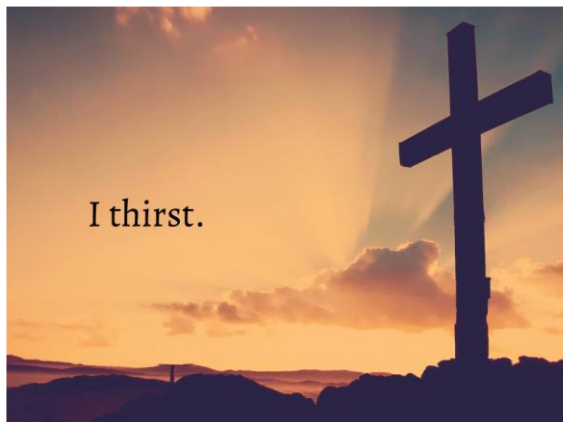


**A Lesson on Humanity**  
(“I Thirst”)

John 19:28

Pastor Kelly Sensenig



A while back a missionary sent an email to me which said: “In the last 3 days the Lord has given the opportunity to preach to about 2000 students at 2 schools (an elementary or primary school and a high school). I preached on the crucifixion of Christ. I took a long spike and a 3-pound hammer. I asked who was brave. At each school a girl raised her hand. I had her come forward and raise her hand in front of

the door. I put the spike against the palm of her hand. She still looked pretty brave at that point.

“As I raised the hammer and drew back her face began to get funny looks. As I brought the hammer forward she jerked her hand down, and of course, everyone got a good laugh. However, I then pointed out how painful the death of Jesus was because of our sins. Just for your information, I was not going to nail anyone’s hand on the door!” But as the missionary pointed out, Jesus was nailed to the cross for each one of us. He suffered great physical and emotional pain while hanging on the cross.

The hymn writer wrote:  
“I saw One hanging on a tree,  
In agony and blood;  
He fixed His languid eyes on me,  
As near His cross I stood.

Oh, can it be, upon a tree  
The Saviour died for me?  
My soul is thrilled,  
My heart is filled,  
To think He died for me!”

John 19:28-29

“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put *it* upon hyssop, and put *it* to his mouth.”

Jesus said, “I thirst.” This is the shortest of all statements that was made from the cross. In response to this statement someone offered Jesus sour vinegar (John 19:29). At this point, Jesus was nearly dead. He had just a few minutes to live. Every breath now is a huge effort. He was heaving, gasping, fighting for oxygen. And He was thirsty.

I want you to think of a time when you were thirsty. I mean really thirsty. Maybe you were working out on a hot summer day and needed a cold drink of water. Maybe you were exercising. Remember how thirsty you can become when you don’t get the water you need? Was there a time when you were so thirsty that you could not go on?

Jesus came to this point when He was hanging on the cross. Crucifixion is a long and slow process of dehydration. A person can go without food for many days but not water. The fact that Jesus was thirsty while hanging on the cross means that He possessed a debilitating, burning, and ravaging thirst. It was the thirst of a dying man. In the Swedish language I’m told that the words for “thirst” and “fire” are related. There is an awful burning sensation when one needs drink. Christ’s suffering on the cross would drain the fluids in his body. Jesus spent the night in a dungeon, He was beaten, He carried His own cross to Calvary, and now for six hours he hung on the cross without possessing any moisture.

John 19:28 once again states:

“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished (*regarding His death on behalf of sinners*), that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.”

This was the fifth saying from the cross. Part of Christ’s judgment on our behalf was thirst. “I thirst.” “I’m thirsty.” Jesus said, “I thirst” because His body was crying out for fluids. These are very simple and straightforward words from our blessed Lord as He hung on the cross. What is the meaning behind these words? These two words from the cross related to Christ’s humanity. This is a lesson on humanity. Thirst speaks of a human need. They point to Jesus embracing the suffering of

humanity. The hours spent in the sun, coupled with the physical pain he was feeling, would have created severe, dehydration. Jesus speaks of his own thirst to reveal His humanity and need for sustenance and relief. On the cross, Jesus is physically thirsty. Why? It's because He was a man.

