

The Rev. Daren J. Zehnle  
Annunciation Parish, Shumway, Illinois  
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The Eighteenth Sunday of the Year (A)

Today, brothers and sisters, let us examine the words of the prophet Isaiah. In so doing, we shall discover what it is that the Lord wishes to speak to us.

Isaiah is one of the three Major Prophets, together with Jeremiah and Ezekiel. They are called the "major" prophets not only because of their roles in salvation history, but also because of the length of their books.

We must now consider what a prophet is. Many people today think of a prophet as one who foretells the future, as one who predicts events that are yet to come. While this view is not entirely wrong, it is also not entirely correct.

First and foremost, a prophet is one who speaks to the people on behalf of God. The prophet is one who speaks God's word to his people. For this reason Isaiah almost always begins his words saying, as he does today, "Thus says the LORD" (Isaiah 55:1).

But how are we to know that what a prophet says really is the word of the Lord and not simply his own words? Are there not false prophets? There are indeed false prophets - even to this very day - and so we must listen carefully to a prophet's

words. We must discover whether or not the Spirit of the Lord rests upon him (cf. Isaiah 61:1).

We can see if the Spirit rests upon a prophet first of all by examining his words to see if they correspond with what has already been divinely revealed. If what a prophet says contradicts Sacred Scripture, he is false and we should not listen to him.

We can also look to a prophet's deeds to discern if he is true or false. Are people converted to the Lord by his words? Are miracles performed through him? One such miracle - albeit a very minor one - is the prediction of the near future (predicting the distant future offers no proof that the Spirit is upon him to those who hear his words).

Let us now examine what the Lord says to us through Isaiah, his prophet.

He says firstly, "All you who are thirsty, come to the water" (Isaiah 55:1). Certainly the Lord invites those who are physically thirsty to this water for we know that he wants to "satisfy the desire of every living thing" (Psalm 145:16).

Each of us has experienced that physical thirst to one degree or another - perhaps especially during these summer months - "but there is a greater thirst in man - it extends

beyond the water from the well, because it seeks a life that reaches out beyond the biological sphere."<sup>1</sup>

There is the thirst for acceptance, unity and harmony; there is the thirst for life and freedom; there is the thirst for joy and peace; but above all - and especially - there is the thirst for love.

Can anyone among us truly say, "I thirst for nothing"? Each of us then is called personally by the Lord, "Come to the water!" What is this water? Where are we to find it?

The source of this water can be found in only one place: in the person of Jesus Christ. He said to the Samaritan woman at the well, "whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of living water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14). Jesus presents himself as the living water saying, "Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink" (John 7:37).

After the crucifixion, this living water burst forth so that each of us can drink well and heartily. The Beloved Disciple, John, tells us that "one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out" (John 19:34).

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Ratzinger / Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 241.

How then do we drink this water? This water is not difficult to drink. "Faith in Jesus is the way we drink the living water, the way we drink life that is no longer threatened by death."<sup>2</sup>

For what do you thirst? Life? Joy? Happiness? Love? There is only one water that will quench each of these thirsts - indeed, that will quench every thirst: Jesus Christ!

What keeps us from coming to him to quench our thirst, to have the deepest aspirations of our hearts satisfied?

The Lord says to us through his prophet, "You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat; come, without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk" (Isaiah 55:1)!

All that is required to drink Jesus Christ is faith in him and obedience to his commands. Perhaps this is what keeps us from drinking him; we do not want to serve him. Yet where else will our thirst be quenched?

Instead of turning to Christ to have our thirst quenched we turn to so many others things: work, shopping, drink, books, television, power, sex, gambling, politics, sports and whatever else.

Each of these promises satisfaction and enjoyment but their promise is false for the joy does not last. The Living Water

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

alone truly promises satisfaction for he said, "I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

In light of this reality, in light of the failure of the things of this world to truly satisfy, to truly quench, Jesus asks us, "Why spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what fails to satisfy" (Isaiah 55:2)? Yes, why do we spend so much of our lives, so much of ourselves, in vain?

He calls to us, incessantly and tenderly, and with much love, "Heed me, and you shall eat well, you shall delight in rich fare. Come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life" (Isaiah 55:2-3).

Having drunk from the Living Water,

The believer becomes one with Christ and participates in his fruitfulness. The man who believes and loves with Christ becomes a well that gives life. That, too, is something that is wonderfully illustrated in history. The saints are oases around which life sprouts up and something of the lost paradise returns. And ultimately Christ himself is always the well-spring who pours himself forth in such abundance.<sup>3</sup>

Yes, let us listen to him and drink afresh of his waters! In this way the living water will well up within us, becoming a fountain from which others may drink. Amen!

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.