

The Spring Instead of Well

by Roy Hession

This sermon emphasizes the concept of receiving God's grace and living in the fullness of His Spirit, rather than striving in our own efforts to please Him. It delves into the imagery of drawing water from a well, symbolizing our attempts to satisfy God, and contrasts it with the idea of receiving living water from Jesus, symbolizing His Spirit springing up within us. The message encourages a shift from self-reliance to reliance on the Holy Spirit for strength, service, and spiritual growth.

Scripture: John 4:10, Romans 7:18, Galatians 3:3, Ephesians 5:18, Psalm 36:9, John 7:38, 2 Corinthians 3:17, Proverbs 4:23, Isaiah 44:3

Topics: "Grace", "Reliance on the Holy Spirit"

Description

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Transcript

Rejoice, you're the child of a king. Rejoice, you're the child of a king. Lift your head up high.

Rejoice, you're the child of a king. Now, not everybody here has been before, at least I assume there are a few. And those who have, have an inclination to make an odd mistake or two.

So, just to refresh your memory, let me sing it through to you once, and then I'm sure you've got it. By the way, I think I tracked down who it was that was making a mistake. He came up, let's go over that.

And do you know, he says it wasn't him. But he certainly made the mistake that others were making. Little children, rejoice.

You're a child of the king. Rejoice, you're a child of the king. Rejoice, you're a child of the king.

Lift your head up high. Rejoice, you're a child of the king. Little children, rejoice.

You're a child of the king. Rejoice, you're a child of the king. Rejoice, you're a child of the king.

Lift your head up high. Rejoice, you're a child of the king. Little children, rejoice.

Little children, rejoice. Rejoice. You're a child of the king.

Little children, rejoice. You're a child of the king. Lift your head up high.

Rejoice, you're a child of the king. And some of the men can put that little children in at a selected point during the chorus when the others are singing rejoice. Little children, rejoice.

You're a child of the king. Little children, rejoice. Of the king.

Little children, rejoice. You're a child of the king. Oh, lift your head up high.

Rejoice, you're a child of the king. Once again. Little children, rejoice.

Little children, rejoice. You're a child of the king. Little children, rejoice.

You're a child of the king. Lift your head up high. Rejoice, you're a child of the king.

Well, we give thanks to dear brother Bill Gator for that one other beautiful song he's provided us with. What a gift God's given to the church in a brother like that and his family. Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, we pray thee so reveal thyself to us this evening, that we shall see that thou art worthy of every word of praise we've uttered to thee this evening. We ask Lord that we shall see that as far exceeds our understanding and contemplation of thee, that of thy fullness has we all received and great upon great. We ask Lord for a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of thee.

Meet us in our emptiness and need in a way perhaps we've never been quite met before. This we ask Lord Jesus, for the glory of thy grace and holy name among thy beloved saints. Amen.

I want to read to you a passage of scripture which is almost too familiar. You've heard it read, often have you heard it preached upon, and yet I believe even in the most familiar scripture there's fresh light to great thought. And there's something about these Bible incidents which makes them so living, so contemporary.

You can see and feel human beings acting and reacting just as we do today. And the Jesus who met them, he's here with us today. We're going to read the famous, beautiful story of that woman whom Jesus met at the well of Samaria from John's Gospel, chapter 4. We shall begin at verse 5. Then cometh Jesus to a city of Samaria which is called Phica, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

We really ought to have read from verse 4, he must needs go through Samaria. Normally Jews avoided Samaria on their way to Jerusalem. They found some other way, but he had reason why he must needs go through Samaria.

It was because he was going to meet a woman there who knew beforehand, and she would become the key for revival in Samaria itself. And so he came to Samaria and, verse 6, now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore being wearied with his journey sat thus on the well.

And it was about the sixth hour. Then cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith unto me, Give me to drink.

For his disciples were gone away into the city to buy food. Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no deeming with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, Is thou nearest the gift of God? And

who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink? Thou wast of asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. From whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself and his children and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. And here I make a few alterations which I believe are more close to the Greek.

But the water that I shall give him shall become in him a spring of water, leaping up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband, for thou hast had thine. And he whom thou now hast in that is not thy husband.

In that doth thou feel it. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. In particular, I want to underline for you verse 10.

I don't think I've ever really got to the bottom of the depth of the meaning of this beautiful verse. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. There are two places in John's gospel where Jesus speaks of himself offering people what he calls living water.

The first is this place here in John 4, and the other is in John 7 where he says, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink, and unto the inner man who thus drinks shall flow rivers of living water. And in the latter place, the writer explains what is meant by living water. This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.

For the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. But he is glorified today, and the Spirit, the Holy Spirit has indeed been given to the thirst. And it's your privilege and mine to be drinking continually of a spring of living water.

