

WELCOME 9 February 2020 – 5 Epiphany '20 A

RIVERS OF LIVING WATER: WHAT?

John 7:37-39 & Acts 1:6-8

Good morning & Welcome to Living Water Fellowship! Special welcome to our visitors & guests...It is wonderful you're all here! It's our privilege & joy to serve you in worship today. Please stay for morning tea after worship so we get to know each other better.

We've heard the old saying "Misery loves company." But we all know it's heaps more fun to share the good stuff...new baby...new job...strong test marks...sports victory. When something matters, you talk about it. When you are interested in it or excited by it, you can't be silent. If something significant happens, you share it.

Yet, statistically, the vast majority of Christians (assured by Jesus of his love for us, his presence w/ us & his victory w/in us over sin/death/devil - possessors of the best news in the world) never share that faith with another person...inviting them to join us in it.

Over these weeks in February we'll see this verse from Is 52:

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace & salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns! – Is 52:7

and remind ourselves that we're called to have beautiful feet because God chooses his church, US, to bear his hope/life to the world...The good news of God's reign over all things through the life death & resurrection of Jesus Christ...and under the strength of the Spirit to labour for the Father's harvest of hearts & lives for all eternity...to see people transformed forever by his mighty saving love.

And like anything we do the first few times we do it...That will almost always be a challenge. To look someone in the eye & honestly from the heart share what God has done for you in Jesus Christ in a way that invites them to trust the good news of death's defeat/hell's overthrow/sin's forgiveness...to share a time when Jesus made a difference in your life & then follow that up with something like: If I told you that could happen for you, would you like it to?

We'll explore and experience that together today & for the month of February as we discover what Jesus really meant when he described those who believe in him as having "rivers of living water" flowing from our hearts...

Let's pray & then we'll get stuck into it!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Living God, in your presence there is fullness of life and love. Draw us deeper into the life of your Son day by day that the fullness of his love may flow out of our lives to others. Use us as agents of your Kingdom of grace...We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ who gave his life for all. Amen.

5 EPIPHANY '20 A – RIVERS OF LIVING WATER: WHAT?

FAITH CHAT: I promised last week you'd see these questions....so...

1. Please share one place where you experienced God's presence this week.
2. Please share a time when Jesus made a difference in your life. This/Jesus/that

Now we're going to get a bit...inventive...We just heard Jesus' final instructions to his followers in the NT

"...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." stay in the city until that happens

But the NT doesn't really tell us a great deal about *HOW* they did that. What they actually said to other people when they were doing the "witness to Jesus – telling people about him everywhere" thing...We have a pretty good idea what Paul did because we have so much of his life/ministry recorded & we know some about Peter's preaching & John's letters & his gospel. The others? Not so much. But when say, Thomas lived out that final directive, *you will be my witness*, What would Thomas have said? What do you think? Or...Jairus? What would Mary Magdalene, Lazarus, Martha, _____ have said?

Clearly we don't *REALLY* know...But I think your inventiveness was great...I reckon you were pretty close to the mark because there was this time when...John 4... Jesus & the disciples are passing through Samaria...disciples go one way to get food & Jesus hangs out to rest by Jacob's well...While he's there he strikes up a conversation with a woman. You know the story. He asks for a drink & she gives him some social commentary about Jewish men & Samaritan women. Jesus cuts that off w/ an offer: *"If you only knew the gift God has for you & who you are speaking to, you would ask me, & I would give you living water."* *"Living Water"* – always in the Bible implies the gift of salvation/being drawn in love to the Father by the Holy Spirit. Spirit moving in someone to effect God's redeeming/rescuing/recreating love in them. Complete wholeness. Ultimate satisfaction. Uninterrupted shalom in the Father's presence.

But the conversation continues...She shows she is historically/spiritually astute as she fences verbally with Jesus. But again Jesus cuts through the evasions *"...those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."* 2X now Jesus offers her eternal life...You know what happens next. Some conversation about religion & who's is best/right & Jesus simply says there's stuff you'll never understand because he isn't here in the service of religion...he kills off religion & in its place he offers himself. Then Jesus sends her off to get her husband & they talk about 5 husbands & current living arrangements... All without the slightest hint of reprimand/rebuke. Jesus comes to us where we are so that his life might be made real in us...so that in him we can be made new... That's called grace...which reaches out to her AS. SHE. IS. not some cleaned up repented up version of her...but the *HER* that's had 5 husbands plus this 6th guy whatever all that means. Then Jesus drops the big one: *"I am the Messiah!"* that's 3X he directs her out of religion & into relationship...relationship with the Father through the only path into that relationship...him.

The 12 show up & the woman takes off to become the 1st non-Jewish evangelist with the shortest "come to Jesus" pitch ever written: *"Come & see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?"* And the whole village came running. You see I am convinced our world is dying of thirst...hungry for that which it does not understand but has sold its soul to the wrong things to pursue. 2 stories... infinity tattoo & dad's presence in the house...welcome to country

Please share a time when Jesus made a difference in your life. The woman simply shares what little she knows about Jesus...he's seen inside to her longing her emptiness her grasping at straws...she's honest about what she doesn't know. No philosophical argument, theological reasoning, Biblical insight... Jesus has cut that all away in his 3-fold invitation into a relationship. And she & her village are transformed.

