

***Go For The Goal (IV):  
Bringing Christ To Each Other***

***Bible Reading:  
Exodus 17: 1-7***

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What do they say? The human body is over 90% water. No wonder, then, that thirst can drive people to do some irrational things.

At the first sign of thirst we get sluggish.

Quickly we can turn grumpy.

If dehydration becomes severe, dizziness sets in.

Weakness, and eventually, death.

Israel was beginning to feel the first effects of thirst, and became worried.

In their fear they became angry, focusing it on their leader, Moses.

Who in turn cries out to God - "*Help!*"

Which He, in holy grace, does sending water out of the rock.

Gushing. Fresh. Clean.

Life to dried-out, quarreling people.

God commands Moses to take the staff used to perform the miracle of creating a dry path across the Red Sea, a path across which Israel had been brought out of Egypt to safety and freedom. The staff was the symbol of God's power flowing through Moses' life; through his actions.

The elders are brought along as formal witnesses of this life-giving miracle - water from the rock. They were legal confirmation of it, that **YES**, God **did** bring water to a needy nation out of a rock in the desert. He gave them life.

God. Moses. Thirsty people. And a rock.

We're going to spend the next two Sundays with this Old Testament picture.

It's a remarkable picture of God's grace, pouring into the lives of back-talking people through an uncertain leader.

It wasn't that much earlier when these same people had grumbled about the same problem - no water. Exodus 15 records that incident. In fact, it records the incident **right after** recording a great song of praise to God - a song sung by these same people as their response to God's amazing, saving work in bringing them safely across the Red Sea, and destroying the huge Egyptian army which was chasing them - drowning them in the Sea. Israel's life is saved - and within short order they're grumbling and whining.

Two chapters later - not much time in between..... doing it **again**.

Yet God responds. Undeserved, rich gracious care.

Water.

A marvelous illustration of how God works in the lives of His people.

Far deeper, richer, beyond anything we deserve or can ever expect.

As He pours His care into the lives of Israel,  
so He will pour His care into your life, too.

Remember the old hymn?

*Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father.*

*There is no shadow of turning with Thee.*

*All I have needed Thy hand has provided.*

*Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.  
Great is Thy faithfulness.  
Great is Thy faithfulness.  
Morning by morning new mercies I see.  
All I have needed Thy hand has provided.  
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

Praise God for His faithfulness!

Did you know that this picture from Exodus 17 becomes a symbol for God's work and saving action in the New Testament?

The rock.

The water.

They're picked up by Bible writers who use them to symbolize.....

.....well, let's move forward in our bibles to the New Testament and see what it symbolizes -

### **1 Corinthians 10:1-4 p.1292**

The cloud in this passage refers to the great miracle of a large cloud that moved in front of the nation of Israel all the way from Egypt to Palestine - a pillar of cloud during the day; one which glowed like a huge fireball at night. It was God's way of directing the people - when to move, and in what direction.

The sea is reference to the experience of crossing the Red Sea.

Spiritual food refers to manna, the miracle food God provided each day for 40 years of Israelite desert travel.

And the rock. Which we read about.

All these experiences galvanized them as a nation. They were surrounded by the presence and the working of God as He guided, directed, and fed them. The Lord gave them life, and protected their life. All of it under the direction of His servant, Moses. Which is what that strange phrase "*baptized into Moses*" means – they were unified and joined as a nation under his leading; he is the one where the experience and power of God is found.

And then the rock - *they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them.....*

There was a legend among the ancient Jews which said that a rock, from which water flowed, accompanied the people throughout the desert experience. This legend had it's factual basis in the account of Exodus 17. A similar miracle is recorded in Numbers 20. Who knows? Perhaps it happened more often than that. We're not told.

St.Paul, in writing 1 Corinthians, refers to this legend and says,

*“that divine supply of life energy,  
that supply which cared for the people all through their time of desert wandering,  
that supply.....*

*..... is Christ.”*

He is the Great Rock out of which life is poured to thirsty humanity.

Paul didn't come up with this symbol on his own.

Moses himself, in his farewell sermon to Israel, sang a song about God's saving, life-giving work among His people. It's recorded in Deuteronomy 32. One of the images woven throughout that song is that of God as rock -

v.15: *The Rock, Israel's Saviour*

That God, that Rock, that Saviour  
is Jesus.  
Life pours from Him.

Remember that - hang on to that image - as we move to yet one more scripture reading:

**John 7:37-39 p.1206**

Jesus is laying claim to the image from Exodus 17.  
As water is so essential for life - so Jesus is essential for eternal life.

But notice what else the passage says:  
*Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said,  
streams of living water will flow from within him.*

Jesus is reaching back to Old Testament prophets.  
Isaiah 44:3

*For I will pour water on the thirsty land,  
and streams on the dry ground;  
I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring,  
and my blessing on your descendants.*

Zech 14:8

*On that day living water will flow out from the city of God.....*

Notice anything about the flow of water, as Jesus refers to it?  
Not only does it flow **into** people to refresh them.  
It also flows

**through** them  
into others!

We are refreshed and empowered by the Spirit of Jesus in order that we may become agents of refreshment and empowerment in the lives of others.