Christ's thirst on the cross gives us a lesson on His humanity.

### **1. The words portray the humanity of Christ's natural instincts.**

Thirst is part of humanity. Many evangelicals affirm the deity of Christ but sometimes forget about His full manhood or humanity. These simple words reveal to us that Jesus became a real man with a real body to pass through the pangs of suffering and death on our behalf. God had to become man to take care of our sin debt before God. There was no other way!

1 Timothy 2:5 declares:

"For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

Let us never forget this! Jesus was the Godman, but He was still a man. As one of the old creeds say – "truly God and truly man." He felt pain and went through the pangs of suffering and thirst as only a man could experience. His humanity was real. The Godman is the mediator of the New Covenant between God and man, providing salvation for mankind and acceptance before God.

There is no other mediator between God and man. The man Christ Jesus is the go-between to give a person reconciliation and acceptance before God. Mary has no part in the role of being a mediator as Roman Catholicism teaches. The reason for this is because Mary is a woman, and she is not God!

Roman Catholicism is a mix of mostly paganism with a little Christianity sprinkled into it, with a lot of Christian terminology that is designed to deceive and delude precious souls. It is a pagan religion disguised or masquerading as Christianity. There is a recreation and re-sacrifice of Christ's death in the Mass, prayers to another intercessor (Mary - the Queen of Heaven), prayers directed to other canonized saints, praying to angels, worshipping Mary, and honoring statues made after their likeness, confessing sins to a sinful and fallen priest, getting indulgences

to satisfy or appease God's wrath against the sinner (this is making a comeback in the Catholic Church), and going to a mythical place called Purgatory to be purged of one's sins after death. If this is not pagan – I don't know what is!

The Bible teaches there is only one mediator between God and man and it's not Mary, canonized saints, angels, or anything else. It's Christ Jesus!

1 Timothy 2:6 goes on to say the man, Christ Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." In the "due time" or the fullness of time Jesus was born and died giving His life as payment to free the human race ("all") from the penalty and slavery to sin. In one sense, Jesus' death made all people savable. It put the entire world into a savable position for He provided a sacrificial payment to God for everyone, providing a way of salvation for all mankind.

Calvinists who limit Christ's death claim that the "all" are the elect in verses 4 and 6. Universalists interpret "all" to mean every human individual will be saved in the end. However, the Scriptures teach that Christ's death provided a basis for the salvation of everyone, and this would contradict Calvinism or the limited redemptionists (John 3:16, 1 John 2:2). Other Bible passages indicate not everyone will be saved and therefore refute the universalists (Matt 25:46; Rev. 20:15). When Christ died on the cross He provided the necessary payment for sin which could potentially ransom all humanity of all time. Christ's death is sufficient to save everyone but only efficient to save those who believe.

A "ransom" (Gr. antilutron, used only here in the New Testament) is a ransom price (what is given in exchange for another). This word and verse clearly set forth the idea that Jesus Christ died as the substitute for all people. He paid the necessary redeeming or ransoming price that God required to release imprisoned sinners from the penalty and slavery of sin. The ransoming price for our sin debt was paid in full when Jesus suffered and died on the cross.

Only the Godman could bridge the gap between God and man. There is not other person who could ever pay the necessary ransoming price to redeem and reconcile us to God. Jesus had to be God and He has to be man. His thirst on the cross speaks to the absolute necessity of his humanity.

