

Water

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon 'Water' illustrates how God uses water as a metaphor for transformation, protection, and faith in our lives.

Duration: 23:27

Scripture: Genesis 1:1-2, Exodus 14:21-22, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 14:28-29, John 2:1-11, John 13:6-7, Romans 8:28

Topics: "Blessing"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the power of trusting in God even in difficult circumstances. He uses the example of Jesus turning water into wine to illustrate how God can take ordinary things and turn them into blessings. The preacher encourages the congregation to affirm their faith and trust in God's provision. He also shares a personal story of facing a devastating situation with his daughter's rebellion and pregnancy, highlighting how God can bring beauty and order out of desolation and disappointment.

Transcript

I want to talk about what's in this bottle, water. Water is the basic component of the human body. It's in a lot of foods, as we know, and it covers most of the earth.

What we call the earth is really covered more with water than with earth, with land. And it's a symbol, in a way, of life. Of course, it's a symbol of the Holy Spirit, but I want to use it today as a symbol of what God can do in our lives because of what he's recorded that he's done with water.

I don't want to liken us to water, which we're made up of, and which is so foundational to our existence, because there's a lot in the Bible about what God does with water. There's some great lessons. I want to give you something encouraging.

How many want to be encouraged? Lift up your hand. I want to encourage you now. And I've learned each of these things in my own life.

The names that we have for God, like God is a strong tower, or the Lord is my shepherd, those titles of God, those names for God, were worked out in human experience. People lived and went through life and found out what God did and how God reacted to their faith and then they came and said, God is a strong tower. God is a rock.

Why? Because in facing life, they found out, wow, I trusted in him, he was my rock, or I was in trouble and I ran into him and he became a strong tower. So although God has described himself from himself, most of the names that we get in the Bible about God is this, God is that, it's come because people have said God is my peace because they've lived through situations and found out that God is peace. And now we want to talk about water.

The first mention of water in the Bible is found in Genesis 1, verse two. Let's look at it. The first verse is, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was formless and desolate, and the raging ocean that covered everything was engulfed in total darkness, and the spirit of God was moving over the water.

That's a very provocative verse, by the way. Some people believe that something might have happened between verse one and verse two, because God, who is perfect, how could he have created the mess that we see in verse two? Do you get it? In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. Well, how in the world would God create what we see in verse two? Did something precipitate that? Was there some judgment or deluge or whatever? Because verse two, earth was formless and desolate, and the raging ocean that covered everything, or the waters covered the face of the deep, and the spirit of God was brooding or moving over the what? The water.

Now, water, unless it's coming like a flood, isn't very much of anything, is it? Even though we need it for life. Water, you can't lean on it. If you take this water and you pour it into a basin, you can't have it help you very much, except you drink it, obviously, or wash your hands.

But in terms of helping us in life, water is a kind of, well, it's a liquid. If you freeze it, it becomes ice. It can boil it, it becomes steam, vapor.

But it's mentioned in the Bible there in Genesis 1-2 that this water, for whatever reason, was dominating a scene of total chaos and disaster. In the Hebrew language, the picture of verse two is of total chaos and actually, as some commentators have said, as a kind of scene of judgment of some kind. It's not a pretty scene.

The earth was without form, and void and darkness covered the face of the deep, the water, but the Spirit of God brooded over the water. So the first thing we learn about God through this little study of water is that God can take something that's a mess and make it into a beautiful world. Because from that mess in Genesis 1-2, God makes the world we live in.

He shapes human beings using water that's in the dirt and the mud, the clay. He separates the waters. He fills the waters.

One of the things that God wants to remind us all the time, and we see it in the Old and the New Testament, is God can take, through this little picture of water, God can take desolation. When you and I think we're at the most desolate spot in our lives, the bottom has fallen out, our hearts are broken, we don't know what to do, it's like a total disaster. God can take a disaster and from it, just speak into it, and it becomes something beautiful and orderly and wonderful.

