

WELCOME 16 February 2020 – 6 Epiphany '20 A

RIVERS OF LIVING WATER: WHAT'S AT STAKE?

John 7:37-39, ! Corinthians 2:1-4 & Ephesians 1:19-20

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

L-plates, White Cards, RSA, SHoF, WWCC, Police Check, Safe Places...we're dogged in ensuring those who work where the stakes are high are trained. It's assumed that if I mishandle food in a professional kitchen people could get sick. If I incorrectly use machinery or equipment someone could get hurt. Put someone untrained/skilled behind the wheel of a car...they could die...others with them. When the stakes are high...when lives are on the line...we insist on training/certification.

"...you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, & to the ends of the earth." - Acts 1:8

"...go make disciples of all the nations, baptize them in the name of the Father & the Son & the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you..." – Mt 28:19-20

"Go into all the world & preach the Good News to everyone." – Mk 16:15

"As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." – Jn 20:21

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How about us?

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We too are called to have beautiful feet because God chose 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.

The stakes are eternally high...personally, spiritually, and cosmically because we're not engaged solely with flesh & blood...but with sin, evil & the power of death.

We'll explore and experience that together today as we continue discovering what Jesus 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

Lord Jesus you held nothing back, not even your own life so that we could live alongside you as beloved children of the Father. Grow your Spirit in us so that we too hold nothing back...not from you, not from our families, or friends, all those around us for whom you also died & rose.

Let your Spirit so fill us that we overflow in public praise & witness to you our Saviour, Lord & friend.
Amen.

6 EPIPHANY '20 A – RIVERS OF LIVING WATER: WHAT'S AT STAKE?

FAITH CHAT: You know the 1st 2 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
3. Someone whose Christian witness makes a difference in your life?

We're 100 or so hours into Áine's L-plates. I appreciate the diligence & intentionality of young people having to go through that sort of training with driving. Will it make her a perfect driver? Probably not...but she's learning from one of the best in NSW...Leonie. You thought I was going to say "me." I took a written test @ 15, barely passed a road test @ 16 & away I went I know I could have done w/ a few more learner hours. When the stakes are high (the life of my children high stakes) I want there to be an equally high training regimen. If I need surgery I want the person who has done a bunch doing mine... don't want apprentice packing my parachute. I know I'm not alone in that...can I get an Amen.

Jesus...evidently didn't feel that way. In Mt 10...let me back up...at the end of Mt 9 Jesus calls Matthew away from his tax-collecting booth...teaches, 2 healings & then: *Jesus travelled through all the towns & villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues & announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. He healed every kind of disease & illness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused & helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. He said to his disciples, "The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields."* Then...& remember chaps/vss are inserted into the text only about the 300's/400's on...1550's...so in Matthew's original recounting of the life of Jesus... immediately after Jesus says, "Pray for more folks who'll do what I'm doing"...Jesus answers his own prayer & sends out the 12.

Jesus called his twelve disciples together & gave them authority to cast out evil spirits & heal every kind of disease & illness...Jesus sent out the twelve apostles (saying) "Go & announce that the Kingdom of Heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, & cast out demons...Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes & harmless as doves. For you will be handed over to the courts & flogged with whips in the synagogues. You will stand trial before governors & kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell the rulers & other unbelievers about me. When you are arrested, don't worry about how to respond or what to say. God will give you the right words at the right time. For it is not you who will be speaking—it will be the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

I don't know about you but if I'm Matthew & I've only been part of this mangy crew for a few days...I'm wondering what I've just signed up for. Evil spirits! Demons! Wolves! Floggings & trials! I'm thinking I can get my old job back!

There is no L-plate log book here. No traineeship/work experience. No small thing ^{b/4} the big thing...hangnail ^{b/4} heart surgery. Just "Go" & inescapable in the "Go" is evil spirits, demons, wolves, hard core opposition...We have to understand, mission in the name & way of Jesus isn't just go tell folks "God loves you & has a wonderful plan for your life." At every point the NT writers presume the presence of the enemy & assume THAT enemy will do whatever it takes to stop the spread of the good news of God reconciling the world to himself through the life/death/rez of His Son. Really? Really! The stakes are absolutely that high

