

RED LETTER DAY; WEEK 3

I Thirst

Joel A'Bell

Hillsong/Australia

Well, I want you to turn your Bibles with me to John, Chapter 19:28. This is Red Letter Day, and we are looking at some of the sayings of Jesus on the cross. This is a great Scripture. Jesus is on the Cross having a really, really bad day. Look at this:

Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." John 19:28

There are some key words here. It says, "Later, knowing that all was now completed." You've got to understand that Jesus lived His life, not like many of us where we are thrown by circumstances. I call that circumstantial living. Thrown by things that are happening in this life and there are these emotional cries that come out. We kind of say things that we don't really mean, or we mean things we don't really say. Jesus, when He spoke, when He said things, it was calculated. He meant what He said. And a lot of what Jesus actually said, if you read through the Gospels, was messianic. His whole priority was to fulfill all of the messianic prophecies. A lot of these, if you look back to Psalm 22, you go back through Isaiah, go back Deuteronomy, Leviticus, Exodus, you see a lot of these things actually relate back to things that had happened. We are talking about a Messiah to come and when He said things, He was clenching the deal to try and confirm to everybody, I am the One. So it says here:

Knowing that all was now completed and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." John 19:28

In the New King James Version it says, "I thirst". Which is kind of what I want to give it as a title today, I thirst. You got iPod, you got iMac, you got iGoogle, you got iLifeChurch.tv and you've got ithirst! Okay, so we are talking about I thirst. It says:

A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. John 19:28-30

So, we are looking at the words, I am thirsty, or in the New King James Version, I thirst. What does He mean when He says, "I thirst"? Well, what does Jesus actually mean when He says, "I thirst"? Because we know that He doesn't just say things without any reason, there is a purpose behind it. And knowing that everything is now fulfilled, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, He says this one statement, "I thirst". There's got to be a reason behind that. In fact, if you go into Exodus, Chapter 7 and 8, you will start to discover that there is a period in the Israelite history, where they have come out of slavery, Jesus is on a cross. They've come out of slavery, out of captivity, Jesus is stuck on a cross. They've come out of slavery, and as they come out of slavery, they are complaining about not having anything to drink. What they actually say is: Why have you brought us out of Egypt to cause us to die of thirst? "I thirst" is what they are saying. Jesus, the Spirit of the Lord, back then, through Moses, was to lead them to an area where they could drink, it would come out of a rock. We know that the Rock of all Ages is Jesus. Go to the rock and water will come

out of the rock and a covenant was made that day because the people complained. This is the statement they were complaining about; 'is God among us or not? Is God really here or not?' I think, my feeling; this is just my take on things down under! This is my take on things. I reckon Jesus said, "I thirst", because He was trying to fulfill messianic prophecy from the Old Testament to say, 'Your wondering? Am I the one or not? Is this really the Christ or not?' He's saying, "I thirst". We went in YouVersion today to remember Scriptures, we have to carry our Bibles around with us. We are not like the Jewish people who grew up knowing Scripture, who grew up rote learning. You wouldn't let them leave your house without reciting the commands of the Lord on your doorpost, overhead, you had them on your hand, on your forehead. You had to memorize the Scriptures. So they knew, as soon as Jesus said a phrase, they went; "Exodus 7:8." So, when He said, "I am thirsty", that would have taken them all the way back to the Old Testament, where the Israelites were complaining about being thirsty and they had to go to the Rock to get a drink of water. And here is the Rock on the cross saying, "I am thirsty"; in order to fulfill all Scripture, knowing that everything now is ready to be completed. He says, "I thirst", and He says, "I thirst" to let everyone know, 'You wondering? Am I here or not? Here I am!' Is it any wonder that the centurion soldier later, when Jesus actually died and the earthquake happened and the temple curtain was torn in two, and everything collapsed and the centurion said, "Surely this was the Son of God! Is this the one or not?" "Here I am", Jesus says, "I thirst." So, I started thinking about that. I started thinking about Matthew, Chapter 5:6, where Jesus said:

"Blessed are you if you hunger and thirst for righteousness, for you shall be filled." Matthew 5:6

So, obviously the whole Kingdom of Heaven is about a relationship with God, being in a right step with God, and everything about that is to seek a life of righteousness. Now, we are not righteous because of what we do, we are righteous because of what He did on the cross.

So now, my inner thirst, my hunger, my appetite is quenched when I enter into a relationship with Christ. So, He thirsts, so that I can be satisfied. So now, I've got to figure out with my thirst, where am I going to get that filled? Because my righteousness is not about, I ought to become who I am because of what I do. Now I do what I do out of who I already am, because of what He's done. There's this whole concept of I thirst!

