



Just One Drop

John 7: 37-39

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I used to do a lot of backpacking in the mountains with a group of friends. One of my favorite places was Glacier National Park in Montana. We carried everything we needed to survive for a week on our backs – clothes, shelter, food...and water. Water was always an issue. How much do you carry? Water is very heavy, so it is impractical to carry lots of water.

I carried 2 water bottles that needed to be refilled on a regular basis, so we were continually on the hunt for water. We were taught to look for running water versus stagnant water because running water was fresh, moving, living water. We often found our living, moving water flowing down the sides of the mountains we were climbing.

In our scripture passage today, Jesus talks about streams of living water. Turn with me to our scripture passage written out in your bulletin. Before we read, let us pray.

Prayer: Come, Holy Spirit, instill in us a desire to deepen our relationship with you, to listen to your words and to go where you guide. Come, Holy Spirit, breathe fire into your church today to further your kingdom. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Jesus is at a Festival. This one, called the Feast of Tabernacles, was celebrated in the fall for seven days at the completion of the harvest. The highlight was the water drawing ceremony on the last day.

Imagine a whole parade of worshipers led by the priest to the pool of Siloam (Sigh – LOW'-am)(where Jesus told the blind man to bathe his eyes after He put clay over them). The priest has two golden pitchers. One is for wine. He fills the other with water from the pool.

Then whole procession heads back to the Temple through the Water Gate. A trumpet

sounds as the priest enters the Temple area. He approaches the altar where two silver basins are waiting. He pours wine into one of the basins as a drink offering to the Lord and water from the pool of Siloam into the other.

The whole ceremony was such a joyful occasion that one of the ancient rabbis wrote: "Anyone who has not seen this water ceremony has never seen rejoicing in his life." They are thanking God for the harvest and praying for rain for the new harvest.

Jesus is watching and participating in this joyous ritual of the water being carried on the last day of the festival, and he takes the opportunity to make a visual illustration. This is where we pick up our scripture passage.

Read John 7:37-39

The Amazon River is the world's largest river in terms of volume. It begins as a tiny trickle emerging from the frozen ground, high up in the Andes Mountains. One trickle meets another and another, until they become a stream. One stream meets another and another, until the word stream becomes inadequate and only *river* will do. The Amazon continues to capture speed and power from other tributaries, until - 3,600 miles from its source - it hits the Atlantic at a rate of 1.4 million gallons per second. The force is so great that it pushes fresh water some 60 miles out into the ocean.

That's power.

Jesus says if you believe in him out of you flows rivers of living water. If we are thinking about the Amazon River, we are talking some power here.

So what did Jesus mean when he said that out of us will flow rivers of living water? The passage says Jesus is talking about the Holy Spirit. But what does that look like – rivers of living water flowing out of us? It sounds beautiful. And what happens when we allow those rivers to flow out of us?

Let's delve into what Jesus said. Usually when we pastors study a scripture passage, we find that there are different interpretations, sometimes because the original language is

not easily understood. If we are preaching on a passage like that, we pick the interpretation we like best and ignore the others (at least I do!).

I kind of like it when that happens. Actually, I think God does it on purpose. I believe scripture is layered. There are times when it is meant to have several different meanings, which makes scripture rich and deep and beautiful. Today's passage is one of those times.

When Jesus says (and I'll read it the way it says in our bulletin) "rivers of living water will flow from within them," the original language can be interpreted in two ways. One is the way we have it here...that living water shall flow from the believer's heart.

It also can be translated this way: the rivers of living water flow from Jesus' heart. Let's take a look at this one first. It certainly goes with what Jesus just said in the previous verse: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink" because rivers of living water flow from Jesus. Jesus said that to the Samaritan woman back chapter 4.

The OT carries this theme. Here is one example: Isaiah 44:3 – God is speaking: "For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring."

The life-giving rivers of water come from God. When the people see the priest pour the water, they are thanking God for the rain. Jesus sees this and points to himself saying: when you drink from the water I give, you will never thirst again – you have received the promised salvation. There is nothing more that you need. God has given it all to you.

This is a great interpretation of this passage – that the streams of living water flow from Jesus. However, maybe Jesus is really talking about the river of living water flowing from us. Can it be? Is that really possible? The OT seems to point to this as well:

Proverbs 18:4 - "The words of the mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a gushing stream."

Isaiah 58:11 The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail."

Is this really possible? That rivers of living water flow from us?

It is possible when you take both interpretations of Jesus' words and put them together (here is that multiple meanings of scripture): Rivers of living water flow from Jesus and into our lives, so much so that rivers of living water flow out of us. When we come to Christ, we not only satisfy our own thirst, but we receive such an abundant supply that great rivers of living water flow from us.

Thus, what we have received from God is not meant to stay within us, but is to flow out of us. It is water that should not become stagnant. In a sense, we become the source of living water for others.

What is this living water that is to flow and flow and flow from us? The living water is the Spirit of God, the love of God, God's compassion and tenderness and mercy and kindness and gentleness for all people. It is the love of God that is flowing out of us.

Perhaps at this point you are thinking, how can I be a source of living water? Maybe other people who are more spiritual or more gifted than I am can be sources of living water. I don't have much to offer.

However, all that is really needed from each of you is just one drop, not a whole river. And our drops come together turning into a trickle.

A trickle turns into a stream.

Other streams come together to become a river of living water.

Just like the Amazon.

The tiniest act of kindness flowing from the human heart appears trivial in itself. But when it combines with other acts of kindness the consequences for good cannot be numbered.

Remember Alex's lemonade stand? Within a year of her birth, Alex had cancer. At the age of 4, she had a stem cell transplant and decided to have a lemonade stand to raise money for her doctors to help other kids like her. And we are all thinking: Isn't that cute!

But she and her brother raised \$2000. Word spread, and pretty soon, other kids were having lemonade stands. By the time she passed away at the age of 8, she had raised over \$1 million dollars to help find a cure for cancer.

Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation (ALSF) still exists today fighting childhood cancer. Just one drop, just one lemonade stand, joined by other drops, other lemonade stands to become a river of living water to fight cancer.

We have been given living water, and we are called to not allow it to become stagnant, but to flow out of our lives. One drop at a time. All you have to do is have your drop join other drops and other streams to become a mighty river of living water.

For example, here in our congregation, I think of the Mission Quilts. Each woman does her part in the quilt, whether cutting or sewing or tying the little ties. You don't have to know how to sew to be a part of the quilting ladies. Each woman adds her own drop, and these drops come together into a beautiful quilt for someone in need of warmth. A river of living water.

Twice a month, people from our church head down to Crossroads Mission in Nogales. Who knew that buttering bread or opening a can of tomatoes or cutting meat can feed 100 people. One drop added to other drops becomes a river of living water to feed the hungry.

After each service, people who have the ability to arrange flowers, take the 2 big bouquets that have been in our worship service and divide them up into 6 smaller arrangements. The next day, other people take these flowers and deliver them to the homebound or someone who came home from the hospital. Many drops coming together to form a river of living water that says we haven't forgotten you.

When we have memorials, Network of Caring comes together. One person takes her drop of greeting, another his drop of ushering, several people putting their drops together for a reception. All to say to a grieving family that we will take care of everything. A river of living water that supports the family and extends the love of God.

One drop from someone who started caring for an orphanage in Mexico, and pretty soon many drops at VPC came together to start raising money for solar power for a place that has no heat. A river of living water that says we care about orphaned children – God’s children.

Think of all the people that are needed to put together a Sunday morning worship service. All of us adding our drops to produce a river of living water to glorify God.

All it takes is the living water flowing from you (your one drop), combining with the living water and drops of others, and turning into life quenching flowing rivers at VPC, flowing out of our doors and into our community to transform lives – lives that hear and experience the love of God for them.

I just gave you a glimpse of what we do here. There are so many more ministries, many of them hidden, such as Bible studies in homes; communion to homebound and care facilities; prayer ministry; birthday ministry, soup ministry. Rivers of living water flowing everywhere!

If you go into the Fellowship Hall after this worship service, you will learn about many more of our rivers of living water: welcome ministry, Faith formation, creative hands, faith and health, kettle dinners, the library, Women’s ministry, art gallery, and on and on and on.

Every person, adding their drop of water, to become a mighty river of living water at Valley Presbyterian Church.

Lord, turn on the faucet full, and let your living water flow into us and through us at Valley Presbyterian Church, and out our doors into the community to spread the Good News of your great love through Jesus Christ. Amen