

Lent 3A
St. John 4:5-42
March 19, 2017
St. George's Church Bolton
Fr. Chris

Thirsty

“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.”

Thirst. The word conjures up images from TV commercials of a cold beer at the end of a long day of work, or an icy Coke in a glass with sunlight filtering through it on a warm summer day. This kind of thirst makes me think of pleasant memories of quenching my thirst on such days and the wonderful sensations associated with it.

Thirst is something we don't have a lot of experience with. We are among the limited few populations in this world that can walk a few steps to a sink in our homes, turn the faucet, and obtain all the clean, cold water that we want. This is a luxury I know I take for granted each day. But it is truly a blessing even though easily use them as a matter of course. We ought to be very thankful for running water in our homes, our work, and the various businesses we visit during the day.

There is even running fresh water in our RV's, both stored in a fresh water tank with a small electric pump to help it flow from the faucets, and of course there is the city water connection for when you are hooked up to water in a

campground. Now that is real luxury. Talk to someone who goes tent camping!

However, we are in the minority when it comes to such a luxury like running water. Most of the world's populations have never seen the like of it or experienced such luxury. And there are places in the world which are dusty, arid, parched and dry, lacking any vestige of water for drinking or farming. These are the places where people have been known to eat dirt to keep their bellies full.

Thirst drives many to walk for several hours from where they live and make their living, to a *community well* for water, and then they carry the heavy load back home. How heavy you ask? A gallon of water weighs about eight pounds. *Five* gallons weighs about fortyone pounds and a cubic foot of water weighs about 62.4 pounds. A cubic foot is not very large, is it? That's a lot of weight!

Probably among the worst kind of thirst comes from being denied any of this basic fluid sustenance while slowly dying on a cross in the heat of the Middle Eastern sun. That is not a very pleasant thought to contemplate.

What causes thirst? Basically it is either from a lack of hydration, that is not taking in enough fluids or caused by intense dehydration, with which the body cannot keep up. In short, losing a good deal of the water of which our bodies are made up. [Like the world in which we live, where water accounts for most of the surface of our planet, *[about 71 percent I am told]* our bodies are comprised of about 60% water. 96 % of the water is in the oceans, leaving a small percentage for human, animal, and plant consumption. Those faucets are looking more and more like a luxury now.

And if *climate change* is real, the amount of water available for human consumption will diminish, so we are told. Now this should be of some concern to everyone, because it will *profoundly effect* everyone. *Thirst* is not what we want the human condition to become in the future. We will need prayers and action honoring God's creation to preserve the supply of this vital resource. I am learning to appreciate that as I turn my faucets on and off at home. Just because New England seems to have an abundance of water compared with the rest of our country, doesn't mean it's ok to use all the water we want as it seems it is an infinitely replenishable resource. It is not. (*Not to mention we had a drought in Connecticut last year.*) Leaving them run when I am not using them is being a wasteful steward of the great blessing and gift God has given me. Surely I can do better than that!

And so we look to grab a bottle of water or some other fluid drink when we feel thirsty. But the effect of this is only temporary.

'Everyone who drinks this kind of water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water Jesus gives them will never thirst.' We need to quench a far deeper thirst: a yearning to make our lives count: a thirst to be loved and not alone, drowning in a salty sea of self concern which will never satisfy our thirst.

Overconsumption of salt causes dehydration and makes us thirsty. Have you ever eaten something very salty, and then minutes later, for the rest of the evening, you can't drink enough fluids to quench your thirst? Sometimes life gets like that also: a little too salty and so we become thirsty for God, at least something larger than what is apparently the condition

of your life. And that brings us looking for water at this well: *the church.*

What causes spiritual thirst? It can come from a lack of spiritual hydration, and because of that lack, our souls get dehydrated. We wither and start dying. We yearn for something more than the treadmill we seem to be on, and we look for a chance to get off so that we can sip a cup of cold water and find rest, refreshment and peace for our souls. Spiritual thirst comes from drinking up our own spirits, depleting them by making ourselves the center of everything going on and by accepting God-like responsibility for others around us, when we are only human. This cannot be sustained for long. This spiritual thirst can also come from feeling guilty, wherein we grovel in our own sins and shortcomings, without sensing there is any hope for us on the horizon. We get very thirsty from this groveling, trying so hard to work off our sins with tons of good deeds, and that *hard labor*, worse than that of a chain gang, makes us very thirsty in the heat of our own spiritual day when we see that it is high noon in the hot sun, high time to be making some changes in our lives.

How can I quench my thirst? “... *the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*” That well which God gave you is in you and accessible with God’s help. Silence, quiet, is a place to begin as we sit on the edge of that well. Deleting the noise, both literal and metaphorical in our lives is vital to taking a sip of this water which God wants us to drink deeply. And like the people who must walk to the community well each day for their water supply, we must be disciplined to step up to our own well and drink daily, lest we get dehydrated again. You can feel the thirst as your mood starts to shift from calm to very anxious, to feeling the weight of the world when you allow yourself to

play god with your life. I sense this is happening to me when I start complaining to myself and others about all the responsibilities I have, and how I am over-burdened with the weight of these. I need a drink, and not an alcoholic one, though many of this turn to alcohol to quench this thirst, instead of having a drink of it for pleasure. It feels like the only thing that will quickly bring me peace.

A drink of alcohol may calm your nerves for a moment, but it won't deliver you the peace you crave and thirst for. That peace, the peace which Jesus offers, is deep inside *this* well, and you need to lower your bucket, and pull up some and drink deeply from it. *"The water I give [you] will become in [you] a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*

I thirst. Words from the cross. Sparse, as was the life giving liquid denied to the one who commanded us to share a cup of cold water with the thirsty.

The drink which Jesus is offering that wells up to eternal life is simply the blood which he poured out for us on the cross: *"This is my blood which is given for you for the remission of sins, for the renewal of life, for the sustenance of eternal life. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."*

"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." The woman said, *"I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."* Then Jesus declared, *"I, the one speaking to you—I am he."*

You have come to the *well of St. George* this morning. Do not be shy. Do not be reluctant. Do not doubt the benefits of this drink. This is not a mirage in the desert, but rather, this is an oasis where you may pause, quench your thirst and carry on with your life. Drink deeply. Quench your thirst. AMEN