Have you ever been thirsty? Have you ever been like really, really parched? Really, really thirsty? Do you remember a time when your tongue was sticking to the roof of your mouth? Mine kind of is right now! You ever remember a time when you were really, really seriously thirsty, like not just a little bit thirsty? Mmm, if only I could share this with you! This is good stuff! This is Life Church water! Have you ever been really, really thirsty? Like crazy thirsty?

I'm a surfer. I've been surfing for, oh man, 25 years or so. I was out one time surfing. I went out at 5:00 in the morning, I used to do this when I was in high school. I'd get out early, be out there for ages! I went out surfing one Saturday morning, went out at 5:00 in the morning and I came in at about quarter past 10! I had been out for five hours. I was in a full length steamer, and so when you first went out, it was really, really cold; but, as the sun came up, it got warmer and warmer and warmer, and I started to get dehydrated and five hours of surfing in salt water, salt water is all over you, you didn't get to drink

anything. I was getting so tired. I was so thirsty, that not only was the tongue in my mouth sticking to the roof of my mouth, you know the punching bag in the back of your throat? That little punching bag in there, I was so thirsty that it was sticking to the top of my throat! It was like this thing was stuck! I was so thirsty it was stuck! I'm just wondering, I don't think Jesus was just saying, "I am thirsty" because He was actually thirsty; I mean, we are talking about a guy who went out into the desert, 40 days and 40 nights with no food, no drink, to be tempted by Satan himself. I don't consider myself worthy enough to be harassed by him himself, maybe one of his cohorts, but not Satan himself. Jesus had Satan himself, 40 days, no food, no drinking, no water, nothing. So, He knew how to go without. When He was on the cross for a couple of hours and He says, "I am thirsty", I have got a feeling that it was a whole lot more to do with what He could give us, than what it was to do with what He actually needed.

This whole concept of I thirst. We have got to figure out how to live a life that brings us into a space, the God space; where we actually live with the well within. There's got to be something that bubbles up on the inside that helps us get to what God wants for us. We thirst for lots of different things. We hunger for different things. It could be something to do with marriage. You might have a picture of a better day. You think about where you want marriage to be, maybe it's some kind of intimacy, maybe it's got something to do with work, or ministry, or I don't know, perhaps there are parts of life that you've got a real thirst for. You're really thirsty, you're so dry on the inside and you want this to really work out. Perhaps it's something like that, and God wants that for us, but it's going to come down to a place where it's not just about me, and me being satisfied, surely mature Christianity is where I transition from everything I do to support me and get to a place where I can be a life giver, where now I am able to give others a drink. Jesus, on a cross says, "I thirst". I've got a feeling it was to try to help us to get to a place where we could start to respond to the needs of others.

There's this amazing story in John, Chapter 4. If you have a look at this with me. Turn your Bibles to John, Chapter 4. It's the thing you don't hear in Life Church much anymore, this noise (sounds of Bible pages turning)! You hear more...click, click, click! It's all good! Whatever works for you!

John, Chapter 4; can I read a live portion of Scripture for us? I want to read a bunch of verses, because it's a phenomenal story. We are talking about thirsting, one of the sayings of Jesus. When we talk about this, we've got to look at this story, because it's phenomenal. John, Chapter 4; I want to read verse 1, right down to verse 26. Twenty-six verses, can we hang in that long? Can we concentrate that long? Can we lean in? Come on, can we engage? Follow with me in your Bible:

The pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, (Oh, some things just never change in the body of Christ, do they?) Although in fact, it was not Jesus who baptized, but His disciples. When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. (Because Jesus is not the competitive type, He's not going to worry about semantics, it's not about getting caught up with all of those things.) Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son, Joseph. Jacob's well was there. Jesus, tired as He was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. (Which is about 12:00 noon right now.) When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus

said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (I thirst.) (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

Well, we are getting somewhere with this, this is amazing!

"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well to drink from itself, as he did himself, and also his sons and his flocks and his herds?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Right there, you start to get the picture of mature Christianity. You've got to go from I need to feed myself, to there is so much in me everything about me is now feeding you. Verse 15:

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

That is phenomenal!

He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

"I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. The Samaritans worship what they do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

The woman said, "I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am He." John 4:1-26

He didn't reveal Himself to very many people. He does to this woman, and I think it's to show us something about thirst. I think the real thirst of Jesus is actually that we would receive His life and that we would become life-giving people, that we would learn how to give life to others.