1 John 4:1-3 gives us an important reminder concerning Christ's humanity: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try (*test*) the spirits (*false spirits – demons*) whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (*suggesting demons are behind their messages*). Hereby know ye the Spirit of God (*when the Holy Spirit is behind a message*): Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh (*the humanity of Christ*) is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh (*rejection of Christ's true humanity*) is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist (*the spirit against or opposed to Christ*), whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

One of the early heresies the church was known as "Docetism." This was the Gnostic belief that Jesus only appeared to be human but was not genuinely human. The heresy taught that Jesus, the second person of the divine Trinity, did not experience the human suffering of the crucifixion. According to this heresy, it made no sense for Jesus to cry out "I thirst", because thirst is a human sensation, one that has no place in the divine being. However, the Bible teaches, and Christians believe that Jesus was fully human. Jesus was flesh and blood like all others. He ate. He drank. He slept. He laughed and wept. He suffered. He died. Jesus did not escape the crucifixion through some divine loophole. Jesus Christ was the very incarnation of God (both human divine) and He died on the cross as the Godman.

John's test question to determine if someone was true or false was as straightforward question. What does the person believe about Jesus Christ? If a person denies the incarnation of Jesus Christ (that God became man and was essentially both God and man) then a spirit of antichrist is within him. To deny that God became a true man is a denial of the doctrine of Christ as the apostles taught it. It is a deviation from orthodox Christology and Christianity.

This is a confession that acknowledged Jesus as the Christ Incarnate. Jesus was not only deity but humanity. Theologians call this the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ. As a man Jesus could say, "I am thirsty." His thirst was evidence of His humanity. We cannot emphasize one aspect of Christ's existence over the other. If we rest too heavily on Jesus as only the divine Messiah, we potentially risk rendering him unapproachable to mankind. If we overly emphasize Christ's humanity then we lose the importance of His deity.

Colossians 2:9

“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”

Jesus was the Godman bridging the gap between God and man. But as man He became thirsty and identifies with us.

On more than one occasion, my little boy would cry in the night, “Daddy, I’m thirsty.” In a similar way, Jesus cried out in the darkness long ago, “I’m thirsty.” He passed through a burning, intense, and debilitating thirst for you and me. But the Father could not help His own beloved Son. This is because Jesus was abandoned by the Father so He could pay the sinner’s ransoming fine.

When Jesus as the suffering Son of Man cried, “I thirst,” He was identifying with humanity and our every need. This reminds me once again that Jesus understands what we pass through as humans. It also encourages us as Christians to pray to Him and trust Him for His consolation and strengthening grace. Our Lord suffered thirst so that He might become our sympathetic priest and come to our aid in the time of our own suffering.

Hebrews 4:14-16 reminds us:

“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

The Scottish preacher, John Watson, used to say:

“Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a battle.”

Christians pass through physical, emotional, financial suffering, and other types of suffering. All of us need to remind ourselves that Jesus is our sympathizing priest who comes to our aid, to give us consolation and peace. He understands us for He became like us. And today He is there for us to calm us while we pass through suffering.

“The great Physician now is near,  
the sympathizing Jesus;  
He speaks the drooping heart to cheer,  
oh! hear the voice of Jesus.

Sweetest note in seraph song,  
sweetest name on mortal tongue;  
sweetest carol ever sung,  
Jesus, blessed Jesus."

## **2. The words prophesy of the humanity related to Christ's death.**

Christ's thirst led to His death and death was also to be part of Christ's humanity. The Bible prophesied that Jesus would speak these words from the cross to prove His humanity and death for sinners on Calvary's cross.

John 19:28 again states:

"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst."

The apostle John links Jesus' statement "I thirst" to the fulfillment of Scripture. There were, in fact, at least twenty Old Testament prophecies fulfilled during the twenty-four hours surrounding the Lord's death. By highlighting how Old Testament Scriptures were fulfilled throughout Jesus' crucifixion, John showed that everything was happening according to God's foreordained plan.

Earlier, Jesus refused a drink of vinegar, gall, and myrrh offered to Him to relieve His suffering (Matthew 27:34 and Mark 15:23). But here, several hours later, Jesus states, "I am thirsty," thus asking for a drink. This time, the soldiers give Him some. Jesus was aware that He was fulfilling prophecy and there was only one remaining prophecy to be fulfilled from the Old Testament concerning Christ's ordeal on the cross. It was His statement concerning His thirst. Everything or "all things" related to Christ's redemptive sacrifice were about to be completely fulfilled with this final statement on the cross.

