

Read: ¹³ Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ 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.”

1. Could I see a show of hands from those who entertained Prince William while he was in Cairns? Did anyone see him, or speak to him? He didn’t drop into my place either! I must admit that I didn’t know he’d been till he was gone and I saw it in the Post. The Cairns Post got pretty excited. Maybe you saw the headline on Monday that read:

**“As the Far North rebuilds,
Prince William’s visit proves a RIGHT ROYAL TONIC”**

Then it said *“Not only did he lift our spirits, but Prince William gave exhausted Far Northerners some memories that will last a lifetime.*

Good on him for coming and lifting the spirits of people. Tired people who are worn out and wondering what the future holds for them and their families. I hope – as I’m sure you all do – that our neighbors here and south of us feel better for the experience.

Maybe the real question is: How long until they need more tonic?

2. “A right royal tonic” is appropriate for us too as we gather today and sit under the living words of Jesus. In today’s gospel a Samaritan woman has an encounter with the *Prince of Peace* – Jesus Christ - who offered her exceedingly more than the tonic the Cairns Post got so excited about.

Jesus told her,

“Everyone who drinks this water (meaning the water from the well – physical H₂O water) will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst...”

Water is extremely important to our health isn’t it? On average, water makes up about 60% of our body weight. Water flushes the toxins from our vital organs, it carries nutrients to our cells, and it provides a comfortable environment for our eyes, mouth, and throat. A lack of water leads to dehydration and in the long term - even death.

Jesus, being the perfect Teacher and Communicator, often speaks to us in terms that we can appreciate and understand. We know how valuable water is to our life. In fact, we can’t exist without it. So we “get it” when Jesus tells us He Gives Living Water...in fact, he’s the only one who can give this living water! We can’t continue to exist without it. His water is life giving. It’s definitely more than just physical H₂O water.

Today Jesus is talking about more than physical water and physical thirst.

3. So are you drinking deeply from the Living waters Jesus gives?

Are you spiritually hydrated and healthy – or are you feeling dehydrated and a bit spiritually sick or weak?

For the Samaritan woman, the answer to this question was an unfolding process as she encountered Jesus in their conversation at the well. Her life was laid bare before Him. Nothing is hidden from Jesus’ sight. That can be both unsettling and re-assuring! He knows that we are thirsty. Thirsty for all kinds of things. Things that we think will ultimately satisfy our inner most thirst, but end up leaving us wanting more, or feeling like we’ve failed, like we’re spiritually empty and dry.

- What about the church in Cairns? What is our church thirsting for?
- What does it need?
- Do we need more members to fill the pews?
- Do we need more money in the offering plate? Yes we do.
- Do we need more volunteers and leadership to fulfill its mission? Yes we do!
- Does it need modernizing? A different service?
- More Christian education?
- A dedicated youth program? We could say yes yes yes.

What are YOU thirsting for?

- Economic stability?
- A fulfilling relationship with-God? Spouse? Parent? Child? Coworker?
- Are you thirsting for medical care and healing? Renewal? Spiritual, physical, or emotional?
- Do you thirst for a new body image?
- Maybe your thirst eludes you, but all humanity thirsts. But where do we go to quench our thirst?

Jesus knew what this Samaritan woman had looked to - to satisfy her spiritual thirst and He confronted her with it. What makes us think he doesn't see directly into our hearts and desires today?

- He knows your heart.
- He knows we're often reluctant or too distracted or busy to sit down and drink the living water that He holds out to us.
- He knows that we're tempted by many other loud voices in the world – offering us “*different water.*” Water in vibrant packaging – even though much of it is stagnant water– a discovery made all too often only after we've tasted it's bitter flavours and fallen into sin.

We can also lean towards thinking that this 'bottled water' (everything in life besides Jesus) will keep us alive. Things like Self-help books, church programs, investments, insurance policies, gym memberships, medications, help to keep us dehydrated. And without doubt, many of these things are necessary for our lives BUT they can't replace what Jesus is offering to us, nor are they worthy of our complete trust.

These bottled-water products help hide the truth about ourselves. **That we trust them more than God to quench our thirst.**

Why do we do this? Because we don't trust that Jesus' living water alone has the power to sustain us at the deepest levels of our lives. *We're drinking ourselves to death.*

4. Only the living water Jesus offers effects a total renewal in you – from the inside out. *It's a right royal tonic for the soul.*

Jesus is the living water. Jesus is life and has life in himself – and not only as a living person, but the creative life and power of God that flows out of him and into you as you drink in Jesus' words (which the bible tells us) are *Spirit and life*.

The good news is that we are spared of dying to our thirst when the real thirst quencher comes to us, offering his living water. Jesus shares his living water with us even when we are still hitting the bottle.

He takes our thirst away by dying to his.

