“God’s Life-Giving, Living Water”

Lent 3A

March 15, 2020

Of all the plants, peace lilies most beautifully portray the effects of water. Without water, they completely wilt. Their heads just droop over and wilt. The transformation comes really quickly however. As soon as they are watered, they begin to perk back up and stand tall again. It’s amazing.

Loren Eisley wrote, “If there is magic on the planet, it is contained in the water.”

Leonardo da Vinci: “Water is the driver of Nature.”

Thales of Miletus, 600 BC: “Water sustains all.”

Henry David Thoreau: “Water is the only drink for a wise man.”

Water. It’s the earthly element used in baptism.

Water is an element of creation in birth and life.

Water is involved in so many of God’s saving acts:

creation, the flood, the exodus through the Red Sea, the baptism of Christ in the river, Jesus healing the blind man with his own spit and dirt, and being washed in the river Siloam, he healed another by the pool of Bethsaida.

Water is also in our readings this morning.

The Lord has delivered Israel from Egypt.

At this point, they aren’t even grateful for their freedom. They are anxious and resentful.

Were they destined after all of their struggle, to die of thirst?

Where is God anyway?

Then Moses cries out to the lord,

“What shall I do with this people?” The Lord says to Moses, “Go on ahead of the people, and I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock and water will come out of it so that the people may drink.”

***God provides them with water.***

Then we come to this incredible encounter between Jesus and the woman at the well.

Jesus asks a Samaritan woman for a drink of water.

Keep in mind that Jews did not associate with Samaritans. Men did not associate with women.

Rabbis did not associate with sinners.

Let’s just break all the rules at once.

Jesus was tired, he was thirsty and he asked this woman, this Samaritan for a drink.

We don’t know the details of the woman’s life.

Jesus at no point invites repentance or, for that matter, speaks of sin at all.

She very easily could have been widowed, abandoned or divorced (which in the ancient world was pretty much the same thing for a woman).

Five times would be heartbreaking, but not impossible. Further, she could now be living with someone that she was dependent on, or be in what’s called a Levirate marriage (where a childless woman is married to her deceased husband’s brother in order to produce an heir yet is not always technically considered the brother’s wife).

There are any number of ways, in fact, that one might imagine this woman’s story as tragic.

Even if she is five times divorced, this was likely not her choice. Men divorced women (for the flimsiest of reasons), not vice-versa.

***Then, in the longest recorded of Jesus’ conversations that we have, he describes God’s Living Water.***

This morning there are some of us who are full of life and vitality. Our health is good, we are finding joy in our work or retirement. We have families where we feel safe and secure. It is easy to sing and praise God.

But we all have known the times of dryness and barrenness.

Prayer has dried up. Life is difficult, it is a struggle.

God seems more remote than near.

The 42nd psalm says it so clearly: *“As a heart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God.*

*My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?”*

The truth is that we drink from wells that have been polluted with contaminants of dishonesty, anger, inferiority.

We are like an empty cup waiting to be filled with whatever it is we think is missing.

The song says it so beautifully: *“Fill my cup lord, I lift it up lord, come and quench this thirsting of my soul…”*

Yet, our needs really are quite simple.

Our thirst isn’t quenched with an exotic vacation,

a sexy vehicle, beautiful skin, white teeth, designer clothes or fill in the blank with that elusive thing you wish you had.

It isn’t quenched with power or prestige or new technology.

No, it is quenched by the life-giving love and grace of God.

So much has been and will continue to be, for some time, *cancelled*: sports events, concerts, plays, worship services, rallies, travel, meetings, classes, family gatherings, and so much more.

However, in the words of songwriter David Haas there is ongoing Living Water for us:

*“Love has not been cancelled.*

*Mercy has not been cancelled.*

*Prayer has not been cancelled.*

*Attentiveness has not been cancelled.*

*Goodness has not been cancelled.*

*Thanksgiving has not been cancelled.*

*Loving relationships have not been cancelled.*

*Kindness has not been cancelled.*

*Music has not been cancelled.*

*Conversations have not been cancelled.*

*Learning has not been cancelled.*

*Poetry and storytelling has not been cancelled.*

*Courage has not been cancelled.*

*Meditation and contemplation have not been cancelled.*

*Painting and dancing has not been cancelled.*

*Families have not been cancelled.*

*Community and solidarity has not been cancelled.*

*Faith has not been cancelled.*

*Hope has not been cancelled.*

*And … God’s presence with us, has not been cancelled.”*

Living Water gives peace of mind and heart,

heals old wounds,

allows an acceptance of who you are,

creates a yearning for justice for anyone who is exploited.

It is God’s Living Water that prompts us to pray:

Prayer for a Pandemic CREDIT to krugthethinker instagram.

*May we who are merely inconvenience, remember those whose lives are at stake.*

*May we who have no risk factors, remember those most vulnerable.*

*May we who have the luxury of working from home,remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent.*

*May we who have the flexibility of caring for our children when their schools close remember those who have no options.*

*May we who have to cancel our trips, remember those who have no safe place to go.*

*May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market, remember those who have no margin at all.*

*May we who settle in for a quarantine at home, remember those who have no home.*

*As fear grips our country (and our world), let us choose love.*

*During this time when we can’t physically wrap our arms around one another, let us find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors. Amen.*

Living Water brings harmony.

It gives us wisdom to make good choices and decisions.

It showers forgiveness upon us so that we can do likewise.

Living Water gives freedom to all those false messages –

messages in our heads, messages in society, messages on social media, messages in the news.

God’s Living Water nurtures reverence and joy for life,

it inspires a yearning to hear God’s voice.

The pure water that God offers is filled with honesty, acceptance, generosity, confidence, faith, hope and love.

It’s interesting that our awareness of water needs is high, but our compliancy is low.

While two out of three survey respondents say they know that health and nutrition experts recommend drinking 8, 8-ounce servings of water a day, one in two admits to not getting enough – not out of a lack but simply out of neglect.

Mayo Clinic: Water is your body's principal chemical component and makes up about 60 percent of your body weight. Every system in your body depends on water.

It flushes toxins out of vital organs, carries nutrients to your cells, and provides a moist environment for ear, nose and throat tissues.

Lack of water leads to dehydration.

Even mild dehydration can drain your energy and make you tired. Severe dehydration presents serious problems affecting blood pressure, circulation, digestion, kidney function and nearly all body processes.

Just think what dehydration from God’s Spirit does to us.

In order to drink of the Holy Spirit, we need worship.

We need to read God’s word,

we need to partake of holy communion.

We need to pray.

We need fellowship with one another.

We tend to take for granted those things we don’t struggle or work for, the things that are all around us.

Like the basic water in our lives.

It’s amazing how quickly we recognize the need when it’s not available.

You can’t flush the toilet, you can’t wash your hands,

you can’t get a drink – no coffee, no tea.

Living Water is the goodness, love, strength, healing, courage, vitality, power of God. It is our essence.

Luther said that a truly Christian life is nothing else than a daily baptism, once begun and to be ever continued.

Lent is about baptism, about returning to the source of Living Water that makes us children of God.

When we enter the waters of our baptism we are declared to be justified, not because we believe,

but in order that we may believe.

It is our baptism in Christ that brings us to repentance, offers us forgiveness, cleansing, nourishment, enlightenment, healing.

So may we drink of that Living Water daily. 8 cups.

*Fill my cup Lord, I lift it up Lord, come and quench the thirsting of my soul. Bread of heaven, feed me til I want now more, fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole.*

Amen.