

Sermon

Living Water

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Bacon Memorial Presbyterian Church

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Water from the driest rock... we say those words almost every month in our communion liturgy. They roll off our tongues so easily that we can forget how strange they really are. Water from a rock. Not just any rock, but the driest, most unyielding thing in the landscape. A place where no one expects life to come from. A place we've already written off.

And I wonder—have you ever felt like that rock? Has our world ever felt like that rock? Hard. Exhausted. Cracked open by too much wandering and too little hope. Moments when it seems impossible that anything refreshing or life-giving could come from us or to us.

In those seasons, we don't just want a sip of something that wets the mouth for a moment. We long for something deeper—something that reaches the places in us that are parched from disappointment, or grief, or the relentless pace of life. Something that doesn't evaporate as soon as the sun comes out again.

That's the thread that ties Exodus 17 to John 4. A thirsty people in the wilderness... and a thirsty woman at a well. Both convinced that what they need is just a little water to get them through the day. And both surprised by a God who offers not just enough, but abundance. Not just survival, but renewal. Not just water, but living water.

Inspired by [workingpreacher.org](https://www.workingpreacher.org) commentary by Rev Collin Cornell on Exodus.

In the book of Exodus, the two great mountaintop moments are clear: the crossing of the sea and the covenant at Sinai. Freedom and relationship. Rescue and calling. But between those two defining events lies a long stretch of wilderness—the in-between place where Israel has to learn who they are and who God is.

And the stories Israel tells about that wilderness are honest ones. They're stories of complaint, of grumbling, of people who are thirsty and hungry and afraid. Three times in a row, the same word rises up from the camp—*lîn*, to complain. First when the water is bitter. Then when the food runs out. Then when the thirst returns again. Each time, the people cry out against Moses, and Moses carries their ache straight to God.

And each time, God responds. Bitter water becomes sweet. Bread appears with the morning dew. Water gushes from the driest rock. Over and over, in the very places where the people see only scarcity, God brings life. Not because they have perfect faith, but because God is faithful.

Today you'll spend time sharing your thoughts and hopes about the future of this ministry. And as you do, I want you to carry this story from Exodus with you. Israel had known abundance before—they had seen miracles, deliverance, and God's power up close. But the past, as rich as it was, couldn't carry them forward. They had to live in the present wilderness, with its real needs and real fears. Honor the past, yes—but keep your feet firmly planted in the present, trusting that God is faithful even in the in-between places.

When the people found themselves thirsty, what God had done before didn't feel like enough. Their need was urgent. Their voices rose. And Moses did the most faithful thing he could: he brought their honest, everyday, vulnerable plea straight to God. And God responded—not with judgment, not with nostalgia for how things used to be, but with provision. With water. With exactly what was needed, in a way no one could have predicted. If someone had suggested getting water from the driest rock in the desert, no one would have believed it. Yet that is precisely where God chose to act.

As we gather today, may we be open to that same kind of holy imagination. The willingness to believe that God can bring life from places we've written off. The courage to trust that even what seems impossible might be the very place God is ready to pour out living water.

And that brings us to another thirsty place. Another moment when someone stands in the heat of the day with a need she can't ignore. The woman at the well in John's gospel isn't wandering through a desert, but she is living in her own kind of wilderness—an in-between place shaped by old wounds, complicated relationships, and a community that has pushed her to the margins. She comes to the well at noon, the hottest hour, because it's easier to carry water than to carry the weight of other people's judgment.

Like Israel, she knows what it is to be tired. To be thirsty. To feel as though the past—whatever it held—can't quite help her now. And like Israel, she meets a God who doesn't scold her for her need, but meets her right in it.

Jesus does what God has always done: He begins with honesty. He asks her for water. He invites her into conversation. He treats her not as a problem to be solved but as a person to be known. And then, in that ordinary moment, He offers her something she never expected—living water. Not just enough to get through the day, but a spring that wells up to eternal life. A source that doesn't run dry. Something that satisfies beyond the temporary moment, the current need, but serves us in a much deeper way. It gives us a source that is never dry, never leaves us wanting, and fills us in a way that actually satisfies – doesn't leave us wanting more and more and more.

Just as water flowed from the driest rock, life begins to flow in the driest places of her story. And she becomes the first preacher in John's gospel, running back to her community with a message that can only come from someone who has tasted grace: "Come and see."

Just as Israel found themselves in a wilderness they didn't choose, the woman at the well is living in a wilderness of her own. Her landscape isn't sand and rock—it's isolation, old stories that still sting, and a daily routine shaped by avoiding the people who avoid her. She comes to the well at noon because it's easier to face the heat than the whispers.

And yet, just like in Exodus, God meets her right there. Not after she gets her life sorted out. Not once she proves her worth. Right there, in the middle of her ordinary, thirsty moment.

Jesus doesn't begin with judgment. He begins with need. "Give me a drink." He opens a door. He starts a conversation. And in that simple

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exchange, the driest places in her life begin to crack open. She discovers that the God who brought water from a rock is the same God who now offers her living water—water that doesn't run out, water that becomes a spring inside her.

And here's the part that always gets me: she becomes the one who carries that water back to her community. The one who had been pushed to the margins becomes the first evangelist in John's gospel. The one who came to the well alone becomes the one who gathers others. Grace does that. It turns wilderness wanderers into witnesses.

And friends, that's where we are today. We are standing at our own kind of well, our own kind of wilderness. We are looking honestly at what we need, what we fear, what we hope for. We are naming the thirst that can't be ignored.

But the good news is this: the God who brought water from the driest rock, the God who met a weary woman at a well, is the same God who meets us now. Not with scarcity. Not with shame. But with living water. With possibility. With imagination. With the promise that what seems impossible to us may be exactly where God is ready to work.

As we step into our Town Hall, may we do so like Moses—honest and open. And may we do so like the woman at the well—ready to be surprised by grace, ready to imagine what God might bring forth from places we never thought to look.

Living water is already rising among us. Our task is simply to notice it, trust it, and follow where it flows.

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