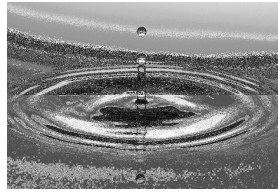


**WATER**



**If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Rivers of living water will brim and spill out of the depths of anyone who believes in me this way, just as the Scripture says. John 7:33**

*Scripture:*

**John 2:1-11 (The Message)**

*From Water to Wine*

<sup>1-3</sup>Three days later there was a wedding in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there. Jesus and his disciples were guests also. When they started running low on wine at the wedding banquet, Jesus' mother told him, "They're just about out of wine."

Jesus said, "Is that any of our business, Mother—yours or mine? This isn't my time. Don't push me."

<sup>5</sup>She went ahead anyway, telling the servants, "Whatever he tells you, do it."

<sup>6-7</sup>Six stoneware water pots were there, used by the Jews for ritual washings. Each held twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus ordered the servants, "Fill the pots with water." And they filled them to the brim.

<sup>8</sup>"Now fill your pitchers and take them to the host," Jesus said, and they did.

<sup>9-10</sup>When the host tasted the water that had become wine (he didn't know what had just happened but the servants, of course, knew), he called out to the bridegroom, "Everybody I know begins with their finest wines and after the guests have had their fill brings in the cheap stuff. But you've saved the best till now!"

<sup>11</sup>This act in Cana of Galilee was the first sign Jesus gave, the first glimpse of his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

**John 4:7-11**

### *The Woman at the Well*

<sup>7</sup>A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink’. <sup>8</sup>(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) <sup>9</sup>The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?’ (Jews do not share things in common 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 no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?’



## **WATER**

I looked in Wikipedia and found that the world is seventy percent water. Of that seventy percent only three percent is fresh water and of that three percent only one percent is clean drinking water, one percent. The human body is comprised of sixty percent water. Water is one precious resource; it’s the very foundation of life.

## **WEDDING AT CANA**

We meet up with Jesus in the first reading from John at the wedding at Cana. Jesus has just called his earliest five disciples but his real ministry was yet to start. John describes Jesus’ act of turning water into wine as his first miracle.

I do find it interesting in John’s account that Mary, Jesus’ mother, is really the one who pushes Jesus into action, into his first miracle.

Mary says, “They are just about out of wine.”

Jesus answers his mother, “Is it any of our business, Mother, yours or mine? This isn’t my time. Don’t push me.”

I could almost hear those words coming out of the mouth of my mother. Not to turn water into wine mind you, but to do something with your life, to move forward. My mom was the type of mother who had unbounded confidence in her five children. I was the fourth of five kids and she was always encouraging us to do more than the minimum required, to push ourselves to do more. She encouraged us to excel at whatever we did; it was even okay to fail so long as we tried our very hardest.

I can’t really say what Mary’s motivation was, but I can only imagine she was ready for Jesus’ ministry to get started. Jesus was thirty years old. He was still living at home. He worked with his dad occasionally in the family carpentry business, but he just recently started inviting these other men (his new disciples) over to the house. It was all well and good to invite friends over to the house but they weren’t much help around the house and they were eating Mary and Joseph out of house and home. It was all they could do to provide for their existing family let alone all these new disciples.

Perhaps Mary was thinking okay, you have been called by God to do his work, so get on with it. Now is your time.

Jesus, at that very moment, was being called by God. But Jesus didn’t feel he was ready to get started. Somehow his mother knew the time had come. And with that amazing act of turning water into wine, Jesus’ public ministry had begun.

## **A TIME OF CELEBRATION**

The idea that Jesus would start his public ministry by turning water into wine is only fitting. He takes the most precious of resources, clean drinking water, and turns it into an even more

precious resource, wine. And not just any wine but really good wine, wine to rejoice at one of life's most celebratory days, a wedding. His entrance into the world ministry scene came at a festive occasion, a time of celebration.

I don't think that is by accident either.

