

ALL MY FOUNTAINS

Psalm 87, Isaiah 58:6-11, John 7:37-38

... “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” John 7:37b-38

Jesus not only quenches our thirst with Himself (living water), but He supplies us with His Spirit to be a river of life within ourselves and everyone around us.

INTRO: WATERSLIDE MISHAP

Vacation back to my home town. I'd lost weight and was in fighting shape. We went to ... the water park. (Not really my thing... I just went because my sister was taking the girls, who were young at the time [pre-Dumisani].)

Got stuck in the bend of a slide... there wasn't enough water to move a rubber duckie, let alone a 225-lb man!! I heard someone come down the slide behind me. I thought... well... this is embarrassing, but I hope the person coming up behind me is big enough to give us both momentum.

But he wasn't... he was maybe a third grade boy... not even fifty pounds on him. After an awkward moment or two, I was able to lift myself up enough to move me down about two feet where there was more water!

It's not a good thing to not have enough water.

DATELINE JUNE 7, 2021, San Francisco.

Just two years after California celebrated the end of its last devastating drought, the state is facing another one. Snowpack has dwindled to nearly nothing, the state's 1,500 reservoirs are at only 50% of their average levels, and federal and local agencies have begun to issue water restrictions.

Governor Gavin Newsom has declared a drought emergency in 41 of the state's 58 counties. Meanwhile, temperatures are surging as the region braces for what is

“What we are seeing right now is very severe, dry conditions and in some cases and some parts of the west, the lowest in-flows to reservoirs on record,” says Roger Pulwarty, a senior scientist in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Noaa) physical sciences laboratory, adding that, while the system is designed to withstand dry periods, “a lot of the slack in our system has already been used up”.¹

There aren't many good substitutes for water. I suppose in my opening illustration they could have used butter instead of water. ... or maybe not.

You could drink other drinks such as soft drinks, tea, coffee. But soon your kidneys will be craving water.

For gardening, I suppose you could use straight fertilizer for a ... day or two? That wouldn't last very long for sure.

¹ <https://news.yahoo.com/truly-emergency-drought-returned-california-070002928.html>

The modern agriculture industry has made significant strides in both understanding and controlling water usage in raising crops. Still, there is no substitute for water.

When it comes to living water for our souls, though, we are good at trying to find substitutes, aren't we?

The prophet Jeremiah lifted up his voice to prophesy about the sins of his people. Will you read this together?

“My people have committed two sins:

They have forsaken Me,

the spring of living water,

and have dug their own cisterns,

broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

In our headlong rush to forsake God we are removing Him from our cultural conversations. We are doing our best to remove any mention of His Name from our history books, and we are vilifying as many of His followers as we can, from the founding of our nation, to current culture.

In our escape from God we have replaced following Jesus with following science. We no longer honor God as our Creator, as it says in the creeds. We would prefer to think that we evolved from a lower species rather than to believe we were created in God's image and likeness. And having replaced God in the narrative of the beginning of the created order, we are writing Him out of the end of all things

as well. Climate Change will explain the unexplainable and usher in a day of doom and despair instead of Christ's Kingdom of perfect righteousness and equity.

And what's most important in this life? For a generation or two now, hasn't it been our health? More recently, our good health has become subservient to the way we look, as Pastor Richard pointed out to us recently.

And if I haven't stepped on any toes yet... the COVID-19 pandemic began to hit at the core of our physical fitness, but most scarily, it began to threaten the physical health, and in a small percentage of cases, the lives, of those who stood in its path. Who here can say that they found their strength primarily in God? Didn't we all collectively lean into the strength of our leaders, and the wisdom of our leading national medical professionals?

Now please, this is not a question of whether or not you can tolerate wearing a mask in public. This is not a question of if you're a vaxxer or an anti-vaxxer. I'm simply asking in what or in whom did we place our trust, and did we allow our faith to suffer in the midst of fear?

Our human needs, driven by fear, addictions, a physical or chemical imbalance, or sin, will only amplify under stress. Our spiritual response, driven by faith and love coming from the Holy Spirit within - the rivers of living water, as Jesus put it - can also amplify IF EXERCISED. See, the human flesh-needs will amplify with no exercise. But if neglected, our spiritual response will diminish until faith has deteriorated to cynicism and love has turned to bitterness. If we do not forsake God, if we refuse to turn to our own cisterns of science, curtailing of God-talk in public, placing our health and physical image above all, and listening to human wisdom; if we instead stay engaged with Him and value the wisdom expressed in

His Word above all else, then we find in Him living water. When we turn to our own devices, our own wisdom, our own echo chamber, our own bodies, our own psychology, we find them to be empty cisterns that hold no water.

I confess I struggled with fear during the pandemic, and I still struggle. I believe that most of the threat is over, or is it? What if our economy never fully rebounds? What if people don't come back to church the way I hope they will? What if, what if?

Oh may God give to me and all of you, my brothers and sisters, the faith and the courage of the Apostle Paul, to stand and proclaim,

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For Your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’

Romans 8:35-39

Isaiah 58:11:

The Lord will guide you always;

He will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land

and will strengthen your frame.

You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.