This prophecy is found in Psalm 69. Jesus's statement regarding His thirst is the fulfillment of Psalm 69:21 which prophetically states: "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." Christ's statement regarding His thirst was the fulfillment of a final messianic prophecy which would be followed with the climactic words, "It is finished." Jesus said, "I thirst," from the cross because He wanted His lips and throat moistened to utter one final victorious shout before He died. The thirst of Jesus Christ was the final prophecy to be fulfilled

regarding the suffering of the Messiah which would accomplish redemption's payment for sin.

Jesus cried out "I thirst" so the Scriptures might be fulfilled while hanging on the cross. He had to pass through what the Bible prophetically taught concerning the Messiah. Jesus' statement fulfilled Messianic prophecy and Scripture. Jesus died in the exact way the Bible said He would die. But it was an awful death. Dying with unquenchable thirst is a terrible way to die. Christ's thirst was prophesied to take place. His burning thirst was mentioned in several prophecies of the Old Testament, and they were coming to pass in the exact way revealed.

Psalms 22:14-16 also has strong Messianic overtones and prophetically reminds us of the thirst of the Savior: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd (a piece of dry, clay pottery); and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death." David's experience was typical of the Savior's experience on the cross. On the cross Christ's strength was gone ("My strength is dried up like a potsherd") and His mouth was dry and He experienced unrelenting thirst ("my tongue cleaveth to my jaws").

They tell us, as indicated here, that those who died on the cross became so thirsty that their tongues would swell, cling to their jaw, and protrude from their mouths. This expression speaks of a tormenting thirst that causes the Lord to cry out, "I thirst" (John 19:28). Jesus was in need of refreshment as a thirsty person craves water when his mouth is extremely dry. In Christ's physical weakness he was at the brink of death ("thou hast brought me into the dust of death"). Again, Jesus' statement fulfilled Messianic prophecies and Scripture. Jesus died in the exact way the Bible said He would die.

Here is an important question to consider. Would we have given Jesus water if we were there at the cross? Of course, the truth is that no person could give Jesus water for He was destined to die the sinner's death and remove the sin debt of judgment from our lives. Thirst was part of Christ's redemptive suffering for sinners of the human race.

Alexander Maclaren wrote: "The cross is the center of the world's history; the incarnation of Christ and the crucifixion of our Lord are the pivot round which all the events of the ages revolve."



Christ's thirst on the cross gives us another lesson on His humanity.

### **3. The words picture the humanity of Christ's submission.**

Sometimes we pass by this without reflecting on His submission to the Father's will and purpose for His life.

Jesus said in John 5:30:

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

In the Garden of Gethsemane, He declares:

Matthew 26:39

"And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*."

Matthew 26:42

"He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."

The "cup" refers to His suffering on the Calvary's cross which included His separation from the Father ("the cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?" - John 18:11). It includes His time of unquenchable thirst.

Here is another outstanding character trait of Christ's humanity. He was submissive to the Father's plan and purpose. Jesus surrendered to His Father which is the normal pattern for the human race. Jesus' burning thirst speaks to us about the depth of His submission to the Father's will even when it involved suffering. We must remember that Jesus was resigned to do whatever had been written in the Scripture. He accepted the plan the Father made in eternity past. This reminds us that it's not our will that matters; it's the will of God (the Father) that is important. Romans 12:2 says we should "prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

There are several important questions of application.

- Are we willing to do what Scripture says we should do?
- Are we ready to obey God's Word for our own personal lives?
- Can you say, "I am willing Lord, to be just exactly what You want me to be?"  
Can you say, "I am willing to do exactly what You want me to do?"
- Are we willing to suffer in the will of God as Jesus did?
- Are we willing to follow the Father's plan for our life whatever it might be and wherever it might take us?
- Come what may are we ready to accept of the Father's will?

