

Gospel Reflections - 15 March 2020

[John 4: 5 - 42](#)

This week, the world, or at least we Australians have been getting back to basics. Locked away for 2 weeks, what is the one thing we don't want to run out of? It's toilet paper apparently. It would seem we Aussies do not want to be caught short when Covid-19 comes a-knockin'. In the hierarchy of human necessities, there's always been air to breathe, food, clothing and shelter but now coming in at number one (and number twos), is toilet paper!

Jesus is also focused on basic human need in this week's gospel reading. He gets into a fascinating discussion about water and life with a woman at a well. Each day, it would seem, this woman comes to the well to collect what is a vital need for her day ahead. But on this day, she leaves with something far more valuable and life-giving altogether. For Jesus is not talking about any old water, but living water. *'Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."' (v 13 & 14)*

Water, is of course, a vital human need. Our bodies are made up of 60% water (our major organs 70-80%), the earth is over 70% covered in it and we cannot live more than a couple of days without it. It is also something that gives us joy – we wash in it, swim in it, fish in it, maybe surf, ski or even scuba dive in it. It is indeed the stuff of life!

In his interaction with the Samaritan woman, Jesus moves on quickly from the need to quench one's immediate thirst and offers what is not just life-sustaining but what will bring her real joy and fullness of life (see John 10:10). He cuts to her real need. He is not unkind to her or judgemental. We do not have all the detail about what she does about her life but the response we see in her actions is telling; *"Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him."*

Her life was no doubt changed that day...and many others as a result (v 41).

The Bible mentions water over 700 times – I'd suggest that it's a word worth paying attention to. Perhaps the most significant watery reference is to that of Baptism. The 'living water' Jesus calls himself is no doubt a reference to baptism. In Romans, St Paul says, *"We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a **new life.**"* Romans 6: 4

This water brings life out of death. Jesus shows the woman that a different life is available through him. She recognises this and responds with excitement and hope. No doubt she is confronted by the life she is living and sees, through Jesus, a way to really live. Jesus doesn't want us living where the water is stagnant and stale, he wants us drinking, washing and playing in the life-changing water he gives us through himself in our baptisms.

Luther puts it this way, *"In Baptism God forgives sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives everlasting salvation to all who believe what he has promised. For daily living, Baptism means that our sinful self, with all its evil deeds and desires, should be drowned through daily repentance; and that day after day a new self should arise to live with God in righteousness and purity forever. (Luther's Small Catechism)*

A health crisis gets us thinking about some of our basic physical needs. Jesus invites us, as he does the woman at the well, to urgently address more important things, our most basic spiritual need, what is needed for a new, joyful and ultimately eternal life. Amazingly on the cross, Jesus cries out, "*I thirst*". As he hangs there dying for me, is this a cry on my behalf too and indeed of all humanity? A thirst so strong and urgent that only his death can quench for each of us. As water flows from Jesus' love-filled, sword-pierced side (John 19:34), do we need to look any further for the source? - '*A spring of water welling up to eternal life.*' (v 14)

Blessings for your week.

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