

Call to Worship

John 7:38; Revelation 7:17; Psalm 150:6

All who believe in me should drink! As the scriptures said concerning me,

"Rivers of living water will flow out from within him."

...because the lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them.

He will lead them to the springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Let everything that has breath, praise the Lord! **Praise the Lord!**

Prayer of Invocation

We come before you today, God, as sojourners in the desert, longing for streams of rushing water to flow into our dry places. We are ready for your gift of fresh air and living water! We call upon you once more, as we learn to live in to your blessings for us. Amen.

The Word

Genesis 1:6-8, John 4:10-11

God said, "Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters to separate the waters from each other."

God made the dome and separated the waters under the dome from the waters above the dome. And it happened in that way.

God named the dome Sky. **There was evening and there was morning: the second day.**

Jesus responded, "If you recognized God's gift and who is saying to you, 'Give me some water to drink,' you would be asking him and he would give you living water."

The woman said to him, "Sir, you don't have a bucket and the well is deep. Where would you get this living water?"

Living the Word

The blessings of water and air: so obvious, yet so often ignored or forgotten in our day to day... Our bodies are dependent on both of these things, they are a requirement for life.

Everyone has heard the advice, "Drink eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day." That's 2 quarts of water!, which isn't that different from the Institute of Medicine recommendations. Although the "8 by 8" rule isn't supported by hard evidence, it remains popular because it's easy to remember. Just keep in mind that the rule should be reframed as: "Drink eight 8-ounce glasses of fluid a day," because all fluids count toward the daily total.

I'm not sure if I get enough, but I drink 20 oz of water each morning before I leave the house and then I know I am at least starting the day in the right direction. We are blessed to have water at our fingertips, some places on earth don't; some have water, but it isn't clean.

Water can be recreational as well: Last week I went fishing for the first time this year. Bob and I took the canoe loaded on the truck to a favorite spot. The lake is pretty high, the same as the year before, so we unloaded all our gear and dragged the canoe to the bottom of the hill. I was so anxious to get to and on the water. It was only 53 degrees and I had several layers of clothes on, yet I still fit in the canoe and away we paddled.

We spent the whole evening on the water, the lake was a mirror for God's handiwork around us, we caught 4 different species of fish: Large Mouth Bass, Sunfish, Crappie and Walleye; we heard an Eagle, we saw a loon - which kept coming up, seeing us and ducking back down in the water - so fun to watch. The water brought me peace and great delight.

What are your water blessings?

My greatest water blessing is when I am able to use this gift to Baptize someone, acknowledging that person as a child of God. My favorite Baptism story and river movie clip - is from the movie 'O Brother, Where Art Thou?' People going down to the river to experience for themselves a moment of knowing that they are a 'child of God' through the feel of this gift of water on their skin.

In headlines this week:

India/Bangladesh: When the cyclone Amphan barreled in from the Bay of Bengal on Wednesday, a storm surge of around five meters (over 16 feet) caused flooding across low-lying coastal areas. Can you and I even imagine a wall of water 16 feet high coming in to our lives and then pulling back, taking everything in its path to be drawn back into the sea.

Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink..."FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 28, 2005"

HURRICANE KATRINA INFORMATION SHEET: Department of Health Warns of Risks to Water Supply Due to Storms - Hurricanes, especially if accompanied by a tidal surge or flooding, can contaminate the public water supply. Drinking contaminated water may cause illness. Individuals cannot assume that the water in the hurricane-affected area is safe to drink.

Now closer to home this week - Record mid-Michigan flooding following days of storms and the failure of two dams forced the evacuation of an estimated 10,000 residents, who are staying with friends, family and at local shelters. Rushing waters took out trees, roadways, homes, businesses, the library, the sewer system, electricity - and part of the City of Midland. Still the community did get a small reprieve. The flood waters that were expected to peak at 38 feet crested at 4pm Wednesday closer to 35 feet. It also stopped raining - for now...

Water is not always a blessing are close at hand. Yet in the midst of these and disasters through history, the blessing can be ours to give. The non-blessed events cause us to motivate from our cozy warm couches and to pray. That is first Asking God to save the people, give them comfort and peace in their grief and loss. And then it opens us to the active responses that we can supply. Helping supply fresh water as a blessing from our abundance of what we have, physically delivering or sending finances for others to deliver fresh clean drinkable water.

How much clean water have you consumed while washing your hands for 20 seconds during these days of COVID-19? The good news is that we also know how to recycle the water to be used again...

Not a Bible Verse you may not have memorized, in fact may not even knew existed: Job 37:10 says this: "*By God's breath ice forms; water's expanse becomes solid.*" Since it did reach the 80's this week, I thought we could handle a little bit of "Frozen."

Across the globe, glaciers are retreating. This melting has accelerated dramatically in the past few decades. Alaska is no exception, with 98% of the state's glaciers shrinking, losing over 20 cubic miles of ice each year.