Come on, can we put our hands together and say amen? When we drink water or we see water, it can remind us that the first mention of water in the Bible, God was teaching us that the spirit was brooding over that water which was in a very bad setting, and he made the world that we live in out of it. Have you ever

faced a situation that looks so desolate, disappointing, disastrous, that you just wanted to throw your hands up in the air? I remember where I was sitting in a house that I lived in in Queens when I found out that my oldest girl, who was in rebellion against God, that she was pregnant with a baby. You talk about a disaster, you wanna talk about desolation, you wanna talk about disappointment.

I thought my world had ended. Where was God? We had prayed, we had raised her, et cetera, et cetera. Come on, you've been there too, haven't you, in your own way? How many have been presiding over a mess once or twice in your life, right? And if you didn't raise your hand, you will within a few years if the Lord tarries, because that's part of life.

And God took that mess, made it into the most beautiful thing in the whole world. Oh, come on, let's just praise him. He turned that little baby, that whole scenario, that whole mess.

God loves to take messes and turn them into blessings. That's what he did with water. But there's another mention of water that jumps to my mind today, and that was when Israel came out of Egypt, and they came to the Red Sea, and what is the Red Sea made of? Water.

And that speaks of the fact that there's not only times of desolation in your life, but there's times of danger. They were hemmed in. God led them to a place which made no sense.

Remember, they were following the cloud. They weren't following some navigational instrument. God was leading them, and he led them to a place with the Egyptians now chasing them, where mountains were on both sides.

You can't go over those. And in front was the Red Sea. It's total, absolute danger, total catastrophe.

And they began to fear and cry, and if you remember, they turned on Moses and said, didn't we tell you to leave us alone when we were in Egypt? We were eating garlicks and leeks and onions, rice and peas, tostones, all of that we had back there, and now we should have died there. Now you took us out here, right? And then God made the water of danger into a wall of protection. The same water that threatened them became a wall of protection, for he separated, and they walked across, and what was protecting them was the water that they thought would kill them.

So God can take the dangerous places in our life when we're facing difficulties and problems, and the thing, listen, wait, the thing that is seemingly the danger, God says, no, it won't be your danger. It'll be a wall to protect you. I'm going to use the very situation that you think is going to get you.

No, it won't get you. It'll protect you. It'll keep you close to me, and you're going to cross over.

Let's praise God for that. God can do that. Takes danger, he takes danger and makes it into a wall of protection and blessing.

Can I add something else on that? Remember, you can't have a testimony unless you go through a test. I look back on my life now. Remember what Jesus said to Peter when he was washing his feet? I read that this afternoon.

Peter said, no, you can't wash my feet, and Jesus said an interesting word, and I want to share it with for somebody here that this will really apply to. What I do now, you do not understand, but you will understand later. There are times in life that what God is doing in our lives, we do not understand.

You have to be patient. We have to learn to trust him because the test that he's permitted us to go through is going to turn into a testimony. You can't have a testimony.

You can't encourage people unless you've been there yourself. How can you sing about the Red Sea unless you came through the Red Sea? So remember that. God not only can take chaos and make it into something beautiful, disaster, and make it delightful, but he takes the dangerous places of life and he uses that test and gives us a testimony.

I see that all the time. I was asked the other day by some pastor who I was having lunch with, and he said, this has happened several times, I've read your books. Tell me about the time that God gave you \$6 million in 10 minutes from two different donors that you didn't know one, never met that person even to this day, and the other one you didn't know, and you didn't ask either one.

Tell it to me again how it happened. I said, why? He said, I'm believing God for \$50,000. But it seems like I can't, I'm so afraid.

But you see, what I could speak into his life came through a test that I went through. Always remember that what you're going through now, God is gonna use it to be a blessing to someone else. So that test, the danger becomes a wall of protection around you and a blessing to somebody else.

And it all had to do with water. Let me just give you two more that came to my mind today. Jesus said to Peter, Peter, I'm gonna ask you, come to me on the water.

