



# Holy Spirit #6

## The Living Water

w/c 9 June 2024

*"Nothing is softer or more flexible than water, yet nothing can resist it." (Lao Tzu)*

Living on the rain-lashed western edge of a northern continent, it is hard, likely impossible, for us to fully understand the impact water – lack or plenty – has on a desert dweller. Unless water comes there can be no life: all water is in that sense living water. In Hebrew thought, blessings, fertility and water would almost act as synonyms. Images of God moving into his land, his people, as streams of water therefore automatically speak of growth, fertility, of blessing.

We are so used to water that its essential property – that it flows – almost passes us by in its familiarity. Not only will it flow, it will penetrate, permeate, soak. It will go wherever it can; it will get wherever it can. How do we emulate that as the 'water' of our spirit-filled lives encounters society around us?

### **Read John 7:37–43**

John records Jesus twice talking of living water: our passage here and also in chapter four as he spoke with the Samaritan woman. Interestingly the offer differs; she is offered living water (verse 10), while here it is those who drink (of Christ) who will be its source. How can we be that source – or are we just conduits? What can/should be the impact on those we meet? But before we get that far, how do we become aware of our need? You have to know that you're thirsty to go and ask for water.

Images of water – for good or bad – can be found throughout the Bible. Reflect on the arc of such thoughts across both Old and New Testaments – from the start of Genesis where the Spirit is hovering over the waters right through to the final message of Revelation – a call to everyone saying, *"Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life."* (Revelation 22:17b)

One biblical image that surely would have come to Jesus' audience is that of trees growing by water. In the second creation story in Genesis, Eden is full of trees watered by a river (Genesis 2:10). Similarly, in Psalm 1 we also find both elements though here the trees are said to stand for the believers. What imagery might be more pertinent for us today where our greater concern is probably that of the river flooding?

In several places we find God's gift of water described as being poured out. Does our British reserve hinder our accessing such generosity? If so, how? A key example is perhaps that of Isaiah 44:3: *"For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants."* In usual Jewish style, the two halves of the verse act as mirrors to each other – the gift of water to the land and the gift of the Spirit to God's people. What might be the equivalent of this gift of water to a desert land for our rain-soaked island?

In our second reading this week (Ezekiel 47) we are given the picture of water flowing from the Temple growing from trickle to a flood with no hint of tributaries adding to the flow. For us, surely, symbolic of the blessings the church can and should bring the land today. What should those be?

*"In a state of grace, the soul is like a well of limpid water, from which flow only streams of clearest crystal. Its works are pleasing both to God and man, rising from the River of Life, beside which it is rooted like a tree." (Teresa of Avila)*