For the longest time, I've been a Christian for over 25 years and I did not not grow up that way, I did not grow up in a Christian household. Actually, I got saved, I became a Christian in high school, in a state-public high school in Australia, through Scripture coming in, religious education coming into the school. In Australia, we are still allowed to do that, which is quite remarkable. I heard the message of Christ, the Gospel, for the first time. It took me a number of years to go from everything I need, I need. I need help, I need security, the whole discovery of Christ and the journey of self and getting to a place where not only are your needs met now and I feel strong enough to be able to stand and talk to others; transitioning to a maturer place, where now I realize it's not about what you can give me, it's not about how you can feed me, it's not about me always needing to get that thirst quenched. Now it's about a well within that bubbles up to eternal life that comes out and feeds everybody, being a life-giving person.

Jesus on a cross, He's on a cross and He's stuck on a cross. Talk about captivity and when He says, "I thirst", it's not about what we can all do for Him. He's trying to give us a bigger picture about the place to get to that everything is about pouring yourself out for others.

In this story, there's a couple of things going on. There is the woman's need, you see that there in verse 7; that when the Samaritan came to draw, "Will you give me a drink?" Jesus said. What Jesus was saying He needed is what the woman needed. Verse 10 is beautiful. If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asked you for a drink, we are talking about the seed, the seed of creation. We are talking about in Galatians 3, it talks and in Colossians 1, it talks about how Jesus is the seed for salvation, He's the firstborn from among the dead, come back for us and how through Christ we can have life. So you've got the seed, the seed of creation, the seed of the woman, which is in revelation \_\_\_\_\_. So, we are talking about the seed, the seed is there, the incorruptible seed that can germinate life in you. That you don't need to walk around saying, "Who is going to help me, who's going to help me?" Now you can walk around saying, "Who am I going to help? Who am I going to help?" So, you've got the seed right there in this story, and then beautiful, right there toward the end you've got this whole story about the seed. I mean, if you look, this is hilarious; Jesus stops, he rests, there's a woman, has interaction, dialogue, the disciples run into town to get food. Look at verse 31:

Meanwhile His disciples urged Him, "Rabbi, eat something." John 4:31

Look at this:

But, He said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." Then the disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought Him food?"

I mean, Jesus is waiting, He's tired, He's waiting. The disciples go in to get the food, they come back and they go, 'We've got the food!' He goes, 'We've already eaten!' They are like, 'Wow, what's going on here? Has someone slipped him a big mac? What is happening? Food that we don't know anything about?' He says, 'No, no, no; my food is to do the will of the Father.' This is phenomenal! Jesus is hungry, yet His appetite is quenched and satisfied by doing the will of God. We know your appetite can be lost through negative things, bad things.

I went to see a movie once with my wife and my mother and it was so bad this movie. We were going to dinner after the movie and this movie was so bad that I came out and I was no longer hungry. It was shocking! I'm not even going to tell you what movie it was, I know you want to know, but you're not going to know! It was a bad movie! Just bad stuff going on in this movie and it was so horrific for me that when I came out, I had actually physically lost my appetite.

There are other things that we are involved in that you can be really, really hungry and you really want to go to Outback! There where Americans love to take us Australians! What is it about Americans who want to take us to Outback! I mean, that is just wrong!

You can be hungry, physically hungry. You get involved with the spirit of God in something and all of a sudden you feel satisfied, you feel full. You are like, "Man I haven't even eaten, but I feel like I've just had the biggest baby-back ribs at barbecue that you can get! You feel so satisfied. There is something spiritually that affects the physical realm.

So we've got need, we've got seed, we've got feed. The disciples come back with the feed and Jesus is like, 'Well done man, you missed it!' They were like, 'What's going on?' Need, seed, feed.

Need requires love. Need always requires love. Jesus saw the need because of His love. Jesus spent, you read through this whole three-and-a-half years of dialogue of His life in ministry, just through the Gospels, and you will see time and time again, Jesus stops and meets a need. Why? Because He loves people. He'd have an agenda, He's on His way to do something else, the ministry related things. He's on His way to fix something and on the way, He is disrupted by a need. I'd rather say, He's disrupted by love. His love for people caused Him to detour. And even when things looked like they were delayed and weren't going to work out, it was okay. Jesus went, 'No, no, I love and I'm going to fix this. It's need. I mean, that should motivate all of us. We should get to a place where, no longer is it just about what you can do for me, what can I do for you? We are going to move. Need is where it stops and need is all, it requires love, it's all about love.

