

Thirst Quenching Water  
Andrew Kneeland, March 12, 2023  
John 4:7-15

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Two of our Scripture readings today share something in common. Our Gospel text in John 4 and the Old Testament lesson in Exodus 17 both teach us about water.

So we're going to talk a lot about water today. The title of the message this morning is "Thirst Quenching Water."

John 4:11 | *"The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?'"*

Let's pray. *Father God, thank you for your perfect and inspired Word. These words were written thousands of years ago, God, but you have kept them and preserved them because they are for us, here this morning. Teach us through your Word, train our hearts and minds, and grow our faith and trust in you. In your name we pray, amen.*

Thirst Quenching Water.

I want to tell you all a story about the Grand Canyon. The Grand Canyon, in Arizona, is one of my favorite places in the world. I think it's one of the most beautiful places I've ever seen, and many people agree. My parents are living in Arizona now, and they visit the Grand Canyon often. My dad has hiked to the bottom of the canyon dozens of times, and is always ready to make another trip.

I've only been to the Grand Canyon two or three times, but my first time was when I was 17 years old. My dad and I loaded up our backpacks with a tent, sleeping mats, and camping supplies, and we took off down the trail at about 4 in the morning.

Five hours later we reached the campsite at the bottom of the canyon. We unpacked our bags, bought some lemonade from the shop, and sat in the ice-cold water of the Colorado River, trying not to think about the 110 degree heat.

At about 10am we realized that if we just sat around all day, and slept on our

uncomfortable mats, we might be too sore to hike out the next morning! So we packed up our 50-pound backpacks of gear once again, and took off up the return trail a little before noon.

We were in pretty good spirits. Sitting in that water had refreshed us, and we were enjoying the beautiful sights of the canyon all around us. But we made a mistake: we didn't pack enough water to drink.

We slowly sipped and savored the few water bottles we had filled at the bottom, and kept trudging up the six mile trail. It was a 5000-foot elevation gain in six miles, though, so we started to struggle. Other hikers kept passing us as we took breaks more and more often. Soon it was dark, we were completely out of water, and about a mile from the top dad started to stumble and sway.

I had him sit down and I summoned all the strength and adrenaline left in me to jog ahead about a quarter mile to some hikers who had passed us, maybe the only people left on the trail. It was a German couple, and I asked if they had any "Vasser" left. They gladly gave me a 2-liter bottle that was about a third filled with water and I brought it back to my dad. He drank the water, and we made it safely to the top.

That was 14 years ago, and to this day nothing has tasted as good or been as refreshing as that lukewarm, German water. It revived us, and we made it out of the Grand Canyon. Thirst quenching water.

Water is an important resource. It's important today, and it was maybe even more important back in Biblical times. Back then and back there, whoever controlled the water supply was rich and powerful.

In the dry, arid Middle East, civilizations were centered on the few sources of water that were available. There were only so many ways to find water in the desert: you could dig a well, or you could live by a river or an oasis. If you left your water supply you couldn't survive.

But there's a distinction made in the Bible between "living water" and "cistern water." Cistern water is stagnant and stale, and often filled with dead insects and sometimes even dead animals. Living water, though, is fresh and pure. It's not stale, and it brings life.

David talked about this living water in his Psalms. In Psalm 63 David said, "You,

God, are my God; earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water.” Again in Psalm 43 David says, “As a deer pants for water so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.”

A living God who gives us true, living water. Jesus here in John 4 stops by a well in Samaria to teach a woman about thirst quenching water.

Jesus met a Samaritan woman at a well in John chapter four. He, being a Jew, actually broke social barriers by speaking to her and asked her to draw Him a drink from the well. While she is startled that this Jew is interacting with her, Jesus said, “If you knew who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water.”

This got the woman’s attention. She thinks Jesus is talking about physical water. I’m sure she would be very interested in some other way to get living water. She had probably made this trip to Jacob’s well every day for years, working hard to get this safe, healthy water. If there was another way, an easier way, she was all ears.

She said, “Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where do you get that living water?” Jesus said: “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”

This Samaritan woman thought Jesus was talking about physical water. She was looking for physical provision, physical nourishment, in the wrong place.

Just like her, we look for salvation in all the wrong places. In our sinful natures we have a karma mentality; we think doing good things will lead to good things for us. We think being a good person will lead to other people being good to us.

Our spiritual nature knows this isn’t true. We know we are sinful beyond recognition and broken beyond our own repair. But we keep looking for physical water, when we should be gladly receiving the living water of Christ.

The book of Jeremiah also talks about water. Early in the book God levels an accusation against His people. He says:

*“But my people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols. Be appalled at this, you heavens, and shudder with great horror, declares the Lord. For My people have committed two sins: they have forsaken me, the spring of living waters, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”*

If you left your water supply you couldn't survive. Everyone knew that! Everyone in the entire country of Judah knew this, but that's exactly what God was accusing them of. They had left God and left their source of living water.

But that was only half of the problem! They left the pure, living water, but also tried to dig their own cisterns. They tried to find their own living water. But their cisterns couldn't even hold the stale, dirty water that they usually did; their cisterns were broken.

The parallel that God was making is that His people had abandoned Him and turned to the local gods and customs of the countries around them. The Israelites had started worshiping rain gods, fertility gods, and even did child sacrifice. This broke God's heart. He loved these people; He had chosen these people to be His ever since He created the world. He would send His Son to die for these people to take away their sins so they could be with Him forever.

We're God's people, too. He loves us, He cares for us, and He wants to give us life-giving water.

How often have we done what the Israelites did so long ago. Reject the life-giving, living water that is offered freely by our God and try to dig our own cisterns. Try to provide for our own salvation, try to brute force our way to happiness and security and contentment.

Sometimes there is a division between our heads and our hearts. We know in our head that we can't be saved by being a good neighbor. God will not look at our church attendance record to determine if we will receive eternal life or eternal damnation. We know in our heads that our works and our actions do not have anything to do with our salvation.

We've all heard this before. We all know that we are saved by faith and not by works. But our hearts so often forget. And that's why we need God's Word to keep reminding us, to keep drawing us back to God, and back to his perfect,

life-giving water.

We don't have to die of thirst in the desert; God has provided us with His living water. We are free from our sins and we don't have to face the punishment we deserve because Jesus has already taken care of everything for us. Our thirst has been quenched; we've been saved by the once-for-all sacrifice of the Lamb of God who took our place on the cross.

But that's not all: God wants to use us to bring this spring of living water to our neighbors in this dry, desert land who are looking in all the wrong places to satisfy their thirst.

*John 4:13-14 | "Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*

Christ gives us this life-giving gift and uses us to share it with the world! We know where the spring of living water is so we can bring this water to those dying of thirst!

Some of us here have been Christians for as long as we can remember; ever since our youth we've been going to church and we've believed that Jesus died for our sins. We've been sitting by this spring of living water for years and years, and sometimes we can forget how valuable this water is to us in this dry, desert world.

Let's take today to be reminded that Jesus died in our place. Let's imagine we're hearing this for the first time ever: how would you respond to knowing that someone took away all the punishment you deserved? If you had never before heard the story of Jesus living a perfect, innocent life and being prosecuted and punished for our crimes and sins, and executed as a criminal because He loves us... how would you respond? What would you think?

I hope that a fresh wave of thankfulness, gratefulness, and love for Christ sweeps over us.

I want to close this morning by reading another portion of Scripture. This is from Revelation and tells us about what eternal life will be like, what we have to look

forward to when Christ returns and takes us to heaven with him.

Revelation 21: *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.”*

Revelation 22: *“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.”*

Thank you, God, for giving us thirst quenching, living water. Amen.