Now, that's impossible. Walk to me on the water. Remember, they were crossing the lake, there was a storm, they were afraid, and Jesus comes walking on the thing they're afraid of, which gives you an idea how great our Jesus is, right? The thing that seems like it's gonna knock us out, he's walking on it.

He's using it to come near to us. Oh, that's a great truth. The things we go through that are difficult, Jesus uses them to draw near.

That's been true in my life. How about your life? How many have been closer to Jesus when your back was against the wall, right? You're hanging on to God. You say it shouldn't be that way.

I know, but it is that way. And Jesus says to him, come to me. And the water, which stands for an impossibility, a man cannot walk on water.

No one's done it since. No one did it before. The water of impossibility becomes a road to come to Christ.

If you're facing an impossibility today, God can change that water, that impossibility, to a road to bring you to him. Why would the psalmist say, in the day of trouble I called upon the Lord? Why? Because when you're facing impossibilities, who do you have to go to but to God? My goodness. Remember, what's hard, impossible to us is nothing to God.

God just speaks and it's done. All kinds of impossibilities have been surmounted by God using the impossibility to cause us to look to him. And as Peter's sinking in the water, why did he sink in the water? Because he looked at the wind and the waves.

He should have kept his eyes on Jesus. That was Peter's problem. He was always looking around in his life.

You know, the Bible says, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. A friend of mine reminded me, Peter always had trouble because he was looking at other things, you know? Like, what are you gonna do with John? He's wondering about that. And then he's on the mountain and Elijah and Moses are there.

And instead of just focusing on Jesus, he says, no, I'll build a tabernacle for them too. He's always looking around, confused. When we look at the winds and the storms, we start to sink, don't we? Then Jesus caught him.

And if you're here today, you're not gonna sink. I wanna declare to you, you're not gonna sink. Come on, can we say amen to that? The Lord's gonna use that water to show you how great he is, how great he is.

So chaos is something beautiful. He takes danger and uses it to protect us and to give us a testimony. Remember, you can't be a blessing deeply to other people unless you've been through it and tell them I came out on the other side.

That's why I love people in the prayer bed who have been through stuff. I love them to come and help pray for people because when people ask, well, how do you know? They can tell them not only a Bible verse, but they can say it came true for me. And then he can take impossibilities in our life and ask us to do the impossible on water and the water becomes not a place to sink, it becomes, as long as we're looking at him, a place to walk.

And then there was the wedding in Cana of Galilee and they ran out of wine. You ever have need in your life? Maybe you have a shortage today. All my life, talking with a different minister who was complaining about, I've been pastoring 10 years, but now we're in a building program and I don't know how we're gonna get the money and I don't see it happening and this and that.

And I said, my dear brother, all I've ever known in my life as a pastor is we don't have it, God's gonna have to do it. That's all I've ever known. Every year of my life, I've never had like, oh, praise God, it's all there.

Whoa, praise God. It's always, how are we gonna do this? Always, that's all I've ever known. I said to my brother, brother, when you run out and you don't have enough, here's the last lesson, your need can become a place of joy because he turned the water into wine.

The water seemed insignificant because they needed wine. Why is he asking them to fill up the pots with water? Because Jesus can take ordinary things, touch them and turn them into a blessing. He will supply all your needs tonight.

Listen, I'm standing up here to tell you this last thing. He will supply all of your needs that you have if you will trust him. Not cry, shed tears.

Not cry out even loud in prayer. That is not what gets the answer. Please listen to me.

Not in feeling sorry for yourself. Not in promising to do better. Those are not the ways to get God to answer you and to see God supply our needs.

What is it? It's the great thing that he takes delight in. Look at Psalm 147, just these verses and I'm done. He gives animals their food and he feeds the young ravens when they call.

His pleasure is not in strong horses nor his delight in brave soldiers. But he takes pleasure in those who honor him. How do they honor him? In those who trust in his constant love.