I have two kids, I have a wonderful wife, Julia. We've been married for just over 17 years. We've got two kids, Harmony who is ten, Eli who is eight. They are poles apart man, hilarious. Harmony is a real sweetheart, she's real, real generous; already at a young age. Eli is just a bag of beans, he's just so active. I love that about him. Harmony is so generous, there's this real compassionate side. One time we were in Paris, downtown Paris. We had just been visiting our Hillsong Church in Paris, and we were walking down the street with some other couples, some other families, some friends. We kind of got lost in the crowd. We had given our kids three, five pound notes each, that they were able to go shopping with. So, that's 15 pounds, which is about \$450,000.00 in Australian! So, they had these three five-pound notes, and as we were walking down the street, there were people everywhere. I lost track of her just for a moment, and I'm looking around and I can't find her, I'm frantic! As a father, I am so panicking! I'm looking through the legs and I'm trying to find where she is. I see just this moment, a gap opens up, and I see her standing right over near this wall. As I kind of rush through the crowd to try and make sure that no one is grabbing her, I walk over and I kind of stop and she's right in front of this older woman who looked homeless. It looked like she had nowhere to go, rags, and she's kind of sitting there with a little tin. My daughter, Harmony, I

had just gotten there as she pulled the three, five-pound notes to give to this woman, completely unsolicited. Love sees need. Need requires love.

There is so much need in our world and I will tell you how we are going to meet it, with love. Because if you can't even see it, you can't do anything about it. But, you'll only see it if there's love. It's love that causes us to see need and to be part of the process in helping. And that's what's so great about Life Church, you are able to see need all around you because of the love of Christ that's so deeply within you. So, need requires love.

Well, what about seed? Seed requires hope. Seed is what you put in the ground, hoping that the elements won't destroy it, but it will start to germinate and flourish and grow up. Seed is what we put in. I mean, how many times have you planted a seed, I've done this with the kids. They've got like a school project, you've got to put a seed in the ground and they've got to wait for it to grow. You kind of put it in and you're like, it's been a whole day and night and you wake up the next day and you're like, I wonder if it's growing? You destroy the growth cycle, and so you put it in! It seems like forever nothing is happening, I mean oh! It's seven days before anything breaks through! But, eventually, this little shoot breaks through. Hope is what's required for things that aren't seen. In fact, the Bible says that hope that is seen is not hope at all. So, hope is what's required for what is not seen. Seed is always the potential of what can be. So, we see need because of love. Love is what spurs us on, we see it, but hope says there's a better day. Hope says we can change this. Hope says we can be a part of what God's plan is for you. Hope, that's what the seed is about. Seed requires hope.

You come back to need. There's always two sides of need. This is the question we have to ask ourselves as believers. In fact, just as human beings, no matter who is watching and no matter where you are right now watching this online, you've got to think about need from these two perspectives. What side of need are you on? Am I needy, or am I needed? Am I a needy person, which means, you've always got to fix me, or am I needed? Which means I'm always called upon.

I believe it says love takes centerpiece in our heart that we shift from needy to needed. Only then can we start to see that the seed requires hope, and it's hope that brings life. It's hope that brings all of the potential. Now there's something better, there's something that can happen. Man, it's going to leave your life full of hope. The news is going to give us all kinds of reasons why not. All of the reasons why we shouldn't, all of the things that are going to go wrong, everything that's probably not going to happen right, but hope says it can work. Hope says Jesus is on your side. That's what hope does. So, the seed requires hope.

Then, what about feed? This whole story is about need, seed and feed. Need requires love. Seed requires hope. It's obvious then that the only one that is left, feed requires faith. Feed requires faith. And it's the difference between me having my needs met, moving to a place now where I'm needed. Hope allows me to see the potential, the seed, that the potential in people and mixed with faith. James says that faith without actions is dead. How can I love God whom I can't see, if I can't love my brother who I can see? Faith says, let's make this across the line. Let's move this into action, let's step this up a gear. And as we come along in Christianity, as we come along on the faith journey in Christ, we ought to be going further and further away from what I used to be and more and more of what Jesus is. That's why John the Baptist says, 'I must become less

and He must become more. I must decrease, He must increase.' Faith moves us to action. Faith says, 'not only can I see the possibility, I'm going to be part of the reality.' Faith says, 'I'm going to get involved, I'm going to get my hands dirty.' There are so many different projects, there are so many different things, in fact, I don't even know that at Life Church, if there's not something that is available, you should get involved and try and say, 'how can we make that possible?' Through different teams, different ministries, there are so many things that we can do, we can partner around the world. That's what's great, the relationship between Hillsong Church and Life Church. We are able to start looking at different ministries, missions together, different projects, different outreaches. When united and stuff comes to town, we can get involved in evangelistic procedures, because it's faith in action. It requires faith. Feed, to feed someone requires faith.

