

Hydrofracturing your life

Exodus 17: 1-7 & John 4: 1-15 – Rev. Jim Cullen

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“Hydrofracturing your life” - Hydrofracturing – not a word we use in church. Some of you who have had to deal with problems with your water supply when your well was running low will know what it means. Hydrofracturing is a process that is used to try to improve wells. A tight cap is placed at the bottom of the well casing. A pipe passes through this cap and water, under high pressure, is forced into the well. If the pressure is high enough, the rock pressure is overcome, the rock is cracked and a fluid fracture is opened up. While the results vary, there are times when wells that have “dried up” produce once again. The flow of marginal wells may be improved by a gallon or two a minute.

Those of you who count on getting your water from a well know just how essential it is to your life. Sometimes wells are taken for granted, assuming that the water will always be there. But after a dry summer, like last year, we know just how much the wells are being challenged.

Since the Walkerton problem a few years ago there is a much greater awareness of municipal water systems. There are contests around the world as to who has the best drinking water. This is a contest that any community would boast about winning. It could be Sweden, Gibson, B.C., or Barrie Ontario or many other places. The presence of good water is a gift of life for a community.

The two lessons for The Third Sunday in Lent are classic water stories. They speak to us about many things. The OT lesson begins with a simple demand ***Give us water to drink.*** Moses has led the Hebrew people out of their slavery in Egypt. We find them in the desert. They are tired, irritable and thirsty. They don't know what to do. Like most of us, they look for someone to blame. Blame Moses. It was Moses' fault. Moses reply, ***Why do you quarrel with me,*** only adds to their frustration. Seeing his vulnerability under pressure, the people lash out at him. ***Why did you bring us out of Egypt?*** Why did you drag us from what we knew to what we do not know? Why couldn't you have left things as they were? Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

Moses is at his wits end. His blood pressure is rising. The ability to think clearly is gone. In his frustration he lashes out at God. ***What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.***

God's response to Moses is to ***go on ahead of the people.*** God is saying to Moses that he should not panic, not surrender, should not let them think in the past. God tells him to go ahead of the people and ***take some of the elders with him.*** God tells him to take the staff that he has in his hand. Moses strikes the rock and like hydrofracturing, water gushes forth. The staff represents the strength of Moses past leadership. He applies it to a new problem. The staff is a physical reminder of the presence of God and of his own strength and gifts.

Our lives can be hydrofractured when we apply past experience to new realities. Like Moses' staff, we can draw water of encouragement and hope from the rocks of complexity and stress that are part of our everyday journey. When the wells of our lives run dry, we need to look for the staff we have used before. We can draw on what has worked before.

The NT lesson is about another well, an ancient well that was not normally visited by Jewish people. It says how *Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well*. In those days, most people came to the well early in the morning when it was cool. This story says it was noon and Jesus was alone. A Samaritan woman came along. She was alone. This was unusual for both of them. Jesus assumed that she had a reason for coming when she did, when she would not be confronted by others.

Will you give me a drink?, Jesus asks. While it sounds like a simple request, it is far from it. It breaks one of the taboos of their society, as the woman acknowledges in her reply. She is taken aback. Jews do not speak to Samaritans. Men do not speak to women under these circumstances.

Then Jesus probes her life. This is the longest two-way conversation ever recorded of which Jesus was part. He says that he has better water to offer her; water that will give her new life, and hope and dignity and humanity. In this exchange she sees Jesus as the Messiah and sees herself as a new person. She returns to town with a spring in her step. Others notice that she is different. They want to know what happened to her. She tells them about the encounter. Many of them went out to meet Jesus on the road.

There are times when the well in our lives runs dry. And just like the dry well in the yard, our energy is low, our self-esteem is low, our sense of future is clouded. Getting up in the morning can be a challenge. We may have pumped ourselves dry. We need time for our well to recover, time for hydrofracturing our lives through rest and change and support.

Our wells are hydrofractured when we see ourselves as being part of God's world, part of something bigger than ourselves, seeing that we continue to have value and dignity. I noticed the posters in the Quinte Mall this week announcing "Random Acts of Kindness" week at the beginning of March. This program exists because one mother redirected her sense of loss to something positive. Instead of focusing on revenge for the murder of her son on a Florida beach, which was called a "random act of violence", she turned it around to say that we can make life better for others and for ourselves when we include "random acts of kindness".

The wells of our lives are refilled when we recall how we overcame other challenges successfully, good conversation, quiet contemplation, a good meal. It is hearing the words of our Lord, *Come to me all you who are weary and are carrying a heavy burdened ... learn from me ...and you will find rest for your souls*. And from the Psalms... the promise of God *...I will raise you up on eagle's wings, bear you on the breath of dawn, make you to shine like the sun and hold you in the palm of my hand*.