Listen again. He does not take pleasure in what we are impressed by on the earth, power. In that day, what was it? It was cavalry and army.

Cavalry and walking foot soldiers. So the army that had the best horses and the most horses, whoa, look at that. The Assyrians, the Babylonians are coming and their horses are just like locusts covering the land.

And then look at their soldiers, they're so strong. And God says, that's not what gives the victory. And that never impresses me.

Hydrogen bombs, nuclear weapons don't impress him. All the money in the stock market, nothing of that impresses him. Remember that.

Nothing that the world calls great impresses him. But what does impress him? What does he take delight in? The person who says, I'm going to trust you no matter what. I don't have what it takes, but I know you cannot fail.

God, come on, can we put our hands together? I know God, you do not. That's what he takes pleasure in. That's the school of faith that we're all in.

I've been in it, I'm still in it, I'll always be in it. I will always be in it. Because you can't get out of the school.

If you get left back, you got to do the year over again. He wants to teach me and you and all of us here, trust me. Trust me.

Believe in God, believe also in me. That's what he takes delight in. He takes delight in weak, fragile people who are vulnerable, but who say, God, I'm tying a knot, and I'm going to hang on, I'm going to trust you.

Horses don't impress him. Drones don't impress him. All this new weaponry, that doesn't impress.

Nothing impresses him. Cleverness doesn't impress him. Smart people don't impress him.

Here's what he takes delight in. Some simple soul like you or me who says, I will trust you. That you're going to turn my water into wine.

You're going to turn my mess into a blessing. My test is going to become a testimony. The thing that looked like it would swallow me up is going to become a wall to protect me.

That's why when we pray with you tonight, you have to believe it's the prayer of faith that heals the sick. It's not prayer. You got to get that.

When you pray, Jesus said, believe. Otherwise, you're just saying prayers. You're just saying prayers.

But, oh, the prayer of faith. To trust God, that's what he delights in. He's God.

How could anything on the earth impress him? Some army, some whatever, some nuclear weapon, like, wow, look at that. Some computer, whoa, look at that. How could God be sick? No, but he delights in the person in the balcony who says, you know what? I'm not going under and I'm not going to be discouraged.

I'm going to trust in God. Yeah, but what do you see? How do you know it? I don't know how it'll work out, but it's going to work out. I'm going to trust him.

He's going to take my lack and turn it into joy. He's going to take my mess and make it into something beautiful. Let's close our eyes.

Does anybody here want to just affirm their faith? You've been challenged by these verses? By this little study of what God can do just with water? And you just want to come forward here and my goodness, we'll wait with you. We'll pray with you. It's early and all you have to do is say, God, I'm going to trust you.

I'm going to trust you. I'm going to believe in you. I don't know how, why, where, when.

I don't know how this is going to work out, but I'm trusting you in the blind. I'm trusting you in the dark. I'm holding your hand because that's what you delight in.

And I know what the pastor said from the word of God is true. What you want me to do is stop worrying. I just talked to a friend in Puerto Rico who's going through some difficulties and the worry, the worry, the worry, it'll just eat you for dinner.

You have to learn to trust him. The just shall live by faith. Without faith, it's impossible to please God.

So take your mess, whatever your situation is, put it in a bundle and just bring it up here to the front. You can come right now and stand or kneel, whatever you want to do and say, pastor, I heard the word of the Lord tonight. God delights in people who trust him.

Trust him. I'm going to trust him. Just say I'm going to trust him.

You don't have to cry. You don't have to feel anything. You don't have to do anything.

All you have to do is say, God, I trust you and I'm going to worship you in front of this church at the end of this service. You know what I'm going through. I'm not going to quit, give up, be discouraged, be depressed, complain, blame others.

I'm not doing that. You can take chaos and make it into something beautiful. You can take danger and make it into a wall to protect me.

You can take an impossible situation and through that test, give me a testimony so I can help others. But God, I want you to do this. I'm trusting you so that I can give you glory and other people can be encouraged to trust you.

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