

## Water of Life

Anyone who has been around a four year old for long knows they are fond of questions, and the one that rises to the top over all things is “why”? Why? Why? Why? “Why is it bed time?”

Because you need rest. “Why?” Because you need to recover your energy? “Why?” Because you don’t just run around all day bouncing off the walls as a 4 year old without energy. “Why?”

Because force equals mass times acceleration and so to move your body-mass at an accelerated rate you need energy. “Why?” And it’s usually about here, before we get into a deeper discussion of physics and biochemistry, where most parents usually say – “oh, just go to bed!”

But “why” is an important question isn’t it? And the Church has been criticized throughout history as trying to quash that question – “Don’t ask! Just believe what we tell you!” But “why” would we do that? If what we believe is true, and we have evidence for it, in history, in manuscript evidence, in extra biblical evidence, in philosophy, in the sciences, yes, physics, biology, sociology, archeology, “why” would we not let people ask “why?”

So “why” are we doing this build project?

Good question.

We’ve talked through it before, of course, and there are practical reasons about how nationally literacy is down, but our kids are up 10 percentile. There are reasons about regulations and classroom sizes. But on a deeper level: do we *need* grand temples made with hands to worship the Lord who has promised to be wherever two or more are gathered? No we don’t. But can we use the gifts he has given us to set aside reverent spaces for receiving his Word, and making it so more and more - especially the children - can learn of God’s creation and truth? Can we make a

place where kids can ask “why?” and share with them all those things I just mentioned about philosophy, history, math, science? My answer might be “Why not?”

And so may God bless us, as he has done for over 60 years already, as we move forward to do just that. Trusting that, come what may, we will always have, even if the steeples and buildings fall, we will have the testimony, the proclamation of Jesus risen – we will be *just fine*.

Which is good news, because if you look inward, into that heart and mind of yours, and even more if you look outward – does everything look “just fine”? No, it doesn’t. And we might ask the 4 year old question, “Why?”

And, well, that depends how much time we have before bedtime. We could go all the way back to the beginning where God’s creation is good. And then we, out of pride, pushed the good God away. What fills that void of the absence of God, like when the sun’s rays go behind a cloud and warmth turns to cold? With God pushed away, Good turns to evil. Evil is not made, it is an absence.

But we don’t have to go back that far, because, as we already mentioned, we can turn on the news and see why everything isn’t fine. Because there we see greed, lust, power plays, hatred.

We can look inward too and see those same evil things. And we justify it, we say “it’s not as bad with me as that other person! But it’s there. In you, in them. In us all.

And can we beat it? We fight, we fight, and we talk about self-help and boundaries. But then we lose and then we give up – it’s so tiring. We fight, we fight, we lose, things don’t go our way, we get angry. “It’s not fair!”

We see both of those reactions in our readings today. In the Old Testament the people are angry.

And we snicker at them, “Come on, Israelites in the wilderness – you saw bread on the ground

every day! You saw the seas part, the pillar of fire. Come on! And you're angry and think God won't provide?" But I ask, do any of us want to pack up and live in tents for 40 years? We *surely* wouldn't doubt God's goodness, when we are thirsty and have no idea where the next watering hole is... *Surely* we, with all the luxuries we have, we never complain – we never yell at the waitress when the order is wrong, we never complain in traffic, or when the power goes out... With all we have been blessed with, and in a world where there are people without so much, we still get so angry...

In our Gospel lesson we don't see someone angry, we see someone tired. Just tired. The men did most of the divorcing in the ancient world, and so she's 5 husbands later... 5 who made her a promise, vows, then changed their mind. And now, probably because she needs a place to stay and is so tired of the "game," now she is with a man who will share a bed with her but no promises. "Love is love" right? "All good! Just fine!" Ask her. No promises for this woman from those men.