His thirst was not "complete"-ly satisfied until he died on the cross, completing his Father's mission. The real quencher for Jesus (and now for us) is when he gave up his spirit (19:30b). And when God resurrected Jesus three days later, our thirst had met its match, to be eternally quenched.

It is from this act that Jesus' living water flows to give us new life.

No bottled water can make that claim – I don't care how pretty the label looks – it's got nothing on the living waters of Jesus.

And it is Jesus' living water (spirited water) that reveals to us the truth behind his words and signs and allows us to trust its source, just as he did. ***The source is God, the living water is the Holy Spirit, and it is poured out through Christ.***

What have you been drinking this past week? Have you been drinking stagnant water or Jesus' living water?

Jesus' living water fills us to the brim with faith, grace upon grace, a clean slate, and a fresh start that frees us to live for God and to live in His promises – even when the going gets tough in life. Jesus fills us up and quenches our inner most thirst. It quenches our inner thirst in ways that satisfy the longings of our hearts regardless of our circumstances.

5. So where does all this happen for us?

The Samaritan woman makes a huge leap in our reading today. She moves from all the talk about physical water and Jesus' living water and changes the topic. At least it looks like she changes topic when starts on about worship. Worship on Samarian mountaintops and in Jerusalem. In response Jesus says,

²³ 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. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

²⁵ The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

²⁶ Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

Worship. Worship is the primary place (but not the only place) to drink deeply of Jesus' living water. It's where we come to be filled up after a big week.

It's where we come to be refreshed, fed and have our deepest thirst quenched by the living Jesus Christ. The one that said to the Samaritan woman and says to you today, ***“I, the one speaking to you – I am he.”***

Worship isn't about what you bring to the table, but how God shows up to pour His life and salvation into you. It's where Jesus forgives all your sins as His living water flows over you speaking words of forgiveness and declaring you “not guilty.” Living water flows in and flushes out the stagnant and bitter remnant of sin – leaving you clean and alive in Christ.

That happens in worship. Then as you listen to the living Word in bible readings and preaching – the Holy Spirit flows in through your ears as you hear God speaking to you - both challenging and comforting you with good news.

When we say “Lord have mercy” we're asking to be filled to the brim with living water to carry us through our week. Worship isn't about what mountain you worship on, but **who** you worship! It's about the messiah! It's about Jesus centered worship!

I hope that makes you want to worship regularly – that's the impact its had on me. I know from personal experience and being away from the church for years on end – that to be separated from the well-spring of living water – the church – is like living in the desert and feeling very, very thirsty.

6. In contrast, when the living water is flowing in constantly – we can end up with an overflow! The Samaritan woman ran into town saying to all the people,

“Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Can this be the Christ?”

Worship, being filled with the Holy Spirit and the living water of Jesus is directly related to mission and ministry wherever God has placed you in life.

Since we know the truth given to us through living water, we let that water take us wherever it will flow. *Into towns, cities, villages. At wells, pubs, markets and shopping centres, and churches.* Wherever we encounter thirsty people, we go-just like Christ. And, recognizing our own need to drink, we listen to what others say **they hope will quench their thirst**, because it's an opportunity to share our living water with them.

We ask others to come to church-not to fill our pews, *but to share our cup.* We pass the offering plate-not to fill it with money to pay our bills, *but as a conduit to share our resources with others who thirst.*

We ask others to come to Church and biblical events -not to drive home our point of view, *but to unleash the living water from Christ's teaching.* As people respond to our invitations, they hear the Word of God, drink living water from the source, and trust that it is all they need to drink.

³⁹ Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. ⁴¹ And because of his words many more became believers.

⁴² They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

Did you notice that? The woman originally posed the question, “Can this be the Christ?” It wasn’t her that caused the people to believe. It was after they tasted Jesus’ living water for themselves that they told her, “Now we know he is the savior of the world.” It moved from a possibility...an invitation...and then a confession of faith for some of the people who encountered Jesus. He did the converting. That’s the power of living water!

We’re simply told in scripture, like this woman, to give an account of the hope we have in Christ Jesus. We’re not called to convert the crowd (we can confidently leave that in God’s hands), just point people to the living water source! **To the dispenser of the Right Royal Tonic – the living waters of Jesus.** That happens in worship and flows out of worshipping and thankful hearts.

Lutherans pride themselves on being a church of the word – let’s now live that identity here in Cairns and Atherton and drink in all the benefits and blessings that God has prepared for us. What I can guarantee you is that they are exceedingly more abundant than I could ever preach or convey to you in a sermon. God lavishes us with his gifts.

Perhaps you could pray for one person to invite a service here maybe for Easter services coming up. Remembering that it’s not your burden to convert anyone – just introduce them to the source of the living water that floods your life and leave the rest in God’s hands.

May the Right Royal Tonic of the Prince of Peace fill you today and may it also flow from you to others. Amen.