If Jesus needed to suffer physical thirst to perfectly fulfill the redemptive plan of God's will, why should we be exempt from suffering?

1 Peter 4:19 says:

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

Suffering and hard times does not necessarily mean that you are out of the will of God. Your poverty or pain does not mean you are outside the will of God. Jesus certainly was not outside of God's will when He was thirsty and hanging on the cross. Fix your eyes on Jesus, and remember that He did the will of God and ended up on the cross! Jesus was born to die and this was God's will for his life. And He fulfilled it perfectly.

Ray Pritchard said:

"Your sufferings may be used by God in a way greater than anything you ever dreamed. God may redeem the hard times you are going through right now to bring something beautiful into your life far beyond your imagination."

A widow once said, "I can't go on without my husband." Are you willing to be a widow, if necessary, in the plan and purpose of God? Are you ready to accept God's purpose and will for your life as Jesus did on the cross? Have you lost your retirement because of the stock market or some other unfortunate and unexpected expenses? Have you been passing through some difficult illness? Are you willing to accept God's purpose and will for your life as Jesus did on the cross?

Can we say, "It is well with my soul?" Jesus did when He took the bitter cup of Calvary and suffered thirst. Nothing can compare with being deprived of water when hanging on a cross! Jesus was willing to be thirsty for us. Are we willing to pass through the trials that the Father has ordained for our lives? Jesus was submissive to the Father's will as recorded in the Father's Word! Are we? Are there some things we must accept today as being part of the Father's will for our life right now? What are they and are you willing and ready to accept them?

"What tho the way be lonely,  
And dark the shadow fall,  
I know wher'er it leadeth  
My father planned it all"

The sun may shine tomorrow  
The shadows break and flee  
Twill be the plan He chooses,  
The Father's plan for me."

"I thirst."

#### **4. The words are part of the humanity of Christ's substitution.**

Jesus was punished and suffered because of our sins. Period. Your sins nailed Him to the cross. But your sins also made Him thirsty!

Matthew Henry said:

"The torments of hell are represented by a violent thirst, in the complaint of the rich man who begged for a drop of water to cool his tongue. To that everlasting thirst we had all been condemned, if Christ had not suffer on the cross."

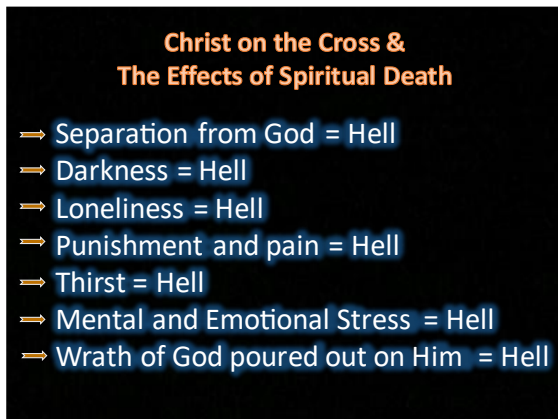
We grumble when we don't have a cup of water, but the reality is this; we deserve the wrath of God. We deserved to hang on the cross and experience the pangs of a terrible and burning thirst.

We deserve the thirst that Hell brings!

Luke 16:24

“And he (the one in hell) cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”

Like the rich man, we deserve God’s wrath, we deserve to experience thirst, we deserve Hell and damnation forever! We deserved the whole package of God’s judgment. We have sinned and fallen way short of the glory of God’s moral perfection and holiness (Rom. 3:23). But Jesus took our place. He became thirsty for us! You see, thirst was part of that judgment and wrath that He experienced on our behalf.



Although the deity and impeccability of Jesus Christ did not change on the cross, meaning His spirit did not experience spiritual death and contamination, Jesus did experience the EFFECTS of spiritual death while on the cross.