She is an outcast relationally, and an outcast sociologically - she has those impure Samaritan bloodlines, because Assyria decided to come by and conquer the northern kingdom in the 700s BC. She didn't ask for that, she had no control over that. But she still has to live with it. And to top it all off, now some Jewish guy is pestering about her personal life – "None of your business"? Or is it? And he's pestering her about her faith too – "You worship what you don't know." The nerve of this guy!

But does he yell at her because of her sinful lifestyle? No. He doesn't condone it either, not at all, but he doesn't yell at her. In fact, he says, in effect, "I want to trade that for something better for you." He will make her a promise, and unlike the other men in her life, he will keep it. He says "I

will give you Living Water.” Water of Life found in the Messiah who will lead you in Spirit and Truth.

She’s heard of this. She says, “When he comes, he will tell us all things.” “Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am he.’”

And her life is changed.

Ever felt angry? Ever just felt tired?

Take heart, those do *not* disqualify you from the waters. The Old Testament folks (angry) get their water – the Rock is hewn, the woman at the well (so tired) gets hers. A family today got theirs.

You today: take heart, Jesus gives Spirit and Truth. If you could use some of that, you’ve come to the right place. Hear his Word and promise even for people who are angry and tired.

And if I can wheel it back around to how we started, “why?” “Why do all this “Church and school” stuff? It’s because all those kids in our school and anywhere else are going into a world where everything is *not* fine and where things get old and die. It’s because depression is on the rise in the youth, in our nation more than most. Does that shock us as they are told they are just accidents who will spin a few times around the sun and then die meaninglessly.

We have, from Jesus: Water, Spirit, and Truth. Not a fairy tale – truth! A real Savior has come.

And let alone the noble task of preparing children for careers and to be wise citizens, with ethics and morals, so they can *behave*, but this Hope is so they can courageously stand in this world knowing right and wrong, and why it’s real and why it, and *they*, matter!

And even moreso so when they, like we and a woman at a well, when we *mis-behave* and fail and get angry and tired, may they recall and rejoice in, as I pray you do today, that they have a Savior in those days and every day. And they are a part of a plan of God that wells up to eternal goodness and life, not because they earn it, but because of his love for them even when they fail or are angry or tired.

We heard it in our middle reading: “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.”

Is that a love that is earned? How could it be if it is given and paid before we or they were born? And God isn't taking it back! That is not a love that is earned, It's a love that is given! And has been given in Jesus. Who (did you catch this?) sits on that well to talk to that woman not just because she is tired, but verse 6, “so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well.” Because he was tired too.

He knows anger – flipped tables when corruption was around, he knows tired, he knows unfair brokenness, oh and he knows pain. Whipped, scourged, betrayed, crucified. And crucified, to make sure he was dead (“Maybe he just swooned and passed out and didn't really rise” – please, spare me...) he is stabbed in the side and what flows out? Blood and, like a hewn rock of our Old Testament lesson, water... The Water of Life flows from Jesus and his death, that we might live.

And he does not ask the woman to shape up and do all that is in her and then he will love her, he offers her living water. “Drop the heavy burdens of sins and the excuse making – that's exhausting. And instead take some Water, and Spirit and Truth from Jesus.” He does not ask us to button up first and then you can receive my love – he shows his love in that while we were still sinners, he died for us.

Love shown on a cross, so we lift it up. Even as we know, we will get there in a few weeks, he overcomes this cross so we need not fear it or our crosses that cause us so much anger and pain.

He has overcome it all. Which means the world is changed for you, for the children!

And if you doubt that, that his victory is for you, well then, consider his Word, has it come to you as it did a woman at a well? It has, it *is* right now. And is there any water for you? From a cross, from the font? Yes, it's true.

The only question left then is, "Why?" Why would God die for sinners like us, so angry, so tired and powerless? The only answer is unexplicable, promised, love. Not some feeling, not some fairy tale, not some lust, no – love. That you might be his forever. That message is why we are doing what we are doing, and, I mean this literally: it's the reason we are here at all. Because this existence is not a coincidence – it can't be. Neither is his truth a coincidence, nor his love for you and the world a coincidence. It is *real* and shown in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In His name. Amen.