I know we're all big fans of Ps 23 & that lovely image of God as our Shepherd. But when Jesus embraces being our Good Shepherd he's not drawing it from Ps 23 but from Jeremiah: "Listen to the word of the Lord, you nations of the world; proclaim it in distant coastlands: The Lord, who scattered his people, will gather them & watch over them as a shepherd does his flock. For the Lord has redeemed Israel from hands too strong for them." – Jer 31:10-11 The word "redeemed" OT/NT is of military origin. It presumes the existence of an enemy. God's People, says the Lord to Jeremiah, have been captured by a Power who is not God & is too strong for them: like sheep captive to a wolf

In 1 Cor 2...Paul says he's not a tricky wise preacher he relies on God's power/Holy Spirit to speak for him to get the gospel out clearly....He preaches is Christ crucified & down a bit from where we read this a.m...he says that sort of wisdom – crucified saviour – is a wisdom the "rulers of this age" reject/won't understand. Paul assumes when he refers to "rulers of this age/world" – "principalities/powers" Ephesians – or "power of sin & death" Romans – or "the enemy" elsewhere in Corinthians – Paul assumes you know he's not talking about Caesar...or Herod...or tinpot dictator of this world. He's talking satan. CS Lewis said "Every square inch of this world is claimed by God & counterclaimed by satan"...Every proclamation of the good news...every announcement that *God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them.* – 2 Cor 5:19 takes back territory owned by the Father but falsely claimed by the evil one.

1 more...John writes, "But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil." – 1 Jn 3:8 The stakes are absolutely that high. The stakes are eternally high...personally, spiritually, & cosmically because we're not engaged solely with flesh & blood...but with sin, evil & the power of death that has captured this world & people we know & love...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....given itself over into hands too strong to escape...Ok...2 more. In Acts 10 when Holy Spirit drags Peter by the ear into Cornelius' house, Peter declares, "You know how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit & power, & how He went about doing good; healing all who were under the tyranny of the Devil, because God was with Him." – Acts 10:38 This is the same Peter who writes, "Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour." – 1 Pt 5:8 A pastor I have some contact with in the US says it like this: "The language of Satan so thoroughly saturates the New Testament, you can't speak proper Christian without it. If you avoid that language, you end up with a Son of God who rescues us from his angry Father, instead of a loving Father who in the Son rescues us from the Enemy that has bound us in a grip too strong for us."

It's almost frightening to think back to Mt 10...Jesus sending out the 12...He's drafting them— without any education or qualifications & precious little training— into an army. To stand in the face of sin, death & evil & declare the victory of a kingdom mightier than any power evil or this world can throw at it. And he never lets them off the hook...to the very end that's the church's call & sole vocation:

"...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."

I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified...I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit.

I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for (in) us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead...

Jesus Christ...crucified/risen/ascended & ruling over all things promises to so fill us with his presence/power – to give us such wisdom & the right words that no power aligned against us can stand. In the middle of a broken world, if you & I are looking for a place of stability, strength, hope...the only place Jesus promises that will be found...is in witness to him – in mission in the name of Jesus, where he himself comes to us & fills us with his life – love – power – hope & joy...his victory real in us

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. *inviting all people to become disciples of Jesus...* Jesus is clear: life with him is not simply the prize at the end of this life, some carrot dangling out on the end of a stick. Eternal life, salvation is not something we sit still & wait on until it comes to pass when this world stops spinning. Eternal life, salvation, life with Jesus is also what happens now within the presence & power of the Holy Spirit working in each of us. We are never left to grind out this life on our own. We are never left to soldier through the circumstances of this life by ourselves. Jesus assures us that his mission, his goal was to bring God's power, God's rule to bear on real human lives & real human circumstances. Jesus' mission was to bring people into a relationship with God the Father such that they lived in his presence & power & carried out his way of living here...with such intimacy that *'Rivers of living water will flow from their heart.'*

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So let's commit to that...and we'll read together part of 2 Corinthians 4 together:

Therefore, since God in his mercy has given us this ministry, we never give up. We reject all shameful deeds & underhanded methods. We don't try to trick anyone or distort the word of God. We tell the truth before God, & all who are honest know this.

If the Good News we preach is hidden behind a veil, it is hidden only from people who are perishing. Satan, who is the god of this

world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

You see, we don't go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, & we ourselves are your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.

Amen