Globally, the melting of glaciers contributes to sea level rise. Locally, glacial retreat can change river and ecosystem dynamics.

A glacier forms where more snow falls each winter than melts each summer. Over time, the snow compacts into ice. When the ice is thick enough, the glacier begins to flow downhill. A slight decrease in temperature leads to more snow accumulation and less melting, causing glacial growth. A slight increase in temperature leads to less snow accumulation and greater melting, two effects that combine to cause glaciers to thin and retreat.

Because glaciers are so sensitive to temperature changes in the mountains where they reside, they have been widely used as an indicator of local climate change. The global extent of their retreat is part of the evidence of global climate warming. The last sustained period of global glacier growth occurred during the Little Ice Age, with glaciers reaching their maximum extent between the 17th and mid-19th century.

The power of God's created element of water can affect us in many ways...California's Water Crisis Is The Result Of Market Failure As Much As Drought **By Brooke Barton**

The fundamental problem is that water is not treated like the scarce resource that it is. That needs to change. A lack of rainfall is perhaps the least of the state's problems. California's situation is symptomatic of escalating water risks all across the world, where water is typically undervalued and, as a result, used incredibly inefficiently as more people than ever need it.

Water - we need to replenish us daily; air - we need by the seconds. Most of us don't even notice the air going in and out constantly, we just breathe. Let's take three deep breaths together; In-Out, In-Out, In-Out. It is good to breathe intentionally sometimes, just to appreciate the air.

Someone tell us about the blessings they find in the air or as they breathe...

The Atlantic Magazine reported in January of 2013: "China's Toxic Sky" by ALAN TAYLOR Since the beginning of this year, the levels of air pollution in Beijing have been dangerously high, with thick clouds of smog chasing people indoors, disrupting air travel, and affecting the health of millions. The past two weeks have been especially bad -- at one point the pollution level measured 40 times recommended safety levels.

Authorities are taking short-term measures to combat the current crisis, shutting down some factories and limiting government auto usage. However, long-term solutions seem distant, as China's use of coal continues to rise, and the government remains slow to acknowledge and address the problems. Since 2013 Beijing China

China has closed down several coal burning factories, but they have a long way to go.

March 4, 2020 - As China seeks to control the spread of COVID-19, fewer cars are driving, fewer factories are running and — in some places — skies are clearer. Air pollution levels have dropped by roughly a quarter over the last month as coal-fired power plants and industrial facilities have ramped down so employees in high-risk areas can stay home. Levels of nitrogen dioxide, a pollutant primarily from burning fossil fuels, were down as much as 30%, according to NASA.

Clean air like clean water has to be something we are aware of as a blessing before we can be more appreciative and wise about its use. We aren't created to bless ourselves, but to receive God's blessing and pass it on to others. What will the air and water quality be like for the next generation...and then our grandchildren?

This last Tuesday I had a special blessing as I spent the day visiting my Sister-in-law Terri. Her body is cancer riddled and she is at end of life. She can no longer breathe without the help of an oxygen tube. I asked her what it was like before they hooked her up to the oxygen. She told me that she kept trying to grasp for air, yet she just couldn't get enough. That oxygen tube is a blessing.

She can no longer get up to fetch a drink of water for herself. So, I was blessed to be able to help her for a while, making tea and getting water. Terri is looking forward to being with her Lord... yet this part of the journey is rough.

Psalm 39:4-5 *"Let me know my end, LORD. How many days do I have left? I want to know how brief my time is. You've made my days so short; my lifetime is like nothing in your eyes. Yes, a human life is nothing but a puff of air!"*

This scripture could be depressing about the length of life. After a number of funerals and memorial services in a row last year, I have realized that most of us are never ready, no matter our age, for the end of our days on earth. Yet we know as Christians that our life here is just a puff of air in eternity.

Even so, it only takes puffs of air to send a kite flying or a bird sailing according to the air currents. How many of you wish that you could fly like a bird? How many have dreamt that you were flying? Dream analysis says that a dream of flying indicates that you feel free. I love the words from the song "Ill Fly Away" Think about the freedom of that - *Some glad morning when this life is over, I'll Fly away; to a home on God's celestial shore, I'll fly away. Just a few more weary days and then, I'll Fly away; to a land where joys shall never end I'll fly away...*

God created the earth for us to be able to survive in, sometimes we can't see the blessings of creation because we are going too fast or missing God because we get preoccupied with ourselves, but God still keeps the air and water coming as we need it. In some ways we have abused the blessings by damaging the air and water and now we need to find ways to repair and re-create for the next generations.

We may be only focusing on one or two blessings each week, but don't forget them as the weeks go by. By the end of the summer I hope you will be more in-tuned to the ways you are blessed and new ways that you can bless others. We are blessed to be a blessing. The real secret to how this works is that when you bless others, that is how you receive more blessings.