Jesus has not only come to forgive us and assure us of our faith in glory, but he gives us as his special gift his Holy Spirit who is to be as a spring, an artesian spring leaping up in his heart. And they only who have the Holy Spirit in that way are Christian at all in the New Testament sense of the word. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of this.

And this is his special, unique and crowning gift to those that believe on him not only to forgive us of sins, but the impartation into their being of this artesian spring of new life, eternal life, heavenly life. I want you to look very much at the context of this first text. It began with Jesus sitting on the well in the burning midday sun and saying to this woman who comes, give me to drink.

She was surprised that he being a Jew should ask drink of him, who was a woman of Samaria. For the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, they despised that half-bred race whose religion was a strange mixture of Gentile heathenism and Hebrew faith. But here is Jesus and he makes his first approach by asking a favor of this woman.

May I say sometimes that's a splendid way to make an approach to someone whom you want to help. Ask them to do you a favor, for thereby in asking you're paying them a compliment. And Jesus paid this woman a compliment.

He showed that no matter what her race was, he regarded her as a person to be respected. And so he made his request, give me to drink. She was going to draw for herself, would he please draw for him too.

And I am quite sure she was not only surprised but touched at this request and was only too ready to give him to drink. And I can imagine her getting her water pot and hooking it onto the rope at the head of the well and letting it down into the well that she might give him to drink. Let me use a little sanctified imagination here, I hope you will think it's sanctified.

But there's something about this verse 10 that suggests it, that which I'm going to say to me. She's going to give Jesus to drink. Sure, only too happy, what a privilege to be asked to do it for a Jew.

And she begins to work hard on the wheel. The deep well takes the time, but that matters not when she's going to give such one as this to drink. And I want to imagine that when she got that water pot to the top, it was to find there wasn't any water in it.

I feel awfully sorry about that Laura. I didn't let it down deep enough, I'll try, you mark my words. And she tries, and she lets it down, yes it's got to the bottom this time.

And it's got the water in it, she can feel the strain. And she begins to work in that hot midday sun, caring not for the toil, she's going to give Jesus to drink. But I want to imagine that by the time she got it to the top the second time, there was no water in it.

For half way up, it had swung against the side of the well and upset. And she felt so embarrassed. Well Laura, I'm so sorry, but I really will give you to drink this time.

And she tries, I imagine, yet a third time. For all I know, in the realm of my fantasy, she might have gone on doing that for several times. Each time some misadventure happening, and each time she was unable to give Jesus to drink.

Then it was, Jesus said, if you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee, give me to drink, thou must have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. You would have quit trying to give him to drink, and you would have let him give you to drink. And it seems clear to me, that Jesus only asked her to give him to drink, in order to provoke her to ask him to give her to drink.

Our first encounter with the Lord Jesus, if you can remember it, when it first happened, our first encounter with him is so awful, hearing him say to us, give me to drink. I don't know how the message was framed, how it was put, but the way it came home to you, was you felt that Jesus was asking you to give him to drink. Give me your love, my son, give me your heart, give me your service, give me your day, give me your year, spend and be spent for me, give me to drink.

That's how it comes home, our end. And our first response is invariably an attempt to get him to drink. Give you to drink, Lord? How marvellous that you'd ask for me to give you to drink.

Yes, Lord, I'll give me to drink. But I want to suggest to you, that you'd be no more successful in giving him to drink, than the woman in our imagined story was. You've tried.

I certainly did. I try to give Jesus to drink. I work on the wheel, I crank away.

I'm going to give him my love, I'm going to give him wonderful quiet times. I'm going to give him my service. I'm going to give him my witness for others.

Oh, what promises we make, and what attempts we try to give him to drink. And I want to suggest, all to no avail. Again and again you try to give him something that will satisfy him.

And again and again, you know you've not made it. That wonderful time of prayer you were going to give him, seems to dry up on you. Those promises you made for more prolonged devotion, never came to it.

Or if you succeeded in setting aside the time, you didn't know how to fill the time up. You were through in five minutes, and after that, your well wasn't producing any water. We thought we were going to give him our love, demonstrated by our love for other people.

But other people only succeeded in upsetting him. And there was nothing for Jesus to drink. And so we could go on.

There was nobody who cranked harder on the well, than Saul of Tarsus, than Paul. He tells us how he cranked on that well so hard in Romans 7. And yet he tells of a dismal result of all his attempts to give God to drink. The good that I would, he says.

When it came to it, I didn't do. And the evil that I would not, that I did. I find a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me.

There's another law that brings me into bondage to the law of sin which is in my members. And if Paul didn't succeed in giving Jesus to drink, it wasn't for lack of trying. He tried to keep the law, and thus, as he thought, satisfy God.

But he never made it. And he ended really in despair, at the little results that came from his religious efforts. Oh wretched Christian that I am, who shall deliver me.

