

## **“The Living Water Versus Spiritual Soda.”**

**John 4 : 5-26**

Our Gospel text this evening refers to that miraculous molecule that we call “water.”

Let’s think back for a moment to junior high science class: water is comprised of very different elements which, when brought together, create an unpredictable response. The formula for water is H<sub>2</sub>O. What does “H” stand for? Hydrogen. What does “O” stand for? Oxygen. What does hydrogen do? It burns. What does oxygen do? It promotes burning. Put the two together and what do you get? Now, you would think that you would get one big humdinger of a fire going, right? Break out the marshmallows! No! Instead you get water; something that extinguishes burning. Go figure.

Here’s the recipe just in case any of you want to go home and make some water in your kitchen: *Take 2 molecules of diatomic hydrogen gas and combine them with 1 molecule of diatomic oxygen gas, and you will get 2 molecules of water.* If we should ever do a future edition of St. Peter’s cookbook, I would like to submit that as a recipe!

Around here, we take water for granted. We don’t even give it a second thought. We have Lake Michigan to the east, Lake Winnebago to the west, Green Bay to the north, and all kinds of surface and underground rivers in between that pump water into our kitchens and bathrooms. Compared to much of the two-thirds world, we have it pretty good!

When we read passages out of the Old or New Testaments, we must always remember that our Bible stories are about desert people. Desert people are intimately bound by life-giving, life-sustaining water.

In fact, the miracle molecule of water is always a fact of life or death for the children of Israel. The devastation of droughts changed the face of empires.

The absence or presence of water created civilizations or set whole populations on the move.

Again and again throughout the Bible, it’s this miracle molecule that transforms God’s chosen people.

Here’s water at work in the Old Testament:

- Creation begins when the world is separated by God into watery depths and dry land.
- The wickedness of a fallen age is washed away by divinely ordered flood waters.
- Droughts in Israel bring Joseph's brothers to Egypt for relief from the hands of the very brother they'd betrayed.
- Jacob/Israel establishes the holy place of Shechem at the site of a life-giving well in the desert according to the Lord's commandment.
- Hebrew slaves escape through the water, and that same water crashes down and destroys Pharaoh's pursuing army.
- Moses struck a rock and brought forth water to quench the people's thirst and save their lives.

Here's water at work in the New Testament:

- John the Baptist baptized with the waters of the wilderness in order to open the eyes and hearts of the people.
- Peter, Andrew, James and John, were all called from the water to follow Jesus as his disciples.
- Paul spent almost as much time being shipwrecked in heavy seas as he did sitting in Roman jail cells.
- Blind men and lepers were healed when they faithfully followed Jesus' directive to wash their ills away.
- Jesus offers the gift of living water that will bring eternal life to all who accept the drink.

Water is a big deal in the Bible, and it should be to us, too. We know that our bodies are over 98% water. We know that although human beings can exist for weeks without food we can survive for only a few days without water. We know that drinking six to eight 8-ounce glasses of water each day will keep our bodies optimally hydrated, healthy, and fit.

We also know that despite all the trendy pull-top, imported, glacial, steam-distilled, and filter-pure waters that now fill our grocery aisles, most North

Americans go around in a constant state of dehydration. Our massive consumption of tobacco, alcohol, caffeinated and sugared drinks, along with enormous quantities of salted and processed foods, all suck the moisture right out of our eyeballs, brains, and bones. We're standing up to our hips in soft drink cans and are dying of thirst.

But the cells of our bodies aren't the only parts of us that are parched. Even more dry is the state of our souls. Instead of pouring in living water to cure our dehydration, however, we grasp out at a huge variety of spiritual junk food. Browsing the spirituality section of many book stores is like cruising down that aisle in any grocery store that has nothing but soft drinks on one side and chips on the other.

Now, some of these spiritual selections won't hurt you in small doses. They taste pretty good going down and they may even bring a temporary sense of satisfaction. Just like drinking soda! But just as biologically there is no substitute for pure, life-giving water, so spiritually there is no substitute for the soul-filling thirst-quenching offered by Jesus' living water. This is what Jesus meant when He said (verse 14) *"Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty."* Living water -- Jesus Christ -- satisfies completely, satisfies forever, and satisfies everyone.

I close with a short piece entitled:

"Everything I need to know about life, I learned from Noah's Ark..."

1. Don't miss the boat.
2. Remember that we're all in the same boat.
3. Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the Ark.
4. Stay fit. When you're 600 years old, someone may ask you to do something really big.
5. Don't listen to critics; just get on with the job that needs to be done.
6. Build your future on high ground.
7. For safety's sake, travel in pairs.

8. Speed isn't always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.
9. When you're stressed, float a while.
10. Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals.
11. No matter the storm, when you're with God, there's always a rainbow waiting.
12. I would add one of my own: This same God who made the covenant with Noah, is the same God Who sent Christ into the world.

Is your soul thirsty this evening? Then you need to pray and ask Jesus Christ to quench that thirst. Christ is the Living Water. Amen.

**Illustrative material borrowed from Professor Leonard Sweet and Professor Jill Granger.**