

WELCOME 23 February 2020 – Transfiguration '20 A

RIVERS OF LIVING WATER: WHERE'S THE JOY?

John 7:37-39, John 13:34-35 & 1 John 4:10-12

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.

You seen this one a few times...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

I promised we'd spend the whole month of February exploring the implications of that verse/others like it for each one of us...especially when that describes us (people who have been given the best news ever) **AND** who live with this command:

*"I have been given all authority in heaven & on earth. Therefore, **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. Remember, I am with you always, to the very end of the age." – Mt 28:18-20 – Great Commission not a good suggestion*

We 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.

Quite frankly...that scares most of us to death...so we don't do it. It seems like a bridge too far - a weight we can't lift...and then there's no joy in feeling bad about what you tell yourself you ought to but don't do...Today...the joy. We've gone through the Why? the What? the What's at stake?...Today...the joy.

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

Heavenly Father, Almighty God, as you gather us to receive from you & offer our worship in return; we know that all across the globe, men & women, young & old, gather as well to be your church. Pour out your Spirit upon us all so that all who gather in your name may experience your presence, know your will, & receive the power to be what you call us to be & do what you call us to do. In Jesus' Name... Amen.

TRANSFIGURATION '20 A – RIVERS OF LIVING WATER: WHERE'S THE JOY?

FAITH CHAT:

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. Please share a few of your favourite Bible stories/verses narratives stuff that always grab you

I'm curious: Did the book of Leviticus make it into anyone's list of "favourite" Bible things? No Leviticus? Not surprised really...Leviticus is the practical outworking of how God's people are to live responsive to him *IN ALL THINGS*. It's how the Law God gave through Moses is to be lived in the grit/grind of daily life, & how the priesthood effects forgiveness/restoration through sacrifices/offerings/ritual worship when they don't.

Key theme is "holiness" how God's people live as sinful people under the rule of a perfectly holy God, & what is required when they inevitably fall short of that perfectly holy standard. In fact, that "holiness" expectation appears no fewer than 3 specific times as God's people are intended to live in intimate relationship to God lives that are so responsive/obedient to him that they begin to live out of his holiness in all they do: "*You must be holy because I, the Lord, am holy.*" – Lev. 11:45, 19:2, 20:26...*you begin to live what I am because you're living in such close communion/fellowship/obedience with me.*

I don't know about you...but to me that sounds like a burden...that sounds onerous like Ash Barty challenging me to a few sets of tennis...An impossible mountain to climb - Luther says the entire purpose of Leviticus is "to deal with sin & sinners." No wonder that's not on anyone's "favourites" list. Who wants to hear **THAT?**...& all the specific details of what you do with skin diseases, mould in your house & reasons someone should be stoned to death...Most of us avoid Leviticus like the plague. But right near the end. CHAP 26. There's something beautiful...grabs me every time I read it...

It's like I forget it's there...and then **BAM!**

CHAP 26...in most Bibles has 2 big section headings: Blessing of Obedience & Punishment for Disobedience or something like that. It's clear God wants his people to live obedient to his Word...to live responsive to how he has instructed. But obedience is not some rote *do this/don't do that* list you tick off & get a prize when you're done. Imbedded ^{w/in} – surrounding – pouring out of The Law – commands – rules – stipulations – regulations...There's real purpose – intention desire design *AND IT'S MAG-NIFICENT. "I will live among you, & I will not despise you. I will walk among you; I will be your God, & you will be my people. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt so you would no longer be their slaves. I broke the yoke of slavery from your neck so you can walk with your heads held high."* – Lev 26:11-13

Just hear that in your heart...*I will live among you...I will think highly of you...I will walk with you...I'll belong to you as your God & you'll belong to me as my people. I rescued you from slavery so that you could walk with your heads held high.*

I don't know about you...but I'ma say it...that's one of the most powerfully beautiful vss in all of Scripture. How much of our lives is spent ^{w/} our eye on our shoes? Sad guilty sorrowful dejected disappointed ashamed broken-hearted frustrated ticked off impatient... The Father says...not on my watch...those are not from me. "*I have set you apart from all other people to be my very own.*" – Lev 20:26b To be God's *very own* is to walk ^{w/} your head held high. Forgiven restored redeemed healed loved freed esteemed treasured held. This is not prideful "Thank you God I'm not him," but "Thank you God you've got me."

"I broke the yoke of slavery from your neck so you can walk with your heads held high." I broke the yoke of slavery from your neck so I could put another burden on you? No. So I could weigh you down ^{w/} guilt & shame & oughtas? No. So I could give you a list of "to do-s" that'll keep you busy 'til you die? No. So I could give you another religion that worked better? No. "*I broke the yoke of slavery from your neck so you can walk with your heads held high.*" *For the Lord is the Spirit, & wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 2 Cor 3:17 The thief comes only to steal, kill & destroy. I came that they may have life, & have it abundantly. – Jn 10:10 – to the full pressed down shaken together running over & dumped into your lap "From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another." (grace upon grace) – Jn 1:16*

You see...we can do this all day long...Scripture upon scripture. Promise upon promise. Mission in the name of Jesus – sharing what you have experienced from the one who died/rose/rules over all things – inviting someone into life in Christ – evangelism - doesn't have to be some long drawn out philosophical debate. It doesn't have to be an argument/rebuttal argy bargy...It is simply One beggar telling another beggar where to find bread – Luther "You know...there was this time I was thirsty, & there was water... hurt/healing alone/family down/joy confused/direction angry/peace.... And right now; you look like you could use a drink." If I told you that could happen for you... Would you like it to? You & I have the unique privilege of inviting the world around us – the people we know into a joy this world cannot produce – a satisfaction nothing of this earth can supply – healing nothing else in the universe can offer.

