

From an early age, every child is fascinated with water. We are bathed in it, baptized in it, and kept from venturing unsafely into it without adult supervision. As an older child, we might fish in the creek, go swimming in the swimming hole, or perhaps jump off of a cliff on Splitrock Reservoir we are not supposed to jump off. Not only does water provide life, but it is also the source for endless fascination. In Cross Country, we would always take a detour through the sprinklers set up on the football field and get a shirtful and mouthful of water intended for the field, which included fertilizer which we should have known was not good for us. Good for plants but not humans. But we could not stop our fascination. Later on, working for an organic farmer, I spent countless hours laying out irrigation lines, laying new ones when they got cut, and finding the source for occasional water build-up or floods caused by the irrigation system. It was critical that the plants get watered just the right amount, not too much and not too little, especially on the hot and dry days.

As suburbanites, we often can get cutoff from the importance of the water cycle. The rain is not just an inconvenience or for the lawn, it provides the sustenance that farmers depend on. How many times do we often look-up at the sky to see what is going on instead of our weather app on our smartphone? How often do we depend on our smartphone to tell us what is going on right around us if we only look? How do you find the sacred in the rain? Not only does rain provide the well-being for living things to grow, but it can also offer us a calm from our busy lives, a chance to reflect. Waterfalls are a source of water that calm us from the inside out.

Yet, scarcity of water also affects us. Parts of the country encounter unusable drinking water like the situation in Flint. Events such as the addition of new pipelines threaten the water source of those who need it for their daily lives, like Native American tribes. There are those in other countries that have to walk miles to a clean drinking source or simply do not have water to drink that is clean. We take for granted the Lakota expression, "Water is Life." From birth to death, we thirst for physical water.

We also thirst for spiritual water. We are reminded of Jesus at the well with the Samaritan woman. First off, she does not understand why he, a Jew, and a male, is at the well, and why he is asking her, a Samaritan woman, for a drink at the well. His willingness to associate with her confuses her. But also, his offering of spiritual water, everlasting and never running dry, finally tips her off that he is inquiring about more than just water.

In our Christian life, spiritual and physical water are intertwined. We are baptized into our Christian identity, either as a baby sprinkled by the minister or as an older child or adult. We might have been sprinkled or even dunked. I was raised Baptist and baptized by my father at the age of nine when I decided that I wanted the water that only Jesus provides. Baptism, whether it is as a child or an adult, follows us our whole life. It is not a one-time event; it is meant to be our overarching story from birth to death. When we thirst for God's water, we are reminded of the events in the Bible where God worked through water: the Red Sea, Noah and the flood, Creation. Water that is baptismal water is still water, but it is also more. Baptismal water is a sign of God's redemption and grace. This water is a sign that beyond physical water, we also need the water, the spiritual life and grace, which only God provides.

-Pastor Ryon