

Water Celebrates

Acts 8:26-40
September 22 and 29, 2019

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There are certain things that need to be present in just the right amount.

Fire – provide warmth, enable us to cook and prepare meals OR burn down a house or a block

Nuclear Energy – provide electricity, power a sub OR destroy a city (purpose or inadvertent)

Water – if too much there is a flood, if too little a drought



Drought in Texas 1949-57

1956 second driest year ever; 1954 the third driest

Temperatures were above average even for Texas – many 100 degree + days

Crops failed, farms were foreclosed, cities struggled to find resources for thirsty cities

When the rain returned, cause for great celebration



When I'm far from home on a motorcycle tour and storm clouds gather, I'm tempted to pray for a reprieve - "Now we go out on our ride. We pray the Lord rides by our side. Keep us safe along the way and let it rain some other day."

But, what I need to remember is that it isn't my convenience that matters – others may well have great need for that rain which I see as an inconvenience.



In Acts 8 we read about a man from Ethiopia Philip encountered along the road.

Philip, one of Jesus' disciples, was directed by an angel to take this desert route to Gaza.

The Ethiopian is the treasurer for the queen of Ethiopia.

He had been to Jerusalem to worship (vs 27) and was returning home riding in a chariot.

Reading Isaiah along the way (cruise control?) Tough to read bouncing along

Philip was prompted by Spirit to go up and join the chariot.

So Philip runs up as if to bum a ride and climbs aboard.

Sees he's reading Isaiah - "Do you understand what you are reading?"

Ethiopian confesses he doesn't, needs some help and interpretation - "Who is the sheep led to slaughter?"

Remember when we talked about sharing your faith and how doors can open?

Here was a wide open door for Philip to offer the gospel about Jesus.

This man, formerly unfamiliar with the gospel is so taken by it that he wants to be baptized.

“See, here is water. What is to prevent my being baptized?”

Philip replies, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.”

Ethiopian replies, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”.

So Philip provides the baptism and both were deeply touched by the Holy Spirit that day as they emerged from the water.

Philip just disappears from the scene and the Ethiopian goes on his way rejoicing.

Baptism is indeed a time for celebration.

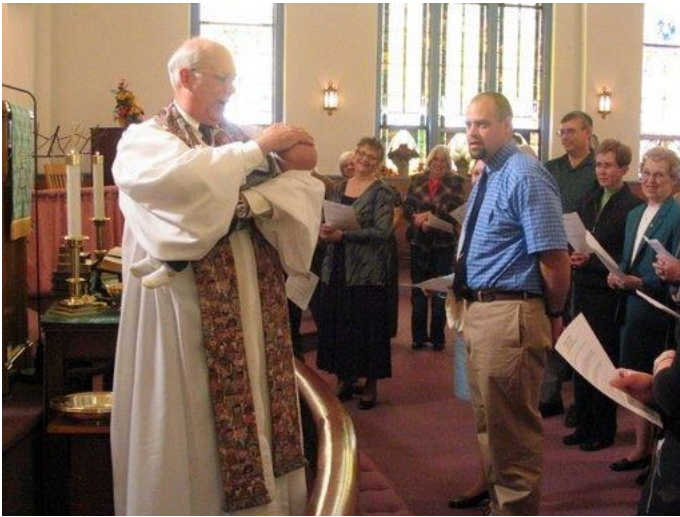
It was a time of deep significance to Kristine and me when our daughters were baptized.

I realized as I answered the questions asked of us as parents, what a great responsibility we had to teach and set an example for our children.

Those baptisms were as special to me as my marriage, my confirmation, my ordination

A time of profound commitment to our faith and a time of celebrating it.

My Dad baptized our daughter, Sharon and my Uncle Jack baptized Carolyn in our Mon Valley church.



I baptized 3 of my grandchildren, both Eben and Jack here at Ingomar and Joshua at Sharon's church in New Florence; my dad baptized Araina there as well.

