

LENT III

“Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?” John 4:11

Where can you get this living water?

In the beginning was water. Somewhere between 70 and 75 percent of the earth’s surface is covered with water. And much more fresh water is stored under the ground in aquifers than on the earth’s surface. The earth is a closed system, like a terrarium; it rarely loses or gains extra matter. The same water that existed on the earth millions of years ago is still present today.

And God said, “let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry land appear.

Our salvation history proclaims that water can have great destructive force. *Then God said to Noah... in seven days I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights; and every living thing I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground. |*

And as we have witnessed in the last several weeks, water can destroy the creations of humanity as well as those of God. The tsunami in Japan has not only claimed thousands of lives through drowning and crushing, but has caused nuclear meltdown— the nightmare outcome of one of our greatest scientific accomplishments.

Water can destroy multitudes, and water can save multitudes, as scripture reminds us. *But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.*

Where can you find this living water?

As the earth is made up principally of water, so are we, God’s children. At birth, water accounts for approximately 80 percent of an infant’s body weight. Roughly 70 percent of an adult’s body is made up of water. We are water; we would not be alive without our watery natures.

And we can’t live without it. A human body can live up to 4 weeks without food but can survive only 8-14 days without water. Water is essential to our physical nature and our physical survival.

Much of the Holy Land is desert, and desert dwellers, above all others, recognize and cherish the value of water. And so, in scriptures born from the desert experience, the water becomes a metaphor.

A metaphor for prosperity, for flourishing. *That person is like a tree planted by streams of **water**, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.*

A metaphor for renewal, for restoration. *God makes me lie down in green pastures, God leads me beside still waters.*

A metaphor for salvation. *With joy you will draw **water** from the wells of salvation.*

A metaphor for God. *As the deer pants for streams of **water**, so my soul pants for you, my God.*

The river of God is full of water.

Where can you get this living water?

And when we move to the New Testament witness, water becomes ministry. Ministry to the body. Jesus tells the disciples, *And if anyone gives even a cup of cold **water** to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.*”

And ministry to the spirit, even the spirit of Jesus himself.

And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was at table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind Jesus at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears.

Turning toward the woman Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do you see this woman? I entered your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

Are her tear tears of sorrow? Tears of repentance? Tears of compassion? We don’t know. We do know they are tears of healing.

Where can you get this living water?

And of course there’s the water of baptism. The Baptizer baptizes with water, for the repentance of sins. He baptizes Jesus. But later, Jesus will baptize with the Spirit, for new life. And baptism becomes the initiation into new life for all followers of Jesus.

*As they traveled along the road, they came to some **water** and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” And after his baptism, he goes on his way rejoicing.*

Water of life, the water of creation. Water of destruction, the water of liberation. Water of flourishing, water of restoration. Water of salvation, water of ministry. Water of baptism and new life.

We thank you, God, for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in death. By it we share in the resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit.

No wonder the woman who meets Jesus at the well wants to know, *Where can you get this living water?*

Sir, she says, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water. Water was precious then, and water is precious now.

Today, millions of women and children spend several hours a day collecting water from distant, often-polluted sources. In just one day, more than 200 million hours of women's time is consumed for the most basic of human needs — collecting water for domestic use.

The Samaritan woman never wants to draw water again, never spend her days in repetitive, endless, thankless, but necessary labor. She never wants to be thirsty again.

And she gets her living water from Jesus.

Where can we get our living water? I pray this often. *Where will I get this living water?*

And the answer is always the same.

I get my living water from Jesus.

Amen.

