Jesus to the Holy Spirit.

The images for Pentecost are often language (spoken, tongues), fire (tongues again), and doves (Spirit). It is also principal feast, making it a suitable Sunday for baptism. So now I'm thinking of fire and water. Which I often argue go together. Both cleanse and purify. They are also dangerous and frighten. Symbolically, they both represent death and resurrection.

While the story from Acts shares the grand entrance of the Holy Spirit, it is paired with the participatory spirit of the apostles. They receive the inspiration and speak. That they are heard and understood is the miracle.

What often gets lost in our modern rendering of the event on Sunday morning is that the event *enabled* the understanding. The apostles didn't have to bring it. They didn't study on Duo Lingo. They didn't market the church well or put a coffee bar in the fellowship hall. The Spirit inspired them and they showed up. That was their work. And it was work they all joined in together. The imagery and theology are invaluable parts of our faith, but the most important part of Pentecost was simple: they all listened and showed up.

With love,
Drew+

EASTER

2026

FOR SUNDAY

Day of Pentecost

May 24, 2026

Collect

Almighty God, on this day you opened the way of eternal life to every race and nation by the promised gift of your Holy Spirit: Shed abroad this gift throughout the world by the preaching of the Gospel, that it may reach to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

John 7:37-39

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Reflection

The Day of Pentecost is famous for the many languages and the tongues of fire. It's a spectacle in the grandest sense. Booming sounds of rushing wind, incredible transformations of sound, and an irrefragable sense of import. There is so much size to this moment, we can hardly address its depth.

EASTER

On the day of Pentecost, Christians often try to match the spectacle in church in small ways, “raising our game” this one day by doing bold tricks, like reading from Acts in multiple languages. Some churches have been known to hire fire swallowers! These kinds of spectacles, like having someone play Jesus riding a donkey on Palm Sunday, might be novel, but I’m not sure they really help the full nature of the story hit home.

It also seems that there are some who look past all of this excitement to hone in on the evangelistic character of the day with all of the subtlety of a Mack truck. Like, never mind all this nonsense, God’s trying to convert the world to Christianity. Umm...no, let’s not think this therefore means we have to learn languages to convert people.

Most of us, however, I think are just trying to capture the excitement. It’s like the disciples’ graduation day, with tongues of fire instead of mortar boards. Most of us want to bring the right kind of energy. Not unlike the Wedding at Cana, when Jesus turns water into wine (which the steward describes as the good stuff) or the woman at the well, whose excitement for “living water” draws her closer to Jesus. John’s image of *living water* is the right vibe for the event, I think.

‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water,’ he notes. Which is to say from within one is the saving grace for another. In short, relationship is central as our hearts can produce the living water others need – and, I suspect, others produce the living water that we need.

In all of the spectacle and power of Pentecost, it still boils down to relationship. Our relationship. That the triune God reflects relationship in three persons, that we reflect that relationship with the persons, and we embody that relationship with one another. All of this keeps the water flowing.

ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
215 N. 7TH ST TERRE HAUTE IN 47807
812.232.5165

STSTEPHENSTH.ORG