And this isn't only his experience, it's the common experience of the sect. They want to give him to drink. But when it comes to it, it's failure again and again, at least it is with this man.

Why should this be? And I'm going to suggest it's this reason. Because you're drawing from the well you are. Where do you expect to give him to drink from? Basically from myself of course, that's the problem.

Because the well called self is an empty well. It's dry. Dry as you will, it won't bring forth any water.

And that's what Paul discovered. And he had to confess that there was something wrong, not with his conscience, nothing wrong at all. What was wrong was the well from which he was trying to draw the water.

And he had to confess, I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing. And that which the Bible calls the flesh, someone has said, drop off the last H and spell it backwards and you've got S-E-L-F. He had to discover that that well called self was barren of holiness.

It was not subject to the law of God, neither indeed could be, no matter how much he cranked on the wheel. And all the time that you and I are trying to do better next time, Jesus is saying these immortal

words to us, if you knew the gift of God. You would have asked for him.

You would have given up trying to give him to drink. You would have asked for him and he would have given thee living water. And that from a spring, an artesian spring, which he would put within you even the Holy Spirit.

And I believe Jesus only asked us to give him to drink, that we might discover that we can't do it. And that then we would ask him to give us to drink. And the one from whom he's going to give us to drink is not a well which has to be laboured on.

But as I've said, an artesian spring that leaps up spontaneously from within. You don't get filled with the Holy Spirit from without. You get filled from the spring within.

Spring go up within my heart, rise to all eternity. A spring that needs never failing. I want to suggest to you that there are two sorts of Christian life.

The one, if you can call it the Christian life, is one long attempt to give Jesus to drink. Which you've never succeeded adequately. And the other is another sort of Christian life.

It's letting Jesus, all the time, be giving me to drink. And it isn't many me that gets drinking. That spring leaps up and overflows.

And from the inner man of the one who's learned to drink, of that artesian well within him, there will flow rivers of living waters to others to drink. It's an entirely different sort of Christian life. I'm not saying I'm quit altogether for all time with the first and now I'm only living in the second.

I can go back all too easily, anytime I choose, to clanking on the old well. In fact, I did it tonight. I got worried about the message.

And I got looking at my notes and got so worried and said, Could I take this? How should I handle it? And sitting on that seat down there, the Lord said, You're clanking on the well. You're trying to get some water out of your well. And then they were singing of Jesus.

Excellent in glory and grace. I said, That's the Jesus I want. Not the one for whom I've got vainly to try to give to drink, but the one who's willing in my poverty and failure to give me to drink.

He's prepared, dear one, to give us. Who failed to give him to drink, he's prepared to give us to drink. He's going to give the billet to give to the giving and we, the receiving.

Spurgeon said, Great saints were only great receivers. They were not great achievers. What they had of prayer, of holiness, of spiritual fervor, was not their own achievement.

It was all received as gifts. And it was received when they discovered it wasn't in the naturally. Had you been close enough to them, you would have understood that.

And those that I would regard as men walking with God, quite obviously, when I get close enough to them, and they're living it this way round, they're not great achievers. All the time they're acknowledging they can't make it. And all the time they're bringing their emptiness to Jesus.

And he, from within, through that spring, is giving them to drink. That's the holiness received. Even their service is something that he's doing for them and through them, rather than they doing it for him.

Even their prayer is of that order. Not their prayer, giving him to drink. But can you believe it? Him, giving them to drink.

Charles Wesley has a hymn that expresses this. Only the imagery is fire rather than water. Do you know that great hymn about the Holy Spirit? O thou who camest from above, the pure finestial fire to impart.

Kindle a flame of safety's fire on the mean altar of my heart. There let it for thy glory burn with inextinguishable blaze. And trembling to its source with her in humble prayer.

And for them, praise! Even that is the Spirit giving them to drink, leaping up within them, and he's doing even that. I suppose one of the authors that's been most read, Christian authors in America just now, is C.S. Lewis. The university don, dead some years now from England.

We loved his writings as they came out. But of course it took a little time for the American public to become aware of this beautiful writer of Christian truth. And now he really has attracted great attention.

I hear that Wheaton College have instituted a chair of C.S. Lewis for the study of this man's work. Perhaps we didn't know that he was a poet as well as a writer on Christian apologetics. And here's a beautiful poem of his I discovered somewhere.

Well, along these lines, they tell me, Lord, that when I seem to be in speech with you, since but one voice is heard, it's all a dream, one talker aping too. Sometimes it seems, yet not as they conceive it, rather I seek in myself the things I hope to say. But lo, my wells are dry, then see me empty.

