

## **Christ in the Desert: Jesus the living water. March 23, 2014**

Christ in the Desert message series was inspired by a visit I made last June during my Sabbath Leave to a Benedictine monastery called Christ in the Desert. The Monastery located about 75 miles north of Sante Fe, New Mexico and one of most remote in the world. It's about 40 miles from where the first atomic bomb was tested and exploded in 1945.

Pray

The bible tells us how to live as Christians, how to have faith, to be forgiving, to love God and our neighbour and even love and forgive ourselves better than we thought possible. 3 insights from the Bible help us go deeper with God. God is closer than we think. We can seek team-oriented solutions. Jesus has the capacity to reshape us.

### **Insight # 1. God is closer than we think.**

There's a TV commercial with a woman sitting reading and a glass of water is on the table. Someone flushes a toilet off camera and the water in the glass goes down, then as we hear the toilet tank re-filling, the water in the glass goes back up. It's clear. We, in Canada, flush our toilets with drinking water. We take drinking water for granted.

We can take God for granted, though God is closer than we think, with untapped resources just waiting for us.

In the Exodus reading, God has just rescued his people, nearly a million men, women, and children the experts estimate, rescued from institutionalized, racist slavery in Egypt. Now they're in the desert and they thirsty. What do they do? Naturally they complain to each other, then to the leadership. Dying of thirst, and ready to stone him, Moses does what any of us desperate enough do; he prays. Fortunately God had a solution Moses hadn't expected. Strike the rock, God says. Strike the rock and I will be with you. "This better work," thought Moses, "or they're going strike me!" Moses uses the same staff he held up to divide the Red Sea and crack! Up comes water, probably trapped in a crevace from torrential Fall or Spring rains or an artesian well. God freely gives the resources to quench the people's thirst and rescue Moses from a quick-tempered, and complaining people.

A young man was getting ready to graduate from college. For many months he had admired a beautiful sports car in a dealer's showroom, and knowing his father could well afford it, he

told him that was all he wanted. As Graduation Day approached, the young man awaited signs that his father had purchased the car.

Finally, on the morning of his graduation, his father called him into his private study, told him how proud he was to have such a fine son, and how much he loved him. He handed him a beautifully wrapped gift box. Curious, but somewhat disappointed, the young man opened the box and found a lovely, leather-bound Bible, with his name embossed in gold. Angrily, the young man raised his voice to his father and said, "With all your money you give me a Bible?" He stormed out of the house, leaving the Bible behind.

Many years passed and the young man was very successful in business. He had a beautiful home and wonderful family, but realized his father was very old. He thought perhaps he should go to him. He had not seen him since that graduation day. But before he could make arrangements, he received a letter from a lawyer telling him his father had passed away, and willed all of his possessions to him. He needed to come home immediately and take care of things. When he arrived at his father's house, sadness and regret filled his heart. He began to search through his father's important documents and saw the Bible, new, just as he had left it years ago.

With tears, he opened the Bible and began to turn the pages. His father had carefully underlined a verse, Matt 7:11,

"And if you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father, give to those who ask Him?"

As he read those words, a car key dropped from the back of the [Bible](#). It had a tag with the dealer's name, the same dealer who had the sports car he had desired. On the tag was the date of his graduation, and the words...PAID IN

FULL. How many times do we miss God's blessings, God's so close but our minds are made up, our hearts as hard as rock?

## **Insight # 2 We can seek team-oriented solutions.**

When we have a problem it is much easier to **blame someone** than to think through the problem carefully and spiritually. In the desert, the people of God could have thought, "We are in a desert; it's not surprising there isn't much water here. We need to look to God to meet this need." Instead they blamed Moses and did nothing to *help* the problem.

Sometimes we need to stop and seek a **team-oriented solution** to our problems, not just complain.

Anglican Parishes across Canada have responded to National Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald's statements about the lack of access to clean water in indigenous communities by contributing over \$100,000.00. Of the homes in one isolated northern Ontario community an hour's flight north of Red Lake, 430 out of 450 had no indoor plumbing. The town called Pikangikum will receive funds to install water and waste treatment for 10 homes. The first house to receive its water system is home to four generations; an elder who has lost both her legs, her daughter, a grandmother, who also lost a leg, a grandfather, daughter and two infant children. The National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Shawn Atleo met with the family shortly after the water system was installed. Atleo said that he "saw dignity returned to the family." Anglicans, Assembly of First Nations and the United Church have worked together to create this fund called Pimtisiwim Nipi which is Cree for "living water."

## **Insight # 3 Jesus has the capacity to reshapes us.**

Jesus says directly to the woman at the well, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

The living water Jesus spoke of was the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit that lives in you and me by faith in Christ given in our baptism.

*"Jesus said to her, "The water that I give will become in those who drink it a spring of water that bubbles up into eternal life."*

Jesus initiates a conversation with a Samaritan woman by sitting down and asking for a drink of water. Their conversation begins simply, but then spirals deeper and deeper into the heart of who Jesus is and what he wants

to give her. Throughout their interaction, this woman gradually has her understanding of life transformed and reshaped by that which Jesus offers.

For the woman, life is shaped by her social role (including the heavy work of drawing water and the pain and stigma of five broken relationships), and by the teaching and practices of her culture. For Jesus, life is shaped by his comprehensive experience of human existence and by being the one who at the same time knows and lives God's life - life that is eternal.

Through spending time with Jesus, and allowing herself to examine her life in his presence, with a feeling, not of being judged but tremendously valued by Jesus, the Samaritan woman comes to understand that she may live in a much larger context. She can live her life in the context of eternal life. Her life is reshaped. From cautious, evasive and suspicious to engaged, hopeful and trusting. From being an outcast to being accepted, welcomed and welcoming of others to meet Jesus. Her life, like our's needed a re-set, a re-charge. The Holy Spirit is not like your cell phone. The Holy Spirit always has a full charge, full bars, and always has service. Our life can be like a plant in a drought needing drops of living water to re-vive us.

The miracle that results from the Samaritan woman examining her life in conversation with Jesus, and engaging honestly and wholly with him, is that she comes to know a new condition for her life - eternal life.

A man commented on Jesus' first miracle of turning water into wine. "I don't know how he did that, but, since I met Jesus, he's turned my drinking into food for my family and lottery tickets into furniture for our home." This Lent may our self-examination, prayer, fasting, and giving, offer insights on the word of God (Jesus himself): that God is closer than we think, that we can seek team-oriented solutions, and that Jesus has the capacity to reshape us.

*Loving God, thank you that Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, knows what our lives are like, and for his invitation to enter into a life he knows with you. We pray for your guidance as, through the Season of Lent self-examination, prayer, fasting, giving and meditating on your word, we come to live the gift of eternal life. Amen.*

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