Can I summarize this whole story by giving you an actual real-life parable of today. This story happened to me just a couple of days ago. I was in Atlanta Airport, and I was waiting to go from, just transiting to go from West Palm Beach, and was coming across and just had to stop in Atlanta, because of the airline I was on. So, as I was waiting at the airport, I was a little bit hungry and a little bit thirsty, so I want to get a drink. As I had done that, I had noticed this couple, this older couple a little bit older than me, maybe 10 years on from me, which is still actually very young isn't it? So, I noticed this older couple that were kind of, there was some tense relationship. It kind of looked like they could be married, there was a little bit of intensity going on. I kind of noticed that, but I kind of walked over to get a drink because I was thirsty. As I came back, I noticed that they were still going at it and it was getting a little bit more intense. We were in this huge area, a big food court in the airport at Atlanta. There was people everywhere and they were trying to keep it discrete, but they weren't really working that hard. So, I kind of came over because I saw a need, because I love people, I saw a need. I thought, how do I become needed? These guys looked needy. They looked like they needed help. So, how do I become part of this answer? As I came over, the reason is because of the seed. I mean, there was hope, I know there is a better way to do this. I've been married for seventeen years, I know there is a greater way to do this. Your marriage doesn't have to end like this. I see this young girl sitting on a chair that is kind of really close to them. I'm thinking, man you have no idea about the impact, the influence you're having on this girl who is not even married yet. She's too young to be married, but she's listening within ear shot. So, I'm kind of sitting at the table kind of watching what's going on. I could see this girl sitting there and I'm praying. I'm thinking, 'God, I've got to do something.' I stood to action. There's this love for this situation, there's a hope for a better day. Faith says, 'You've got to do something!' Man, this is where I get so challenged. Because faith says you've got to get involved, I'm thinking, 'How am I going to break in?' You just kind of just go, 'Hey, hey, time out, get some gloves!' How do you fix this? So, I looked for what would be the appropriate moment and there actually wasn't one appropriate moment, I had to actually try and create one. It was just at the last second where I had just overheard them saying, "Well fine, if that's the way it's going to be, maybe we shouldn't be together!" He was talking about 25 years of this, I'm thinking, 'Man they've been married for a long time!' I've got enough context of the conversation to know, this is so destructive right now. So, I get up off of my chair and I walk over and I go, "Hey, hey!" Which is Australian for, "Can I have a chat for a second?" So I walk over and I go, "Hey!" And they turned to me and she's kind of storming off in a huff. I said to the guy, because I actually reckon it's the guy's fault always! Because the guys going to

leave, and you're going to love your wife like Christ loved the church, it means you have got to lay down your life, you've got to die. It's just another story, it's another message! Maybe next time!

I walk up to the guy, and I looked at him straight in the eye and I said, "Sir, I don't know what's happened, but there is no way that what's going on right now is worth losing 25 years of history. It's always worth working at it." He kind of goes, "Thanks so much, really appreciate it!" As he walked off, this girl stands up and follows. That's when I realized that was their daughter. I thought, man that just could have been an encounter right there with this next generation that could have so easily repeated what was going to come next. Just maybe faith, hope and love is all that's required to turn individual stories around.

Can I pray for you? Father, we thank you for your Word today, and we thank you so much that your Word is powerful, it's true. Jesus, we can only guess what you were really meaning when you were on the cross that day and you said, "I'm thirsty, I thirst." But we know through the tenner of Scripture, we understand that you are trying to bring all of us to a place where we are so secure and founded in your love and that out of that we can have a hope for a brighter day. We can have faith to activate and to bring change throughout the community. I pray for every person here, every person at all of the campuses, and all of those online, that you would bring us through a journey where we would understand more and more, that it's about everything in you, that you would teach us, you would lead us, that you would satisfy us completely. That we would become whole people that wouldn't always need to be needy, that we would get to a place so secure where we would be needed and called upon. God, give us the grace and the strength and the power to be able to bring answers for people, to be able to bring life to people, and where if people are thirsty, all around in our communities, that somehow, we might be able to bring your grace and your love and your peace into every situation. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.