God has called Living Water Fellowship to be a vibrant Christian community that glorifies God by inviting all people to become disciples of Jesus who grow in his grace and go in his power to show his love to the world.

Say that with me. Again. Now without seeing it. I warned you...we're going to memorize that...and a few other things...It'll be fun. Let's look at this piece again: *inviting all people to become disciples of Jesus* Like Thomas, the woman, Peter, Paul & the others...your invitation is going to sound different from theirs or mine. Like the woman or the disciples... there's stuff you don't know...in fact there's stuff Jesus didn't impart to the disciples so we don't know at all.

But there are some things we can say, that we can learn together. When you came in today...there was paper & pens & clipboards on most of the chairs...We're going to learn a way to share the gospel...so you're not just going to hear the good news today, you're going to see it AND you're going to have one simple way of sharing it with a friend, family member, co-worker, fellow student over lunch over coffee in your home or theirs...in fact...in less time than it takes to eat lunch. So here we go...

This moment is only possible when someone you know who right this minute is not connected to life in Christ...they're living distant from his grace ...not part of his family in any real way...and you've been praying for them & asking Jesus to open a space for you to offer them living water...You've said, "Jesus, I'm going to do it. I'm going to obey your command to be your witness to make disciples...to give what I have been given...not just invite to worship but invite to you" and then stepped into that space with them..."You know...there was this time when I was thirsty & there was water... hurt/healing alone/family down/joy confused/direction angry/peace when Jesus made a difference to your life & right now you look like you could use a drink..." If I told you that could happen for you, would you like it to?

It goes like this...copy what I draw --- 1st – Draw a circle...and a squiggly line through it...This is our world as we know it It's broken...crime, violence, war, drought, disease, political shenanigans...you watch the news...If it bleeds it leads...and our world bleeds a lot. Couple of arrows. Now we can Hide/Deny/Blame. Work harder to make something go right. Therapy Recycle. But our cemeteries just get more residents every day. 2 constant things in life. Death/Taxes. Both remind us of how powerless we are. I can sometimes duck taxes... I can't avoid death. My name will one day be on one of these tombstones

2nd circle – But most of us have a sense it wasn't supposed to be like that. We dream of long for have some inkling that the world is supposed to be better lovelier less argy bargy - more kindness & compassion. Well...in fact that's exactly how the world was created. It was built in love for love. It was designed by God for harmony & fulfillment. Where people & nature all had a role to play & it was "good"...no it was "very good" – And somehow people lived responsive to God & unafraid of his power & presence.

Lines from 2nd to 1st – So how did this become this? Easier than you might imagine We chose it. We chose to be self-directed autonomous. We convinced ourselves we knew best & God wasn't the boss of us anymore. Bible calls that sin...that chosen lived separation between God & people. And we did it...we do that. It's who we are. It's how we are. Look...forget the idea that sin is doing bad stuff. Sin is, at its heart deciding that I know better...I can run me just fine without God...that I can live a life I designed not the one God created me to enjoy. And as soon as I make that choice; it's not far to one of these little stones over a 6x6x3 hole in the ground.

So far does this make sense? Broken world...shouldn't oughta be like that. Designed for more...fuller...richer...wholeness...Well...because God is God he's determined to have this not this. You know how he does that. Nukes us from orbit. No No No...in fact the Bible reminds us that one more strongarm tactic one more show of force one more threat...converts no one.

Draw a 3rd circle inside the 1st...He steps personally into this mess as one of us... In Jesus, God comes personally to us, to rescue & renew all things by Christ's life, death & resurrection. Jesus lives the life responsive to God we were designed for. He lived pouring out love & hope & joy & restoration & offered life to anyone who wanted it...life at its best fullest most abundant. Showed us the very heart of the Father. He didn't hide from the brokenness or deny its power...He simply suffered it to destroy it. He actually died, like we do, but he rose from the grave...tombstone rolled away & he walked out alive to demonstrate once & for all that God was going to have His world & His people the way he wanted us...filled with love & life & joy & hope & peace...forever.

NT says this: *God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them.* The greatness of the gospel is that because of Jesus killed & raised...God has declared every last one of us his beloved children purely as a gift...by grace. "...people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who justifies the ungodly." – Rom 4:5 In the cross of Christ, God is a God who justifies the ungodly. To justify is to make just, to make right, to rectify. The justification of the ungodly then is the power of God. It's the power of God to make right all that is wrong...to make new all that's broken. Especially us...God's most prized & loved creations...the only part of the created world that shares his image & is intended to live out his purposes here on earth. What did I say a minute ago? In Jesus, God comes personally to us, to rescue & renew all things by Christ's life, death & resurrection.

And here's the deal...If all this is true...how does it become true for you...for me? Lines back to the 2nd circle...trust that it's true. Believe. Be baptized. Acknowledge at the deepest level of your heart that you want that to be you being rescued, renewed, brought to the fullness you were intended to enjoy all along in Christ. Be part of the community/church & grow in and share what you've experienced...

So let's pray for that...

Let's pray...**Heavenly Father, you made this promise: "I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations."** Lord Jesus take over. Take all of me. You alone are my hope, my future, my security, my peace & my joy. Use my life so that your love is known and your life pours through me for the sake of those around me. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