Very special and joyful times symbolized in the cleansing and renewing water of baptism

When an adult wishes to be baptized, I find that special in a different way.

For infants and children, it's an affirmation of parents' beliefs

For adults it is a confirmation of their own – a public statement of “I believe”. (like Ethiopian)



Watch kids splashing around in even a puddle of water after the rain and you see unbridled joy
Getting wet, kicking the water around, getting each other wet – just a lot of fun
It's the kind of happiness God wants for us every day of our lives.

Too often we restrict ourselves from the happiness God would provide because we're too concerned about what someone else thinks, or we just feel we need to maintain a certain image.

It's not too far fetched for me to picture Jesus splashing around in a puddle with some kids.
Water reminds us that life is to be enjoyed.

Consider the water projects of Ingomar Church.



People without readily available water supplies in many countries suffer greatly.

Women spend hours a day transporting often unclean water over miles when that time could be much better spent if that were not the case.

When clean/available water is provided it is a joyful thing – a time of celebration; truly a gift from God through God's people – through you.

Water is a rare commodity in the desert.



Imagine seeing this after the dryness and heat of a trek in the desert – what a joy that would be!
I recall riding my bicycle on a hot summer day as a kid and getting really thirsty.

First thing I'd do when I got home was get a drink of water – a cup or a hose
It seems to me that many people today are living in a spiritual desert.

Their lives are drying up – no enthusiasm for life, feelings of defeat, pointlessness
They have a thirst, but like a kid on a bicycle some distance away from the hose,
frustrated and miserable

They're like the Woman at the Well in Samaria Jesus came across in John 4 to whom
he offered “living water” - his spiritual presence, and the difference that made.
She was no longer forlorn and lost, but joyful; sharing the experience with others.



Every morning one of the first things I do is head to the kitchen and get water from the sink to make tea for Kristine and coffee for myself – You turn on the faucet and there it is – cold or hot.

I don't even think about it because it's always there.

But, a little while back the borough was working on a water line on our street and had to shut off the water for a few hours.

I went to the kitchen, turned on the faucet and nothing happened! What would I do?

No coffee or tea, no water to wash my hands, no shower that morning.

When it came back on, there was a genuine feeling of relief, even celebration - “Yes!!!”

It's like that in our relationship with Jesus as well.

He tells us in Matthew 28 He is always with us, and He is.

We get accustomed to that fact – our relationship with the Lord becomes routine, matter of fact to the point we don't really pay a lot of attention to it.

But then a time comes when something disrupts life (illness, death, financial setback, a family issue) and we ask ourselves, “What will I do?”

It's then we see what a valuable resource that “living water” offered by Jesus is to us.
We no longer take it for granted, but experience a deeper appreciation for that gift.



Our water at home was off because a pipeline delivering it needed fixed.

The pipeline for the “living water” offered by Jesus is prayer.

We need to maintain that pipeline so that the resource is always there

If we allow it to deteriorate with all the debris life has to throw at us clogging it up or rusting it out, there will come a time when we truly miss it.

We maintain that pipeline when we celebrate the sacrament of baptism or when we reaffirm it, reminding ourselves of the cleansing and refreshment it supplies to our souls.

Just as the waters of the oceans envelop every area of the earth, the waters of baptism unite us as Christians in every nation – even those where it has to be practiced underground.

No one can last long in a desert – we cannot go without water.

Nor can we go on without the “living water” offered to us by Christ.

If we do, we dry up and fail to accomplish the fullest potential God has placed in us.

Remember that picture from the beginning of the sermon



That's how we ought to experience the joy of being in the presence of the Lord.

Cleansed, renewed, energized and revitalized.

Usually people run for cover when it starts to rain, but not that farmer.

We can know that joy here in our worship and in our day-to-day lives if we're willing to get wet.

Are you ready to soak it in, or put up an umbrella to keep things dry... it's all the difference.