



## Living water: to never thirst again

An address for the Cosmic Mass ● 25<sup>th</sup> November 2007 ● Rev Louise

*As a hart 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?  
My tears have been my food  
day and night,  
while men say to me continually,  
"Where is your God?"*

*Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,  
my help and my God.*

*Psalms 42:1-3, 5-6a*

I thought it was good to begin the service with a song about gentleness and mercy and silence after the clamour of the election campaign! Probably most of us are relieved it is over at last. My only other comment about the election comes from T S Eliot. He said: *Destiny waits in the hand of God, not in the hands of statesmen.*

Our spiritual year is drawing to a close and next Sunday we celebrate the new beginning at Advent. So, it's a time of reflection and preparing for the new. Today's second reading is from the Gospel of John, chapter 4. Jesus is on his way to Galilee and is passing through Samaria. He comes to a place near the field where we find Jacob's well. The story of Jacob's well is told in Genesis 29. This well was where the flocks of sheep were gathered together to be watered.

There was a large stone on the mouth of the well that the shepherds would roll away when all the flocks were gathered. The stone would not be rolled away until all the flocks were gathered together. At one point in the story it is Jacob who rolls the stone from the well's mouth to water the flock.

In this story of Jacob's well there are wonderful images which have some meaning to us: there are sheep and shepherds, there is a stone on the mouth of the well that needs to be rolled away. And there is the need for all the sheep to be gathered together for the water to be available. We have Jacob rolling the stone away.

It is here, in this place, that we find Jesus. He sits down beside the well. There's such a sense of history and power in this scene already. He is sitting in the place where centuries before, Jacob rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well.

*Jacob's well was there, and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. 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." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?" Jesus said to her, "Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."*

*Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly." The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."*

*Just then his disciples came. They marvelled that he was talking with a woman, but none said, "What do you wish?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" So the woman left her water jar, and went away into the city, and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"*

*John 4:6-29*

This is a very familiar passage for many of us and you'll have noticed it contains the text that we heard at the New Year's Eve Meditation when 2007 was declared to be the Year of Worshipping in Spirit and Truth.

Living water. It's so appealing and enlivening. We want to know more about this and how we might drink of it. Living water, to not thirst again, to never thirst again, to have our soul's longing met and to become a spring of water welling up to eternal life. What is this living water?

Nowadays, we're all probably much more aware of the importance of water; what it means to not have enough or to have none at all. Our awareness of water is changing and expanding. We consider how much to use and what it is most important that we use water on – what are the priorities? We are valuing water much more and not taking it for granted.

It's extraordinary that we in our cities flush the toilet with water that is fit for drinking. And yet there are places in the world where there is no water, or the water there is not safe to drink. Drinking the water makes people sick and leads to death for some, as it carries diseases.

It's interesting to reflect on the differences around the world in terms of resources. Whether it's money, food, water or oil; there are vast differences in access to resources needed for survival. And it's not very comfortable for most of us. We want to assist, to change the world, and yet our capacity to do so at this point in evolution is very limited.

However, it is interesting that we are currently being faced with water shortages. It's challenging in our western world to have the potential for some scarcity of a crucial resource. How will we respond?

### **The Etheric Body**

Returning to the passage from John: at first glance it seems that because this passage is about water that it indicates it might be about our astral bodies. But there are some indications that we are being drawn to the etheric world. It is the sixth hour, which some of you will know leads us to the future and the transformed etheric body.

Jesus is speaking to a woman, and what's more, a Samaritan woman – so in this story gender and race are no longer barriers between people. The etheric substance of blood has been transformed so there is unity and brotherhood.

And also the Samaritan woman says of him that he told her all that she ever did. This leads us to think of memory and the akashic record – he could see and know who she was, what she had been and done. He could see her with spiritual perception. So these things tell us that one way to enter into this passage is to consider that it is referring to the etheric world and our etheric bodies.

So we can approach this passage by being conscious of the life force, of vitality and what it is that unites us.

### **Living Water**

One of the other characteristics we are aware of in relation to water is the power of water. It can create and destroy – it can power electricity, plants need it to grow, fish need it to live in. Yet we also see storms, tidal waves and tsunamis that destroy and kill. We also know how it can hold within it poisons which kill.

Perhaps we've all seen patches of water which are stagnant. There is no flow, no life. Stagnant water is unpleasant - it smells. We don't think of this water as living water. No life is created from it or within it.

In contrast to this, I was reading an article about water in a part of West Bengal in India. Thousands of people had been drinking this water for generations; it was clear, it tasted good and had no smell. There was every indication it was safe to drink and use. But, in fact, it was dangerous. It was making the people sick, some with skin conditions, and some also had died. The water was contaminated with arsenic. The people did not attribute their health problems to the water but believed it was a curse from God, perhaps due to sin in a past life.