**Jesus, by performing this miracle at a wedding, proclaimed that religion, and therefore life, was to be celebrated, not just endured. It was to be lived to the fullest.**

## **SAMARITAN WOMEN**

In our second passage from John where Jesus meets the woman at the well, I am most intrigued by the Samaritan woman Jesus meets. Jesus had been traveling all day. It was a long journey; he was fatigued and tired, and he was thirsty. The Samaritan woman is surprised that Jesus, a Jew, would even talk to her, a Samaritan. The Jews despised Samaritans. She was an outcast to the Jews; she was unclean and unwelcome. She came to the well looking for water; she was thirsty. Jesus came to the well looking for far more than just water, and Jesus came looking for her. He didn't yet know the woman, but somehow he knew he needed to meet her, and engage her in conversation.

Jesus spoke with her at great length. He looked deep into her soul and told her all about herself. He told her things about her that she didn't really want him or anyone else to know about her. Their conversation changed her life. She was changed by the water, by the living water that only Jesus could give her. She ran back to her village transformed. The old life was left behind, and a great new future was ahead. She was so transformed by her

encounter with the living water Jesus gave her that she wanted to share this new life with everyone she met.

## **RIVER OF LIFE**

Have you been transformed by the water, the living water that Jesus speaks of, that he shared with the woman at the well? Perhaps we all need to sit by that metaphorical river of life and ask ourselves the question, “What would God have me do?” Do we dare fill our cup to overflowing; do we dare take a drink?

Both of these passages from John remind me that God didn’t just call Jesus into ministry, he calls each and every one of us into service as well. I doubt God will call us to turn water into wine, or raise someone from the dead. But just because our act of service may be a bit less dramatic, it is no less important. The water that Jesus turned into wine, the living water that the woman at the well was exposed to, is the same water that we can use to help change the lives of the people God is calling us to serve.

## **PURE WATER**

It has been many years since I have been back-packing in Sequoia or Lassen National Park, the Desolation Wilderness or climbing Mount Whitney. Several of the lessons I learned on those backpacking trips I still remember well. One of the lessons I learned was the closer to the source of the water (in most cases snow) the purer the water. The second lesson was: never fill your water bottle from the still, stagnant lake water, but always take it from the swiftly flowing, moving rivers and streams. You see I learned the hard way that the still, stagnant water has a way of getting contaminated. The impurities, the bad bacteria in the water have a way of settling out in the calm, still water. The further from the source, the dirtier the water is with more opportunities for the

bacteria to build up. The rapidly moving water has a way of self purifying itself. It oxygenates itself and purifies itself, and the bacteria dissipates in the swiftly moving waters.

It seems almost paradoxical that the calm, peaceful, placid water can be so unhealthy. Those crystal clear, blue, high Sierra lakes are beautiful but not so good if you drink it unfiltered. Bodies of water that are locked in by boundaries, that are isolated, that are not allowed to mix can become polluted in their isolation. Polluted water is not just dirty, it can be deadly. Whereas the fast moving stream or river, the one you carefully approach, and give a healthy dose of respect to, are so much healthier. The water is constantly being renewed.

## **WATER LESSONS**

Perhaps there is a lesson to learn from the water. Individually, and as a church, we are most at ease when life is predictable, calm, and still. We so rarely seek out the uncharted, the turbulent, and the unknown. And yet that very complacency can be very unhealthy. We can become isolated, and locked in to our own little safe community. We need to be constantly listening to God, to be working outside the comfort zone most of us find ourselves living in.

When strangers come to visit us at church, we might offer a quick greeting but often we then drift away to find a friendly face to engage in conversation with. The time and energy needed to get to know them can be exhausting. It's hard work getting to know strangers. We really want to meet them and engage in conversation but we're not comfortable doing it. It's hard to start a conversation with someone new.

When we have a new co-worker thrust upon us at our work place, we are usually slow to include them in the inner circle of our work

environment. It takes time and energy to train them. It means I'll be spending more time getting my work done. It might take years for them to become one of "us."

And yet it's often those times when someone exposes me to a new idea, has a fresh approach, that I have never thought of that makes me think through what I really believe. I have to look at how I do my work, how I plan my day, how I spend my money. They make me examine my own personal beliefs, my habits, and my life style. They make me a better person. Yes, at times it's uncomfortable, unnerving, unsettling, but in the long run it enriches my life.