I've been pretty insistent about Is 52:7...that whole "*beautiful feet on those who bring good news...*" thing. I have deliberately not given you the whole verse & the context until now...now it's crucial...Over & over again the NT sees

Jesus as the fulfilment of God's promises through the prophets...particularly Isaiah...Isaiah spoke to God's people surrounding their captivity in Assyria/Babylon & their eventual freedom under Persian rule...& in the middle of that sad history; in the middle of their rebellion & unfaith – in the midst of their turning everywhere but to God for security/strength/hope (sound like the 21st century & some of us now & again) God through Isaiah makes this promise:

"But I will reveal my name to my people, & they will come to know its power. Then at last they will recognize that I am the one who speaks to them. '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. 52:6-7

Imagine...as a defeated/captive/downcast/broken people being reminded that not only does God still love you (in spite of your rebellion & the self-destruction you've endured) but that in the end God reigns. God will have the last word. God will reveal to you & in you his power & glory & restore you to your place as his people overthrowing all the earthly powers that would bind you trap you ensnare you & kill you...He would give you life in its fullest from the very death's doorway into which you have run headlong. He will again break that yoke of slavery so you can live with your heads held high. The good news that God is, was & will be forever God...even if no one sees it, acknowledges, submits to his rule...God is still God & will have the final determining say on all of human history.

The NT witness is clear...Jesus says God sent him not to swoop you up out of this broken heap of human history off to some angelic heaven, but to bring you & all human history & all creation back to its fitting & rightful & intended destiny. To bring you back into right relationship with the Father who loves you & wants to reveal himself to you & through you...*to live with you & walk with you*...& that time of restoration & renewal & rebuilding is now...by the work of Jesus Christ.

We have the unique privilege & pleasure of inviting people into that joy...To say with absolute clarity & loving boldness: In Jesus, God comes personally to us, to rescue & renew all things by Christ's life, death & resurrection. He lives responsive to God we were designed for. He poured out love & hope & joy & restoration & offered life at its best fullest most abundant. Showed us the very heart of the Father. He didn't hide from the brokenness of this world or deny its power...He simply suffered it to destroy it. He 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 his way...filled with love & life & joy & hope & peace...Forever. *God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them.* – 2 Cor 5:19

Jesus declares that in him God takes hold of you...makes you his own...first a recipient & then an agent of that good news...Through his life/death/resurrection God in Jesus defeats all the forces that would bind you trap you ensnare you & kill you...restores you to your place as his child & begins restoring you into the image & likeness of His Son. Scholar, former Anglican Bishop NT Wright says: "Our task as image-bearing, God-loving, Christ-shaped, Spirit-filled Christians, following Christ & shaping our world, is to announce redemption to a world that knows only fallenness, to announce healing to a world that knows only brokenness, to proclaim love & trust to a world that knows only exploitation, fear & suspicion..."

Redemption – healing – love & trust...We are called to have beautiful feet because God chose US to bear that good news...that hope/life to the world...and under the strength of the Spirit to labor for the Father's harvest of hearts & lives for all eternity ...to see people transformed forever by his mighty saving love. It may always feel daunting, frightening & a hill too high...But only in that proclamation is there true joy because it leads inevitably to revealing in us the love we are intended to demonstrate...only in sharing that good news is God's love brought to full expression in us...only in living that love in all things do we show the truth of His love by our actions...only in living that love in deed AND word do we prove our discipleship...And let's remember...what joy there is on the final day when the final promise is kept: *"They will never again be hungry or thirsty; they will never be scorched by the heat of the sun. For the Lamb on the throne will be their Shepherd. He will lead them to springs of life-giving water. And God will wipe every tear from their eyes."* – Rev 7:17

Jesus is here & he has gathered us here to show the world that God's reign of love & peace & joy & justice is at hand & at work in the world as he moves in us & as he moves through us into the lives of the people all around us...He makes good on his promise: *"Anyone who believes in me may come & drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from their heart.'"* Let's pray for that river to wash through each of our lives & let's also take a brief time to pray quietly for those who live distant from that joy & that grace upon grace & are in so many ways waiting for us to share the hope we have within us.

Let us pray...**Lord Jesus come alive in us today. Fill us with your Spirit and your strength. By your Word and your Spirit move us into your world to share with others the life and love we have received from you. I pray right now for... (silent prayer for those living distant from God's grace) In your name we pray... Amen**