Thousands of years before Jesus, Moses followed the call of God to lead His people out of the slavery of Egypt into the Promised Land. During the time in the wilderness all God's people lived in movable dwellings - we would think of them as tents, although they may not have folded up as neatly as tents, which is why they are referred to today as booths. God miraculously took care of His people; leading them through the Red Sea - on dry ground. When Pharaoh and his army followed them, the water buried them alive. The children of Israel sang, "I will sing to the Lord for He has triumphed, throwing horse and rider into the sea!" In the desert, God provided His people with manna in the wilderness, and miraculously provided water provisions by leading them near streams and wells, and on two occasions, allowing water to pour from a rock, so that His people might be refreshed.

The wilderness wanderings are remembered by the Jewish people in the Sukkoth, or the Festival of Booths. A later tradition of the Festival of Booths that would have been celebrated in Jesus' day, was called the water libation ceremony. It was an intentional reminder of God's acts of salvation and provision with water. Sukkoth - which usually happens in October of every year - was commanded to be celebrated with great joy, and this water libation ceremony - called Nissuch Ha-Mayim - was celebrated with even more joy.

A huge container (think of a large washtub) was filled with water from the pool of Siloam. Levites sang, played instruments and danced as they carried and led the

water from the pool of Siloam to the Temple. In the Temple Courtyard, three candlesticks 75 feet tall were lit to remind the people of God's presence as a fiery pillar. The drawing of the water and the procession to the Temple was done at night, amidst tremendous shouts of praise and joyful singing, so that the water would be in front of the altar in the morning to be poured out by the Priests who had been assigned altar duty. Poured out on the altar of God in the morning light, the water represented to the people the presence and anointing and power of the Holy Spirit.

You can hear the end of this morning's psalm come to life in the raucous scene of the nighttime procession to the altar: As they make music they will sing, "All my fountains are in You!"

God, everything I look for and everything I need are found in You.

- The fountain of my identity, God is in You.
- The fountain of my health, physically and mentally, God, is in You.
- The fountain of my life's purpose God is found in You.
- The fountain of my life's provisions, financially and otherwise, God, is found in You.
- The fountain of good relationships, God, is found in You.
- All my fountains, all that I care about in my life, God, are found in You!

Ironically, in Jesus' day, there was a great drought in the land. The water was carried and processional was still done with the customary shouts of praise, for it reminded the people that their God who saw their forefathers and mothers through a desert wilderness would also see them through a time of drought. But it also made them keenly aware that this precious water being carried to the Temple

and lavishly poured out on the altar, was also representative of sacrifice and offering. And that's what makes what happens next so poignant. Many scholars believe that as the water was being poured out on the altar, in a time of drought over the land of Judea, Jesus stood in the Temple for all to see and cried out in a loud voice for all to hear:

LET ANYONE WHO IS THIRSTY (say that with me)

If anyone is thirsty? They were in drought and likely had water rationed to them somehow, and they were watching a large amount of precious life-giving water being poured out as an offering on the altar of God. Just like that altar which had not had any water poured on it for a year, our souls are dry and parched from lack of water. *If anyone is thirsty...* **Everyone** was thirsty! But they had to first recognize that they were dry, and unable to satisfy their thirst on their own.

LET ANYONE WHO IS THIRSTY COME TO ME (say that with me)

After we admit our thirst, we need to come to Jesus. This is the part of the process that we own: in what direction are we moving? Moving toward Jesus means we leave our broken cisterns behind. We come empty handed, all we've ever had are inadequate substitutes and shortages of what we really need. *If any of you is dry and parched, move toward Jesus.* And we come only to Jesus, for only Jesus is the Way to the Father.

LET ANYONE WHO IS THIRSTY COME TO ME AND DRINK (say that with me)

Have you ever been truly thirsty? Have you ever seen a truly thirsty person drink? The realization of need for a drink outweighs being selective about the drink itself. I'm just gonna bring the cup up to my mouth and drink!!!!

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.

WHOEVER BELIEVES IN ME

It's complete, total, no reservations belief that Jesus is who He claims to be: God in flesh, the Messiah who came to set His people free, the One who came that we might all have life, and have it to its fullest here and through eternity.

RIVERS OF LIVING WATER WILL FLOW FROM WITHIN THEM.

not just a little bit of positivity to help you feel better for the next two hours, but deep rivers of endless supply of life-giving water for all of your needs, rushing over the banks within you, to splash onto those around you, too. And these rivers of living water are not just coming from your mind, this is coming DEEP INSIDE OF YOU.

This life-giving water is from the Holy Spirit of God given to you the moment you begin to wholly, completely trust in Jesus as the Forgiver of your sins and follow Him as the Leader and Center of your life. So, as you've heard us explore these words of Jesus, what I want to know is have you responded personally to this invitation? Will you say yes to the living water of Jesus Christ in your life? Will you today be able to say ALL MY FOUNTAINS ARE IN HIM? Everything that I value and the Center of my life, is found in my Lord Jesus Christ.

It is my prayer that as a people we will live in this reality. That we would realize that we are dry, parched, and stale apart from Him. That we will continually move to Jesus, being as close to Him as possible. That we will gratefully receive what He gives to us, that we will meet Him in faith, believing that He is who He claimed to be, and that He can be that in our lives and the lives of our loved ones and friends today and tomorrow just as He was for those who lived thousands of years ago. And it is my prayer that from deep within the center of our souls, that living water would flow in rivers from us; nurturing our own souls, and reaching those around us with the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit.