

## **Water of Life**

John 7:37-52/Revelation 22:1-5 by Patty Friesen (May 31, 2015)

In today's scripture it is the Festival of Booths, when the Jewish people would make tent dwellings to remind themselves of when they lived in the desert in tents after the Exodus. Throughout John's gospel, Jesus deliberately does a symbolic act like a miracle with bread or a healing or a teaching on a Jewish holy day to highlight his authority over the Jewish law and feast days. The prophet Zechariah chapter 9:9 speaks of the Festival of Booths as the time when the messiah will ride into Jerusalem triumphant on a donkey and in 12:10, Yahweh will pour out his spirit on Jerusalem. In 13:1 God opens a fountain to cleanse Jerusalem and the temple of merchants and living waters flow out from Jerusalem. In John 7, Jesus announces that he is this messianic river of life and then acts it out by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, casting merchants out of Jerusalem, pouring out his Spirit and indeed his own body and blood, ripping the Temple curtain in two and creating a new Temple with his body. There can be no doubt that Jesus is the River of Life and the one who flows from the throne of God for the healing of the nations in Revelation 22.

Water is on our minds these days. No rain in California – which grows half of the fruit and vegetables we import in Saskatchewan is a disaster for all of us. Relying on food transported all the way from California to Saskatchewan was never sustainable. But the drought, now entering its fourth year, is also an opportunity to take a long-needed hard look at how water is used and conserved, how food is grown and what sustainable development means, not only in California but for us here in the Valley.

Vancouver Sun columnist Stephen Hume warned last month that climate change had dramatically eroded British Columbia's mountain snow cover and shrunk its glaciers in the past 50 years. He said a crisis loomed for western Canadian cities reliant on rivers fed through the summer by B.C.'s mountains. "We had better start thinking now about what happens when the winter snows and glacial melt that supply Prairie cities with drinking water are diminished and at worst simply gone, like California's," Hume noted. (Star Phoenix, Tues. May 26, 2015)

Barbara Kingsolver in her food memoir *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* writes of leaving her home in Tucson, Arizona during their drought. "As it closes in on the million-souls mark, Tucson charms have made it one of this country's fastest-growing cities. It keeps its people serviced across the wide, wide spectrum of human wants with its banks, shops, symphonies, colleges, art galleries, city parks, and more golf courses for Canadian snowbirds than you can shake a stick at. By all accounts it is a bountiful source of everything on the human-need checklist, save for one thing – the stuff we put in our mouths every few hours to keep us alive. Virtually every unit of food consumed there moves into town in a refrigerated module from somewhere far away. Every ounce of the city drinking, washing and goldfish bowl filling water is pumped from a non-renewable source – a fossil aquifer that is dropping so fast, sometimes the ground crumbles."

We prairie folk need a better understanding of just how much development a particular piece of land, like the Valley can sustain. Potable water is fast becoming more precious than oil – something we take for granted here wedged between the North and South Sask Rivers. This week's Star Phoenix assured us that what happens in California and Arizona will not happen in Saskatoon North. The Saskatoon North Partnership for Growth (P4G) was formed last year to design solutions of collective benefit to Martensville, Warman, Osler, Saskatoon and Corman

Park. Their vision statement references not only economic growth but also the desire for healthy and connected ecosystems, acknowledging the aesthetic beauty of the region with the South Sask River and prairie landscapes. Unfortunately the article didn't mention how we will conserve water from the South Sask and reduce wasted water.

While agricultural and industrial solutions for conserving water are important, so are urban lifestyle changes. We town and city folk may need to forget about green lawns and let our neighbours think we are poor white trash. We need promote urban gardening and support local agriculture not imported food from California. Local agriculture is totally our niche here at Osler Mennonite, which is why all the Agriculture classes from St. Andrew's want to come out here to visit our farmers and I know it's a pain to host them but it may be our mission. It's a pain when they stop by the church office too but I see it as Adeline and my mission as well. We can showcase local Ag at our annual MC Sask Meeting here next spring and MC Canada sessions in Saskatoon next summer. We have got the gospel here in the valley and we have got to spread the good news.

Scripture says, Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. That is an announcement, a declaration, a heralding, a summoning - let anyone who is thirsty come. We are grasped by this call to drink. Our thirst drives us to the well. What do we long for? What makes our tongue hang out like a thirsty dog? To have this longing for God is to sense that it can be satisfied. Our thirst for God will never be satisfied by taking an eye-dropper full of divine love and dribbling it onto our tongues. We want to lift the whole bucket and pour it over our heads. We want to swing out on a rope over the river and let go. We want

to be washed all over in the water of the love of God and in the end to have nothing left but the holiness and rightness of God.

Verse 38 says Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water. We are invited to drink first and then we ourselves become rivers of life. Once we have drunk deeply of Christ and our thirst is somewhat slaked, then that water has become such a part of us that it seeps out of us. What we drink, becomes what we sweat. We are what we drink – which is scary considering whoever owned the bottle of booze that sat on the altar all through Lent! When we drink from living water, it is living water that we have to offer the world.

After service, we have several water stations in the lobby for drinking flavoured water or blowing bubbles or listening to flowing water. For those who want a more intense water experience, we will have water balloons out the gym doors for a sort of baptism in which hopefully we can reflect on the outpouring of the water of life and maybe we can make it rain.

Let us pray...God of all who thirst, our hearts are parched from wandering in deserts far from your life-giving springs. Call us to your well. Fill our cups with your grace. Let your love overflow in our hearts, and make us fully alive. Amen.