

The Power of Living Water

John Ch 4 v 10

“Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink”. This is not a religious quote but I am sure we are all familiar with it coming from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1798.

We all need water to drink - in order to survive. Plants need water. Animals need water. All living things need water. Put quite simply water is at the centre of life itself.

I remember as a child growing up that my school had a water fountain which we were allowed to drink from at break time. It is different today. It seems to me that most children in this country are never far away from a drink of water. They carry water bottles around with them constantly. They take them to school in their back packs and when at school there are water coolers round every corner in order to refill them throughout the day. At home the fridge houses a variety of drinks and of course **we** also usually have access to tea and coffee throughout the day. I doubt that any of us have ever been in need of water in the way that people in biblical times were.

In Israel it rained only during a few months of the year and when it did it was deemed a “gift from God”. The rain ran into streams or rivers and was fresh in contrast to places like the Dead Sea which, because of its strong salt content, acted like a poison and made the land barren.

The theme of water runs through the Bible like a stream or more like a river. There is, of course, a stream that runs through the Garden of Eden into the four rivers that emanate from that place and the final chapter of the Book of Revelation speaks of “the river of the water of life flowing down the middle of the city's streets.” Throughout the Old and the New Testament water is at the centre of many important events, miracles and parables. Some of these we will explore during the next twelve months

This water, however, essential for life in its physical sense, is no ordinary water. The water referred to in the Bible is “living water”. It is the word of God, supplying water to quench our spiritual needs not just our bodily needs – water that once we have accepted will be a constant supply welling up within us - water that will give us eternal life.

This year we are following the theme not just of “living water” but the **power** of this water. How do we experience this power? When do we experience it and where do we experience it from day to day? You may remember on Boxing Day in 2004 there was an enormous tsunami that hit Indonesia - a giant tidal wave caused by an enormous underground earthquake that caused loss of life and devastation to the lives of many thousands of people. There was power indeed. A visit to Niagara Falls or even High Force, a beauty spot in the Yorkshire Dales, and **there** is power in water. Hydro-electric power stations harness this power and put it to good use. But this is not power in the biblical sense. The power we are considering is the recognition that God is present in everything, encompassing everything and within everything. We see God's power in the tiny rain drop and the gentle trickle of water in a fish pond just as much as the mighty roar of the ocean and torrential flood. God's power is spoken through Jesus' words and seen through his actions and through his life that we try to emulate. Jesus is not the living water but through Him we can receive God's unconditional gift.

For discussion

1. Music can be very powerful (Fingal's Cave by Mendelssohn and Vaughn Williams Sea Symphony are examples). Try to make a collection of music inspired by water and listen to the different pieces during your meetings.
2. There are also several hymns that refer to water. Sing Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken\* at the end of this meeting.
3. Try to visit a garden or natural beauty spot that includes water and feel "The Power of Living Water".

\*Words for Hymn MP173/NMHB305/MB363 v 2

See, the streams of living waters,  
Springing from eternal love,  
Well supply thy sons and daughters  
And all fear of want remove;  
Who can faint while such a river  
Ever flows their thirst to assuage?  
Grace which, like the Lord, the giver,  
Never fails from age to age.