And you forsake the listener's role, and through my dumb lips breathe, and into utter waste, the thought I never knew. He found over springing up, when he found that his wells were dry, he discovered there was an Arcadian spring, not a well, but a spring, and there welled up, my dumb lips breathe, and into utter waste, the thought I never knew. I know that sometimes.

I think I expressed it, mentioned it the other day. I find myself saying things I don't know. So much so that I said, but you mind, Lord, the moment I want to drop that, to chop that down, and mind those thoughts.

That's just beautiful, Lord. And then I take up the thread, as I was saying, Lord, until the next thing comes. And sometimes when Anne's praying, she's uttering things, which she didn't really, clearly understand like that before.

Why? It's the Spirit. That's one of the reasons why I do not have it, to speak or pray in tongues. I want to know what the Spirit's praying for me.

I get so flattered thereby. I don't want to touch on a subject that might divide us or be controversial, but you won't mind me saying that, will you? I find such great depth in being aware when this blessed Spirit is leaping up within my heart. And the grace of it has touched me, I say, this evening, that I, who've been planting on the wheel so hard, I, who fail so ignominiously and so often to give Him to drink, that He should be willing to come to my aid and meet in my hour of need and give me to drink.

I love that bit of C.S. Lewis. I keep in myself the things I hope to say, but lo, my well-died love, bed, bed, see me empty, see you forsake a listener's role. And through my dumb lips, dreams and interruptions, the

thoughts I never knew, but then He graced me.

This is Jesus. He's worthy to be praised, and He loves to come to you and me when we know we've utterly failed to give Him to drink. He said, I've got something better for you, I'm going to give you to drink.

All food is there, available, for those needs that you've completely failed to give. Now, I made a slight alteration in the reading of one verse. The water that I shall give Him shall become in Him a spring leaping up into everlasting life.

The water shall become a spring. That is in actual experience. Because although potentially, actually, He, the Spirit, is a spring, you don't always experience Him like that.

What we think of Him is as a draft, you call it that, or a draft, of the water of life. There's another chorus there, the well is deep, and I require a draft of the water of life, and none can meet my soul's desire for a draft of the water of life till one draws near. For the cry will heed, helper of men in their time of need, and I believe in finding thee that Christ is the water of life.

Now, what you might think happened when you were saved was your sin was forgiven and you received a draft of the water of life. My, it was good! How refreshed you were! And the most, perhaps, that you can hope for is on subsequent occasions having another draft. That's not what Jesus intends.

He intends that that which we thought was only a draft should actually become a spring. And how does that take place? Well, I'm going to suggest that most of you have already had some experience of that. There was an occasion when you had your backs to the wall.

You were beat. You were facing demands you couldn't meet. Perhaps you were asked to take part in a public way in some Christian service you'd never done before, such a thing.

And you were full of fear. You were absolutely empty. And you said, Mr. Hesley, it was marvellous how you undertook it.

I was at the end of my rope. I didn't know how to do it. He gave me words I hadn't got.

He gave me ability I hadn't got. He gave me experience. I hope that won't happen too often.

That's the trouble. We've had isolated experiences of grace meeting us in our extremity, but we hope it won't be always like that. That's the trouble.

We're not prepared to live like that, bringing nothing but emptiness, and doing so reconciled to the fact that I'm an empty sinner, empty of holiness and cunning. Not struggling to be made strong to face the demands of a difficult Monday. Coming as I am, omitting my world, I die.

And then it's as if Jesus delights to give us a new and yet another one experience of that which he has given us, the spring leaping up within us. The drama is to become a spring. Now, in spite of all this, however, it may be that some of us have to confess, well, there hasn't been much springing up in my life.

There hasn't been much springing up in my ministry or in the service he's given me to do or as I go around my house busy with domestic tasks. I can't say really and truly I'm singing and praising and doing it in the strength of this new life within. And I want to ask why is that? And I want to suggest there are two reasons.

Why, in spite of what grace has potentially given us, we're not in the good of it. I want to suggest that in spite of the fact we've begun in the Spirit, we're seeking to be made perfect in the flesh to use Paul's words in Galatians 3. We are still drawing from the old well. And you can do it any time.

You can get steamed up with what's facing you. And you go back to cranking on the well, hoping to get something for yourself, hoping for strength, hoping for something, and not realizing the weight of fullness is the concession of emptiness. And it could be some of us, if we're defeated and needy and barren.

It's not the lack of cranking, but man is the wrong well. And we need a new experience that there isn't anything there. And I believe we need to repent of drawing once again, or trying to, from this old well.

And getting so worried and apologetic that there's nothing in the well. Don't apologize. God's told you before you start, there's nothing there.

Agree with God. But, oh, I do it. I do it.

And people see me cranking on the well, sometimes my wife does. Another reason is that although the spring is there all night, daily and lots have fallen into that spring and filled it up, and that's the reason why it is not leaking out within our hearts.

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