In Exodus 17 it was Moses, with the staff of God in his hand, who served as the agent of God's refreshment in the lives of desperate, thirsty people. He brought the people together into the experience of God, says 1 Corinthians 10.

There is no Moses today, my friends.

Instead, that central, unifying agent for the flow of God's life is the Church. I'm not referring to the building. And I'm not first of all referring to some social institution set up for institution's sake. I'm referring to a group of people who are joined together as a large family, joined together by their faith in Jesus Christ. It is you and me, hearts joined together along the road of devotion and service to Jesus Christ.

Hear the prophetic call of Jesus:

*Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said,  
streams of living water will flow from within him.*

Water flowing **out** from believers.

Who did the water flow out of, according to 1 Corinthians 10?

**Jesus.**

Who did Jesus say the water would flow out of?

**Us.**

Do you understand the implications of that?

By the amazing presence of the Holy Spirit within a believer, the power of Jesus flows through them. They become agents of Jesus' power and life to others around them.

Jesus **in** us.

Jesus **through** us.

That means that we, who are the Church of Jesus, are a group of people **NOT** here for our own end.

We're here to be the agents of divine, life-renewing power flowing into the lives of others.

Saint Athanasius said:

*He became*

*what we are*

*that he might make us*

*what he is.*

Our congregation's mission statement focuses us on bringing:

*the life changing message of Christ  
to our neighbors as well as to each other.*

Flowing the life-refreshing, life-strengthening power of Jesus  
into those around us.

Functioning as a rock in their life.

Being an agent of Christ to each other.

So, what does that look like?

How can we flow the power of the Spirit, the life of Jesus to each other?

Practically, how does this play out?

Consider with me the life of Jesus; his actions among the disciples.

What do we see Him do for them?

1. John 17 tells us that Jesus prayed for His disciples. Luke 11 displays Jesus teaching His disciples how to pray.

Do you pray for the others in this congregation? Are you willing to receive the prayer of fellow believers?

2. Luke 24 describes Jesus walking with two believers. He takes time to carefully explain the true meaning of the Scriptures to them; and how it is that He is the central fulfillment of it all.  
Taking time to study Scripture together. For the life of me, I still can't understand why more of us can't take the time to gather for church education where together we can search and study the Scripture for God's will. Sure, it's easy to stay home with a second cup of coffee and read the *Citizen*. But honestly, is that God's best intention for us?
3. Luke 19 speaks of Jesus going with his disciples to the temple. Jesus took time to worship. Luke 22 tells of Him observing the Passover with His disciples. He worshipped **with** them. Together.  
When you gather in worship - don't come seeking, first of all, what **you** are going to get from it. Come, first, to bring glory to God. And then come to give support and spiritual encouragement to your brothers and sisters. It's easy to stay home, especially come Sunday evening. Or flip on a TV religious program that turns your own crank. Or flit from church to church to get whatever spiritual program feels good to you. But what does that do to believers left behind? It **is** your business!
4. John 13 tells of Jesus, at the Passover, bending down and doing the lowest of slave work - He washes the feet of his disciples.  
What a far cry from our contemporary consumer mentality!  
Give..... instead of get.  
Sacrifice..... instead of consume.  
You..... instead of me.
5. In John 21 Jesus prepares a meal for His disciples. Again and again we read that He loved them - look no further than the cross, and His suffering for their sake: proof positive of His love and how far He would go to work it through.  
Look around you. Do you love them?  
Love is not first of all a feeling.  
It is a decision to work for the best,  
    want the best, pray for their best.  
Love is a God-driven, God-empowered verb.  
*"Love each other as I have loved you."* says Jesus. (John 15:12)
6. John 8 tells us of Jesus forgiving someone caught in adultery. *"I do not condemn you"* He says to her. Forgiveness, full and complete. Guilt and shame removed.  
When people hang around each other long enough, stuff happens. And it's easy enough to become bitter or resentful.  
It is cross-difficult to surrender our hurt and pain to Jesus.  
To let go our desire for revenge.  
To make new beginnings.  
*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who have trespassed against us* says the Lord's prayer.
7. Luke 19 tells the touching story of Jesus seeking out and going to stay at the house of a social outcast named Zacchaeus. Luke 7 records Jesus receiving the care and love of a small-town prostitute, ridiculed, used and abused by everyone else. He accepts her.  
With whom in this church are you willing to be seen?  
Who will you welcome into your home?  
For whom will you make time?

*Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.....*

Jesus is our rock-sure foundation for life.  
His death was to remove our guilt.  
His resurrection was to bring us eternal life.  
His Spirit is given to connect us to heaven's power.

In that new life  
In His power  
we are called to be a rock in the lives of others;  
to be, as St. Francis put it, channels of God's peace;  
the flow of holy grace and life and love;  
the love and life of Jesus.

*As members of a community that wants to glorify God, we are called to bring the life changing message of Christ to our neighbors as well as to each other.*

That is our challenge.  
That is our focus.

May the Spirit give us power, direction, and desire so that at the end of it all, we as a congregation may say -

that every last one of us may say -  
*I have fought the good fight*  
*I have finished the race,*  
*I have kept the faith.*

[2 Tim 4:7]