

The Water of Life

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[0 : 00] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 21st of March 2004. The preacher is Ken Perry.

This sermon is entitled The Water of Life and is based on John chapter 7 verses 37 to 52. Let's just bow in a word of prayer. May the words of my lips and the thoughts and the meditations of all our hearts be now and always pleasing in your sight.

O Lord our strength and our redeemer. Amen. Amen. Water is always in the news.

Take for example the TV ad which we're seeing often with the words, Our Water, Our Future.

[1 : 08] And that ad is trying to persuade us to use water carefully. Then there's been all the publicity recently following the Mars probe as to whether there is water on that planet.

For without water there cannot be life. Also we are aware that all over the world there are droughts and floods, an excess of water and a shortage of water.

And there isn't a country in the world I don't think that tries to, doesn't try to store water. We've only got to think of the great three dams project in China.

Colossal. Storing water. For their people. And so it goes on. That water is a subject which is before us every day.

Because we use it, we drink it. And it's at the centre of a lot that we do. Now water is basic to our very existence.

[2 : 39] And it is a vital part of God's creation. But just how significant is water in the economy of God in his dealings with his creation?

Well to answer that question, we must search the scriptures. And as we do, we will find that from the beginning to the end, from Genesis to Revelation, the subject of water takes a prominent place. There's a story told some years ago of an American Negro who was asked whether he had read the Bible.

Oh yes sir, I've read the Bible. I've read it from generation to revolution. In the revised, reversed vision.

Well we're going to look from Genesis to Revelation. I'm nearly saying it myself. But more importantly, or most importantly, is the place that Jesus gives to water as part of his teaching.

[4 : 08] As our reading today from John 7 and verse 7 tells us. On the last and greatest day of the feast Jesus stood and said in a loud voice If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink and whoever believes in me as the scripture has said streams of living water will flow from within him.

And then again the words that he spoke to the woman at the well in Samaria. He said to her If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asked you for a drink you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

And a little bit further on Jesus says to her Everyone that drinks this water will be thirsty again but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst.

Indeed the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. And in those last words there's an important truth that if we receive this living water that Jesus gives it has eternal consequences.

It will spring up to eternal life. And that is a great thing to know for it assures us of our future destiny.

[6 : 10] But let us start at the beginning with creation with Genesis and work our way through the Bible. In Genesis 1.1 we're told in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Now the earth was formless and empty. Darkness was over the surface of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

So it was there right in the beginning. And we read in Genesis 2 that after God had created all the flowers and the trees and everything else and the animals and then created Adam and Eve and the

Garden of Eden we read in chapter 2 verse 10 a river watering the garden flowed from Eden. And not only did that river flow from Eden but it went out into four different areas. And some commentators have suggested that this indicates the four ways that the world north, south, east and west.

the next big event in the story of water is of course if you think of your Bible the flood Noah and the flood.

[7 : 55] And why did that flood come? Why was all that water there? Here in this story water is used in judgment.

It was came upon the earth to judge the world. But also at the end when the water fades and goes away the mountains appear and those who are in the ark are saved.

And so this incident of Noah and the ark and the water is a place not only of salvation where Noah and the family were saved but it also was a place where they were indeed sorry it was a place of judgment but they were also saved.

God uses water here in both judgment and salvation and this is surely the case also in the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites as they fled from the Egyptians.

Here we see again judgment judgment upon the Egyptians but we see that the people of Israel were saved and so water is used again in judgment and in salvation.

[9 : 30] Then if we move on in the wanderings in the wilderness on their way to the promised land God provided abundantly for their need in this barren land.

Those who I guess all of us have seen just how barren that land is and the people of Israel complained to Moses that they had no water and Moses was directed to hit the rock with his staff and the water flowed out and those people never lacked for sufficient water.

God provided through water water and God provides all our needs in Christ Jesus. God provides for us in the barren times the times when things are difficult things were hard.

God provides in those times as we turn to him and look to his provision. If we move on quickly to a few verses in the Psalms the Psalms begin in Psalm 1 with talking about the blessings that come upon a man.

Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly and so on. But it goes on to say that the man who is blessed is like a tree planted by streams of water.

[11 : 07] That's the person who is blessed and can we confess really that we are beside streams of water receiving that blessing from God day by day as we walk with him.

But the Psalmist also reveals another side of the story. Over and over again in the Psalms we read the Psalmist is speaking of his thirst and of his longing.

Let me just quote a number of these verses. Psalm 63 verse 1 says, O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you.

My soul thirsts for you. My body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

What a cry from a heart that needs to be met. And he cries out that indeed that he as he thirsts for the living God, that he may find what he's looking for.

[12 : 28] Or again that beautiful verse at the beginning of Psalm 42. As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. Could we say these words honestly and truthfully, that our life is one that thirsts after God, that we long for God, the living God?

Psalm 143, I spread out my hands to you, my soul thirsts for you, like a parched land. But there is another side as well, as we think of Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd, therefore I can lack nothing. I lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside the still waters, and there is a picture of peace, that there God places the psalmist beside the calm waters.

And I don't know whether you've ever been in that situation, we were down at Cow's the other week, and one morning we rose, and there is the cross western Port Bay, a beautiful calm sea.

[13 : 57] It just makes the difference from when the waves are crashing in, the peace that it gives. And again, from that passage in Isaiah, that was read, think of these words.