This is exactly what Jesus did with the woman at the well. He didn't know the woman, and she certainly didn't know him. He invested a lot of time and energy with her. He probably would never again even see her. Yet the time he spent with her enabled her to reevaluate her life, and she was changed, never to be the same. Her transformation enriched Jesus' life as well. He stirred the water. He helped her discover the living water for herself, and she felt compelled to share it with anyone that would listen to her.

**The writer Robert Quinn wrote,  
"One key to successful leadership (and I would add a  
successful life) is continuous personal change.  
This requires that we do an unnatural thing -  
that we exercise the discipline  
to take the unusual perspective."**

## **MONTGOMERY BREAKFAST**

The Montgomery High School Breakfast Program is a mission project our church has been offering for over ten years. We feed

the Montgomery High School students and a few middle school students every morning before classes start. I have had the opportunity of working at our Montgomery Breakfast Program since school started this school year, in the middle of August. Every morning I get to Church at about 7:00 a.m. and try to talk with most of the kids. It has been an eye-opening experience for me. I have really enjoyed meeting the teenage students. What an amazing variety of kids.

They come from all over Santa Rosa. Some of them are from very poor families; some are from more typical middle class families. I have discovered that some of the kids take as many as three city buses to get here in the morning. They get up as early as 5:00 a.m. to be able to get the bus to get them to our church in time to have breakfast before school.

Some of these kids come from large families, where both of their parents leave for work before they even get out of bed in the morning. They get themselves and their younger siblings ready for and to school. Many of these kids live with one parent and are really struggling financially and emotionally to get by. Life is not easy for many of them. For a few of these kids the breakfast our church provides is the only substantial meal that they eat each day. They eat a lot and I encourage them to make a sandwich for lunch.

Our church collectively spends a great deal of time, energy and money making sure that these kids have food to eat each morning. We have four to six incredibly dedicated, different adults each morning of the week, working from 6:30 to 9:00 a.m. to prepare, serve and clean up after these teenagers. It's a huge job. We have yet to feed the five-thousand that Jesus did with five loaves and three fishes. But we do almost the impossible: we serve one-hundred-twenty students every morning. In an average morning

we provide fifty pancakes, sixteen pizzas, numerous bags of bagels and English muffins, cold cereal, big tubs of cream cheese, peanut butter, jelly and lots of other breakfast foods to keep the kids satisfied each morning.

Yet with all of the work involved in feeding these teenagers every school day and trying to meet just a fraction of their personal needs, I truly believe that we don't feed the Montgomery High School students because they are hungry. We feed them because we need to be fed. We are hungry. We are thirsty and need to drink from the well that they provide. We need their perspective, their lives, their ideas and culture to be mixed with ours. We need their water to be mixed with ours.

We need to have our calm, peaceful, placid, water stirred and they help us to stir it.

We can't allow our water to become dirty or toxic; each of us needs to help provide that living water that only Jesus can provide.

## **CALLED BY GOD**

Jesus is calling each of us to serve, not just here at the church, although there are an incredible number of opportunities to serve here, but throughout the community. But God is not calling us to do good things for people. God can do that on his own. God is calling us to do good things with people and empower them to do good as well. Jesus enabled the woman at the well to see where her life needed to change, and he empowered her to go and share that with anyone she knew.

She came to the well expecting to just simply get a drink. She wasn't ready or even willing to be changed. But Jesus talked with her; he had a conversation with her.

If you personally are not able to serve, enable someone else to serve.

If no one notices what you are doing that's okay, God knows what you are doing. And sometimes the smallest of actions makes a huge difference in the life of someone and maybe even in your own life.

Jesus was hesitant to get started in his public ministry. I know I often am hesitant to move forward even when I know that small voice in the back of my mind is God. There have been a few times in my life when that small voice became deafening.

Mary was that deafening voice in the back of Jesus' mind, and he reacted so humanly. He didn't want to start serving God just yet. He wanted a little more time, next week, next month, next year, please God, please. But he listened to Mary and he did respond. Jesus responded to God and it was so God-like, so powerful. And yet not everyone knew what he did; in fact very few people knew that he had actually turned water into wine. God spoke to Jesus through Mary.

**God will speak to you and through you if you let God, if you listen for his voice. The real question is not *if* God will use you, but *how* God will use you?**

So I would encourage each of you to stir the water. Take your cup, fill it to overflowing, drink the water, share your water and go. God is counting on you.



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