

The Third Sunday in Lent  
12-03-2023  
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Exodus 17: 1-7    Water from the rock  
Psalm 95            An invitation to Worship God  
Romans 5: 1-11    Peace and Joy through Faith  
John 4: 5-42        The Samaritan woman by the well

### Introduction

There are a number of themes from today's bible readings, but the main theme we have, seems to be around the symbolism of Water. And what great symbolism this is, because water is an essential part of life.

So today I would like to look at the symbolism of water, and explore what our bible readings are teaching us about God, by using this symbolism.

### Symbolism of Water

Firstly, let us look at water itself. The chemical symbol for water is H<sub>2</sub>O. At its most basic, water is made up of, two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom. Water is a very simple element of nature, and yet it is also essential. For adults our bodies are made up of between 55% to 60% water. Our brains are about 75% water. People have been known to survive for weeks without food, but we can't live for more than a few days without drinking water.

We cannot physically exist without water.

So just as we need water to survive physically, we need God if we are going to live our lives to the fullness for which we have been created.

Let us now explore how the Bible readings have used the symbolism of water for us today.

### Exodus Reading

Let us begin with the reading from Exodus.

Today we hear the Israelites complaining and questioning Moses, and by default questioning God.

Under God's direction, Moses had saved the Israelites from slavery, he had led them through the Red Sea, and was taking them on the way to the promised land.

The Israelites had quickly forgotten all that God had done for them and were complaining to Moses.

When we were talking about this reading at the Lenten studies this week, there were some suggestions that it was probably reasonable for the people to be upset because they had no water. We need water to live. But the issue at stake in this reading is not that they were concerned about not having water, but rather how they reacted to Moses, and to God.

Problems and difficulties will always arise in our lives. It is the nature of the fallen world that we live in. But if we know God, we should be enabled to take our issues to God in prayer. Not blaming, or whinging, or cursing God, but rather turning to God and trusting God.

Even though God had done so much for the Israelites, they continued to fail to trust God. In this reading we hear the places were named Massah and Meribah, where Massah means "testing" and Meribah means "quarrelling".

When problems arise in our lives do we calmly seek a way forward by careful thought and planning, or by seeking good counsel, or by being determined in quiet prayer? Or do we skip to quarrelling and complaining like the Israelites?

When we face challenges in our lives, we should turn to God in trust and Faith.

Moses turned to God, and Moses trusted God. God told Moses to strike the rock and the water flowed from the rock at Horeb.

Through Moses, God gave the people water to drink.

When we are faced with life's challenges, we need to calmly trust God in our lives, knowing that God will provide the "water" we need.

### John's Gospel

And now let us look at the reading from John's Gospel.

In this reading we hear Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman at the well. John records quite a discussion between this woman and Jesus. She continues to talk about just physical water, whereas Jesus is referring to Himself, when he talks to her about the "living water". The conversation goes

on for a while, and the woman doesn't get what Jesus is trying to tell her, until he tells her something quite personal about herself. The conversation changes and the woman begins to be more open to who this Jesus really is.

How much do we really seek to know Jesus in our lives? How open are we about really allowing Jesus to know us?

Just like we need to drink water to live, we need to enter into an intimate relationship with Jesus to really know the 'living water' in our lives.

I believe this is the turning point in the conversation:-

<sup>25</sup> The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.' <sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, 'I am he, the one who is speaking to you.'

After this, the Samaritan woman must have got pretty excited about Jesus, "the living water", because she left her water-jar at the well, the whole reason she was there in the first place, and rushed back to the city to tell others about Jesus.

And when Jesus relented and spent two days in the city with the Samaritans, we hear:-

<sup>41</sup> And many more believed because of his word. <sup>42</sup> They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world.'

We know from history, and from the very reading today, that Jews and Samaritans did not get along well. So, something pretty dramatic must have occurred for the Samaritans to acknowledge Jesus as the "Saviour of the World".

The woman at the well became one of the first evangelists. Not only did she believe who Jesus was, but her belief drove her to want to share who Jesus was with others.

Once she had tasted the 'living water', it wasn't enough to just know it for herself. The knowledge of the 'living water' sprung forth from her, to those around her, and they also came to know it.

## Conclusion

Today we have looked at some portions of the bible where the symbolism of water has helped us to understand more of how we “know” God and how we “respond” to God.

Of course, there is much more symbolism we haven't even looked at, like how we use water for baptism, a sacrament, and the Christian rite of initiation.

I hope today, that the example of the Israelites whinging because of a lack of water, will encourage us, in trusting God, and behaving well in times of difficulty, knowing that God wants to provide for us.

And I hope that the example of excitement and passion shown by the Samaritan woman, when she discovered that Jesus really was the ‘living water’ will be an example of encouragement for us.

I pray that we will be encouraged and enabled to “know” and “respond” to Jesus the “living water” in our lives. Amen.