The psalmist says, with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

What a wonderful truth that is, one to hold on to. With joy you will go and find in the Lord salvation from a particular situation that you are looking for.

But, we need to be careful because we can seek that salvation in all ways other than in Christ. In Jeremiah, for instance, we read these words of judgment upon the people.

in Jeremiah 2.13, what does the psalmist say? My people have committed two sins.

[15 : 27] They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns, that cannot hold water.

God. And I can't help thinking every time I read those verses and think about them that they apply to our modern generation.

We've committed two sins against God. We have dug our own cisterns, our own way. We have sought relief in the things of the world and not in the things of God.

God. Let's move on to the New Testament. Our Lord opens his ministry with a Sermon on the Mount and speaks of the blessedness of those who what?

Hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled, not just with a little, but with all that is available in God.

[16 : 37] They will be filled, with water. Let's think of other times when Jesus was very much involved with water. There's a storm on the lake.

There was a time that he was walking on the water. There was the wedding of Cana where he turned the water into wine. There was baptism, his own baptism.

baptism. There was the pool of Siloam where he sent the man to wash. And it was also given that he said, if you give a cup of water to he who is least, then you are giving it to me.

These and many other references to Jesus and his link with water. At the end of his ministry, Jesus, at his crucifixion, we are told, that when his side was pierced by the spear, blood and water poured out.

Then when we come to the end of the Bible, in the book of Revelation, we see two marvellous invitations.

[18 : 06] First one is in Revelation 22 verse 1. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city.

Here is this glorious river, again provided by God, flowing down the midst of the city. But what about the invitation at the end?

In chapter 22 verse 17, the spirit and the bride say, come, come, let him who hears say, come.

Whoever is thirsty, let him come, and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. It's free. We don't have to earn it. We can't earn it. We are told that if we are thirsty, we may come and partake of that water.

[19 : 29] And this invitation, which is also prominent for us in the book of Isaiah, in chapter 55, verse 1, come. Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters.

This invitation echoes from beginning to end of the Bible, and I believe it demands our response. but it begins and requires an acknowledgement of the deep longing within our soul for more of the spirit of life that comes only from Jesus.

Do we have that thirst, that longing thirst, to be filled more and more with the spirit of Jesus?

Because that's what this is all about.

to thirst for it, to long for it. As we believe in him, as John says, rivers of living water will flow from within us.

We not only receive what indeed the living Christ gives to us through the spirit, but we are given much more in order that we may share it.

[21 : 03] think of the things that Jesus is saying about living water that we can share. We can share with people God's power as manifest in the waters of creation and in other places.

people we and our family have known in recent days something of the power of God at work in healing.

And those of us who are linked in the prayer chain here at Holy Trinity know something of sharing in the joy and the wonder of the power of prayer.

this is what we have to share. Do we tell our friends and our neighbours and share with them the power that comes from being touched with the living water?

What about God's goodness? Again, sharing God's goodness. Do we testify to his goodness of what he's done and is doing for us?

[22 : 13] we can talk about and share spiritual refreshment or times of great blessing. We can talk about times of cleansing when we've had to come to God in confession and say Lord I've done this I've failed you in this but knowing the joy of being forgiven.

And that's one of the things I think that stands out in the Christian faith is that we know we can be sure that we have forgiveness in Christ which unfortunately many of our folk who belong in other religions don't know so we can share with them this glorious truth.

We all know of the Dead Sea. Why is it dead? Because the water that flows into it never goes any further.

And it teaches us doesn't it that we have been given the water of life in order that we may share it. There's only one way that our thirst can be satisfied our thirst for God love.

And that is through the living water of Jesus Christ which he freely gives us as a gift. Let me close with a little story.

[23 : 52] When we were in Java when we were serving there in Indonesia we went one time up into the side of a mountain in central Java and there we saw something of a miracle for flowing out of the top of the mountain right up at the top was a spring a spring of beautiful cold living water and we were told that this spring never ever goes dry so long as anybody knew that it was never dry.

we were told also that there was the same amount it seems of water that flowed through it. But that water did not stay there.

It started going down the hill and came to the first terrace of rice and then when that came to be filled up with water there was a bamboo pipe at the end which carried the water down into the next terrace and so on and so on and so on right to the bottom of the hill.

Down by the side of this stream were villages and as we watched this and walked past them we saw that these villages were enjoying the benefits of having this water available to them.

They used it for cooking. They used it for washing. they used it for all sorts of things that were needful and they would never ever go short.

[25 : 35] They never kept more than was theirs. There was no greed. It appears that way and they told us until eventually this water reached down to the river at the bottom and had flowed on out towards the sea.

but all along the way from the beginning to the end that water had been shared and I believe that that teaches us something very important that as we share that we ourselves have longed for and known satisfaction in the living water that we can share it with others and that it goes on down until it reaches those who need it most.

And these people one of the things that we discovered as we talked with them is that they were just so thankful so thankful for all the provision that was made for them in this water.

Friends may I ask you to think again about your thirst for the living God as portrayed to us by the psalmist and all those in the Bible and that that need may be met in the living Christ through his spirit.

Let us just bow in prayer. Father we thank you for your word and pray that indeed as you have taught us this morning we may find a new spirit of longing and thirsting after you that our needs may be found in the living water that Christ gives us freely and we ask this for his name's sake.

[27 : 42] Amen.