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THIRST FOR AUTHORITY ??

It's open season on voters this political season. You're bombarded with "spin" messages from media and handlers. *"Everything is changing," said Will Rogers. "People are taking comedians seriously and politicians as a joke."* And *"I don't make jokes, I just watch the government and report the facts."* Personally, I'm not a fan of political jokes -- too many get elected.

As you read John 7 this week, perhaps it rings with overtones of a political campaign. The people discuss a popular new public figure, wondering when He will take center stage in Jerusalem. Trouble is, they're thinking physically and politically, not spiritually. Jesus didn't come to satisfy earthly thirsts. He isn't angling for votes. Jesus has come to save souls. He's on a mission from God -- to transform thirsty souls!

Because the people could try to make Him king before His time, Jesus goes to Jerusalem privately. He operates on God's timetable, to fulfill God's purposes. He's not a candidate to give you what you want, but what you really need. It's not yet time for His triumphal entry, and Jesus must endure the cross before He receives the crown. Jesus attends the Feast of Tabernacles. Like a Labor Day weekend campout, the Israelites lived in tents throughout the festival. It drew nearly everyone across the land. It commemorated God's provision for rains and vineyard harvest, as well as remembering God's provision in the wilderness when they lived in tents after being rescued from slavery in Egypt and before entering the Promised Land.

As Jesus taught in the temple, the undercurrent of conversation among the common people concerned Him -- His message and speculation about His future. But the religious authorities publicly challenged His authority -- since Jesus challenged their authority. Consider three major questions.

-1)- What's the unquenchable thirst of the people? Jesus isn't a political candidate; He represents the dilemma of discipleship. He appeals to the root issue of human nature: "who's going to run your life?" It's all about your "thirst for authority." The religious leaders claim the authority of Moses, who gave them God's Word. But Jesus says in verse 19 "**not one of you keeps the Law.**" Their traditions contradicted the spirit of God's Word. In verse 24 He says "**do not judge by appearances, but with right judgment.**" The hypocritical leaders were trapped by their own self-importance, self-righteousness, and self-authority.

-2)- What does Jesus' promise of "rivers of living water" have to do with it? They had deep thirst for God's authority, but kept drinking at their own man-made fountain. During the Feast of Tabernacles, the priests led a procession which ended at the temple with pouring water from a golden pitcher. It recalled "*water from the wells of salvation*" and which poured from the Rock in the wilderness (which was Christ). It recalled the rains, and the promised pouring out of the Holy Spirit spoken by the prophets.

Religious rituals cannot satisfy spiritual thirst. Only Jesus can. In verse 37, He stood up and cried out, "**If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.**" Jesus is the personal fulfillment of the prophecies and promises. "**Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'**" This brings to mind numerous Old Testament imagery. John tells us, "**Now this Jesus said about the Holy Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive.**"

-3)- What's the remedy for YOU, for your thirst for authority? What can quench the unquenchable thirst of your human soul? In the parched poverty of your mind-heart-will, do you follow the lies of the world-flesh-devil instead of submitting to God's eternal, holy, written-down Word of truth, the Bible?

Jesus came to baptize with the Holy Spirit. He regenerates you to believe and indwells you with eternal resurrection life. He does not give your own spiritual authority. He instructs you to understand God's Word, equips you to do God's will, and empowers you to witness -- to tell others the good news about Jesus.

Knowledge and experience are useless without faith in Jesus for eternal spiritual life. That's the living water Jesus promised. The Holy Spirit brings you to trust in Jesus for salvation, and to obey Him, and to bring others to Him too. That's the only thing that will satisfy your "thirst for authority" -- to submit to your Creator who is also your Savior who is also your Lord. Drink deeply of Him! Let the river of grace flow!