A group of people led by a Jesuit priest worked to assist the people. They first had to educate them to see the connection between the water and their health. In the article it was described as: helping people see through the myths that ensnare their minds. Secondly, there was a need to find access to safe water. They did this by helping to dig wells that took account of the geographical characteristics so they could access safe water.

We need water, we need safe water, flowing water. This story from India highlights the importance of knowledge in accessing good water; to know what is good water and how and where to build the wells.

If we return to the passage: what might we think of as living water? Living water is flowing water. It is always moving. Rivers and streams flow to new places, passing through unknown territory. It flows and it keeps on flowing. It is available, it can be used. Living water has the capacity to flow over and around obstacles with ease and without causing harm to anyone or anything else.

Living water is purposeful, it creates life, enables growth, it renews, it soothes, it cleanses. Living water calms, it cools and it refreshes. Water is a liquid, its nature is fluidic. It can reach into unreachable places; dry, parched and withered places are enlivened, enabled.

### **Living Water Quenches Thirst**

We know we need water when we thirst. We hunger and we thirst. Our experience of hunger is quite different to thirst. From a physical point of view, we feel hunger in our stomachs. When we are hungry we need something of substance that will satisfy us, fill us up. When we have eaten we feel replete, satisfied, nourished. Food provides us with nourishment, sustenance and strength.

But thirst has a different quality. We feel thirst in our mouth and throat, don't we? It is dry, very uncomfortable to be thirsty and only fluid will suffice. Water quenches our thirst. Words that describe the quenching of thirst are not the same as for hunger. We think more of relief, soothing.

For what do we thirst? What thirst does the living water quench? The Psalms tell us that our souls long for God, the living God. This passage with the Samaritan woman also seems to be telling us that we long for truth, for the spirit to dwell within us – that we need this spirit.

Living water quenches a spiritual thirst, a longing of the soul for refreshment, renewal, soothing; for connection with spirit and with the truth of our own natures. The Samaritan woman spoke truth about herself. "I have no husband" and Christ could see her fully and truly – as she described it: all that I ever did.

In an Agape Ecclesia presented by Rev Mario, he was reflecting on the scene of Christ on the cross saying, "I thirst." Mario described the thirst of Christ like this:

*I thirst for thee, O God, to be united with you in that kingdom where there is no pain and no suffering. I thirst for thee, O world, that you may receive the Christ spirit and become conscious spiritual beings. I thirst for you who violate me, and crucify me time and time again. I thirst for your souls, that you may be enlightened and realise the wonder of grace...*

And then Mario asked us to say within ourselves: *I thirst. I thirst for the souls round about me, the people I meet. I thirst that they may be enlightened and become aware and conscious of Christ.*

Our thirst is a longing for God, for spirit, for Christ, for perception, for truth, for consciousness. Living water quenches this thirst.

### **The Well**

But we can also become a well of living water. From John 4 - *the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.* And also in John 7:37: *If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'*

It's a beautiful picture of what is possible for us; to become wellsprings of living water. If we drink of the spirit of Christ, if we believe in him, we can become a source of this living water. It can flow through us and from us bringing life, vitality, creativity, unity and harmony.

I guess we need to consider what kind of well we are becoming – will it properly contain this water, will it allow for a free flow? Is it safe from contamination? Jacob's well was 105 feet deep. We need to know how deep and how wide to dig this well. Where do we dig, what tools do we need?

## Conclusion

In the last few chapters of the book of Revelation there are a couple of references to living water which tell us some more about this.

*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water without price from the fountain of the water of life.  
Revelation 21:6*

And from Revelation 22:17, *And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.*

We thirst. The water we need is freely given; it is without price. It requires us to know and acknowledge our thirst, and to bring it to him, to allow him to quench, refresh and renew us. In turn we can become wellsprings of living water.

This story of living water gives us a picture, a way to begin to know what we can become. Spiritual beings, perhaps we can call it our etheric body – which is flowing, moving, perceptive. A nature that is full of a life that flows out - soothing, healing, uniting and harmonising.

How do we become this living water, this flow of life and spirit that enlightens and enlivens? Another characteristic that enables us is worship. I'll finish with a quote from the New Year Meditation for this year:

*There is a cleansing flow in worship where all that is not necessary can fall away, and we can be refreshed. It is literally the hose that flushes out the mudpit. And we find we can see anew, in right perspective. We are refreshed in our vision of our lives and this world. "See what the Lord has done!"  
Worship brings knowledge and revelation of the will of God and openness to his goodness.*

*Through worship we experience communion and unity with our homeland.*

So shall it be.

Works from Rev Mario Schoenmaker  
Used with permission  
Antoinette Schoenmaker ©

The Centre in Melbourne  
The Independent Church of Australia ©  
email: [melbournecentre@ica.org.au](mailto:melbournecentre@ica.org.au)  
web: <http://www.ica.org.au/melbourne>