There is a Hell! And there is no water in Hell! The Jehovah Witness cult claims that when you die, you die like a dog, like Rover

or Fifi and cease to exist. The annihilationist concludes that when you die your soul ceases to exist. Even some of the modern evangelicals are concluding that annihilation is a better option than hell. They are rejecting the eternal punishment of the wicked and lost.

Someone said this about evangelicals:

“There is more jelly than even in many evangelicals today.”

For instance, Clark Pinnock reasons that God would never “install a torture chamber somewhere in the new creation in order to subject those who reject him in everlasting pain?” Some evangelicals are abandoning the idea of eternal suffering. If the lost don’t thirst and suffer in Hell for all eternity, then why did Jesus need to thirst and die on the cross? Jesus died on the cross to save people from everlasting judgment.

There is an inscription on a tombstone that reads:  
“Don’t weep for me now, don’t weep for me ever;  
For I’m going to do nothing forever and ever.”

There is the lie of atheism and humanism!

In Matthew 25:41 Jesus taught:

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

If you die without Jesus Christ as your Savior, you will go straight to Hell. This may not be politically or religiously correct today, but it is Biblically correct! There is a Hell. If there is no Hell, then Christ’s death has no meaning! Don’t talk to me about Jesus on the cross if there is no Hell! Christ died for Hell-bound sinners! There is a Hell. Christ died to save us from Hell! He endured God’s punishment on our behalf which included unquenchable thirst, a part of Hell’s judgment!

Did you ever watch a person die and go to Hell? I recall witnessing to someone who was in the emergency room and was dying. They were working on him, and they had all the wires and gadgets hooked up to him. He was awake and I began to tell him about how God loves him and how Jesus Christ, God’s Son, died to save him from hell and give him eternal life. He looked at me for a while but then he turned his head away from me and wanted nothing more to hear about salvation and eternal life. Many people die the way they live. They live unsaved and go to Hell unsaved.

Donald Grey Barnhouse was called to the hospital by a doctor friend. An atheist who disliked Barnhouse was dying. Barnhouse responded, "I'll come right over to see him." The doctor noted, "But he doesn't like you." But Barnhouse insisted he was coming anyway. He entered the patient's room, grabbed a chair, sat down and folded his arms and said nothing. The atheist was curious and irritated. "All right, what do you want, Barnhouse?," he finally asked. Barnhouse answered, "I've come to see what it's like when an atheist goes to hell." Then he proceeded to lead him to faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus experienced the wrath of God on the cross. He bore our Hell and His cry of unquenchable thirst reminds us of this dreadful experience that He encountered

on our behalf. Jesus paid sin's penalty in full, so we don't have to pay for our own sins and experience the suffering, thirst, and agony associated with an eternal Hell.

Someone wrote a letter to me after I spoke at a funeral. In the funeral I mentioned how wonderful it was that Jesus died on the cross to save us from hell. The person writing the letter said, "I can't believe you used the word Hell at a funeral. Funerals are to be a time of reflection on the deceased." The person said, "I should be ashamed for speaking in this way at a funeral."

They were too chicken to sign their name! Listen, if Jesus did not die to save us from Hell, then I never want to have another funeral again! We take the message of hope out of our funerals if Jesus did not die on the cross taking upon Himself sin's penalty.

As we reflect on Christ's thirst we can be sure that Christ thirsted so we might never thirst in Hell! Jesus suffered thirst and parched lips that we might be able to drink from the wells of salvation and find spiritual refreshment and satisfaction.

John 4:13-14

"Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

There is a paradox here. The very One who alone could give the water of life (eternal life) needed to become physically thirsty, die upon the cross, experience our Hell, so we could experience in return the refreshing drink of eternal life.

Revelation 22:17

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Jesus thirsted on the cross so that we might never be thirsty again from a spiritual standpoint! He thirsted to quench the thirst that we have for meaning and purpose in life, and true satisfaction and fulfillment.

“I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
“Behold, I freely give  
The living water thirsty one,  
Stoop down and drink, and live.”  
I came to Jesus, and I drank  
Of that life-giving stream;  
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
And now I live in Him.”