

Water is a commodity we cannot live without. Our bodies are about 60% water. We cannot go for more than about three days with water. We're going to talk about how water was such a powerful image for Moses and Israel and about how Jesus used water to illustrate His kingdom on earth and what this means for us in our day to day walk with the Lord and with one another.

## OPENING PRAYER

### EXODUS 17:1-7

**All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. <sup>2</sup> Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" <sup>3</sup> But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" <sup>4</sup> So Moses cried to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." <sup>5</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. <sup>6</sup> Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. <sup>7</sup> And he called the name of the place Massah (test) and Meribah (quarrel), because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"**

**"The people of Israel"** were some two million in number whom Moses led them out of Egypt, and they found themselves in the desert, thirsty, and they were not happy. They cried out, **"Is the Lord among us or not?"** And the Lord was angry with them for their lack of faith.

At first glance it might seem like the Lord's anger was unfair. After all, who wouldn't complain if God had led them into the desert but failed to provide water? Indeed, water is a commodity we cannot live without. But there's more to the story.

The Lord had demonstrated His love for the people in so many unique and miraculous ways before their time in the desert. He sent plagues on the Egyptians to demonstrate His power and authority and to free Israel from bondage. And once the people were free, God led them with a cloud by day and by fire at night. Then when Pharaoh decided to

chase them down, God hid them under a cloud. And when they got to the Red Sea, the Lord parted it down the middle so they could cross from one side to the other on dry ground. The Lord delivered Israel with miracle after miracle. He never abandoned them. He never told them to figure it out on their own. But He was always with them.

This was not the first time Israel complained, nor was it their last. When Israel looked over the Red Sea before God parted it, they cried out, **“Is it because there on no graves in Egypt that you have brought us into the desert to die?”** (Thus began the mistaken notion that sarcasm is a spiritual gift.)

It’s even in their name: “Israel,” which literally means, “struggles with God.” That’s the kind of people they were, always struggling, grumbling, and complaining, despite everything God had done for them.

So now we find the people in the desert without water. Their throats are parched, but their hearts are even dryer, as dry as the desert itself. And they cried out, **“Is the Lord among us or not?!”**

Despite the people’s grumbling, the Lord gave them water. Later, He nourished them with manna—bread from heaven. But His work among them did not cease for He protected them from all their enemies until they reached the Promised Land. In His mercy the Lord loved the people despite their lack of faith.

Entitled, spoiled brats, weren’t they! Two years ago I was in Israel leading a tour. Our Jewish guide told our group the reason God chose Israel was to prove that anyone could be saved!

But aren’t we the same? Like Israel, don’t we also forget how often God has intervened in our lives, complaining bitterly, “Surely He’s forgotten us?!”

It is the human condition. We take for granted what we’ve been given, and we believe we deserve even more. But Jesus shows us a better way. Consider the story of the Samaritan woman at the well:

#### **JOHN 4:7-15**

**There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."<sup>8</sup> (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.)<sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him,**

**and he would have given you living water.**" <sup>11</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." <sup>13</sup> Jesus said to her, "**Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,** <sup>14</sup> but **WHOEVER** drinks of the water that I will give him will **NEVER be thirsty FOREVER.** The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water **welling up to eternal life.**" <sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

Water is a commodity we cannot live without. That is why Jesus used it to illustrate His ministry, which He said was LIVING WATER. Like so many of His teachings this one includes a vivid picture to help us grasp a difficult idea. For instance, if I told you God loves you, you might be moved, or not. After all, what is love, truly?

On the other hand, if I told you God's love is like a cool glass of water you put to your parched lips after a hard day's work, on a sweltering hot, cloudless day, you might imagine that as you put that glass to your lips the cool water flows over your tongue and into your throat, and your whole body is revived. You imagine that you take another glass of this cool water and you pour it over your brow. As it runs down your face and your neck you are refreshed.

Like water pulled from the deepest well, clear and cold, Jesus refreshes us and restores us to life. Jesus bathed us in Living Water in Baptism. As Luther explained in the Small Catechism, Holy Baptism "is a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit" [cf. Titus 3:5-8].

The Living Water of Jesus flows over and through us from the Cross, into us and over us through His Supper, through us and over us through our fellowship one with another. The Living Water washes over us in so many ways, satisfying our deepest thirsts unto eternal life.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, what things in your life parch your spirit? Does your heart ache for a love lost? Receive the Living Water of Jesus; let Him heal your heart.

Do you ache for acceptance from other people? Receive the Living Water of Jesus. He has accepts you as His son, His daughter.

Are you overwhelmed by a grief which you carry in your heart? Receive the Living Water of Jesus. He grieves with you; He feels your pain.

Are you filled with shame because of something from your past which you cannot seem to shake? Receive the Living Water of Jesus. He says to you, your past is nothing to Me. I love you as you are, and I have a plan for your life.

As a child I had some very oppressive experiences with my stepfather, which created in my heart a lot of fear. For many years I carried that fear around with me. The motto in our family for us kids was to be not be seen nor heard. And I became invisible.

But one day I heard, really heard, Jesus' own words preached, preached as though they were for me. Jesus said, **"if the Son sets you free, you are be free indeed" (John 8:36).** These words pierced through the darkness in my heart and brought forth life, a life I didn't even know was there. These words set me free from all of my childhood anxiety and dread, for I realized as I heard these words and received them as my own, that I was a child of God, a son of the Most High, an heir of treasures from Heaven. And I had peace. This was my Living Water.

Friends in Christ, let Jesus' words wash over you, for they are indeed Living Water. You are forgiven. You are His beloved. Your heart has been wrested away from the devil and the things of this world, and you are free, and nothing in heaven or on earth can put you in bondage ever again.

Brothers and sisters, this week may you be filled with thankfulness for everything the Lord has given you for this life and the next.

This week may you be filled with confidence that the Living Water which our Lord Jesus promised the woman at the well is for you too, taking time in your busy day to spend time nourishing your heart and spirit with His Word.

And this week may you have the opportunity to share this Good News with another person who really needs to hear it, in the name of Jesus. Amen.