

Renewed in Hope

Week 3: Hope is life-giving water of the Spirit

Jesus came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there. Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well. It was about noon. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" (For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep; where then can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." [John 4.5-15]

Video Summary

Again and again, hope is expressed in the bible as living water, water that renews the desert places, turning the dead land into a fertile garden, transforming the perspective of those who have felt themselves unloved and hopeless: welling up within, and overflowing to others – the way that water will. For hope is fluid and supple, finding the cracks in whatever opposes it, always alive and purposeful.

The gift of God to the Samaritan woman is the Holy Spirit to refresh her human spirit; the life of God to awaken her own buried life.

Our natural focus when we ask anything of God is to ask help with the needs that fill our minds in the moment; and it is good to ask, for God cares about these things too – our worries, hurts and wants. Yet, we have to be careful not to get stuck in grumbling, for grumbling erodes hope. God's giving is free and generous: Holy Spirit to refresh your human spirit; life of God to awaken your buried life; not something outside but someone inside, the welling up within of hope like a spring of clear, fresh water, giving life to your wilderness places.

Some questions for groups

- Why is 'living water' a symbol of the Spirit? What do you feel when you watch the flow of a river or the welling up of a spring?
- When has a chance meeting – like that between Jesus and the Samaritan woman – made a difference to your life?
- Why is grumbling damaging to relationships and destructive of hope?
- What else strikes you in the video?

Some exercises for personal reflection and prayer

Remembering meeting:

This week we are considering that hope is shaped not only towards a 'something' but a *someone*. In touching our lives God has awakened our longing. When have you had a sense of meeting God? It is likely to have been within the ordinary and the everyday – like that chance meeting at a well. As a memory of a time, recent or past, comes to mind, write down a few words that express the character of that experience. Then allow another memory to come in, and again write a word or words to note that time. Continue the same process until you have filled up your page or come to a natural pause. Now look through what you have written. What feelings and thoughts arise in you? You may find yourself wanting to express some of these to God, or being drawn into some particular memory that seems significant for this time.

Beyond words

Sometimes what we hope for is difficult to put into words. A creative activity may be able to give freer expression to what is stirring in your spirit. Use painting, collage or modelling clay to help give shape to your hope. Music may also be a medium for you.

By living water

Go for a walk by a river or a stream. Watch the movement of the water and listen to its sound. Ask for the gift of living water to refresh your spirit and satisfy your longing.

Some Bible passages on life-giving water:

Ezekiel 47.1-12 / Isaiah 41.17-20 / Psalm 42

Holy Spirit, refresh my human spirit.
Life of God, awaken my buried life.
Well up within me like a spring of fresh water,
Bring life to the wilderness within me.
Overflow with hope in me
Let me share what you freely give.