

“Eye Of Water”

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Exodus 17:1-7 + John 4:5-15 = Springs of Living Water

On the highway to Ghost Ranch there is a sign. Past the high road overlooking Hernandez where Ansel Adams took the photo of the moonrise, yet before one arrives in Abiquiu, a sign points out a left turn which reads: “*Ojo Caliente.*” In Spanish, “hot spring.” I have been there many times, rustic, 100° spring fed pools



and a spa. Well worth the trip!

Springs are a source of wonder in the Bible. The Spanish word for ‘spring,’ “*ojo de agua,*” fills my mind with awe. “*Ojo*” means literally “eye,” and a ‘spring of water’ is thus an “eye of water” ~ a beautiful expression.

Yet even more awe invoking, the word in both Indonesian and Spanish for a “spring” translates as ‘eye.’ So a ‘spring of water’ in both languages means an “*eye of water.*” Other languages as well use this expression. A coincidence? I think not.

Scripture itself is filled with references to Springs. Springs are important. In ancient Israel, land titles reference the distance from a spring or well. Even today Jewish marriage certificates still start with “near wells of water.” In ancient times and in ours, springs in the desolate places meant life; the failure to locate one meant death.

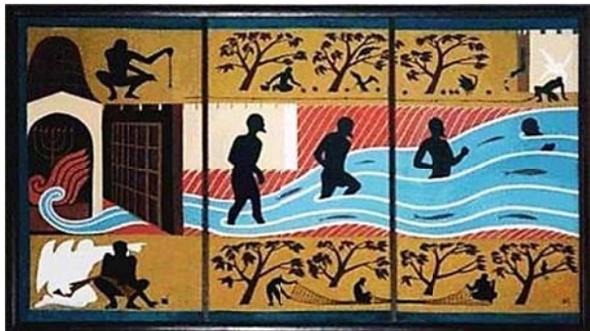


A spring is more than just a welcome feature; it is a unique feature. They are mysterious and inexplicable. No one knows why they are some places and not others.

Water and springs of water have mystical significance in Scripture. When the people of Israel quarreled over water in the wilderness, God instructed



Moses to strike a rock and a spring of water burst forth.¹



The Prophet Ezekiel saw a vision of a very wide river coming out of the temple which could heal and make alive everything it touches ~ even bringing to life the Dead Sea.²

Jesus heals a man ill for 38 years lying beside the spring-fed pool of Bethesda. Jesus said simply: **“take up your mat and walk.”**

Also in the Gospel of John, Jesus meets a Samaritan woman by a well and says to her:

“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but...[t]he water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”³

In Rev. 22 in the very center of the New Jerusalem come down from heaven, there is a spring, and from that spring flows **“the river of the water of life, bright as crystal.”** In Revelation 21, God says:

“To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.”⁴



All these scriptures come down to one thing: life giving water. Clearly the same water for Moses, for Ezekiel, for John, for Jesus: water,



the water of life, the water of heaven freely given to all who are thirsty ~ the water of abundant life, a spring flowing by grace full of God's overwhelming wholeness, justice and peace ~ bringing life to the desert and healing to the nations.

Water, nothing less than God's refreshing and sustaining love.

Aren't we also thirsty for this same water?

Centel is the highest, driest, last village on the side of Mt Merbabu in Central Java. Situated well above the point of irrigated rice culture, agriculture there is hard-scrabble at best. It is the most isolated and



desolate village on the mountain. By God's grace, Centel happens to be a Christian village.

Nevertheless Centel has something no other village on the mountain has. Near Centel there is a spring, an "eye of water" as it translates. There is also a church in Centel, a spring of a different kind ~ a spring of living water for the soul.

The spring's water source is a rarity for so high upon the mountain. It is prolific and never runs dry even in times of drought ~ more than enough to meet the villager's needs. The Christians there with help from Christians world-wide were able to build a distribution system so that water from the spring outside the village could be piped into the village square.



It was not easy. The building of a cistern, the digging and laying all had to be done by hand. The roads all ended much lower. There was no electricity. Pipe had to be carried in bundles on shoulders over footpaths ~ pallets of bricks and heavy sacks of cement as well. The whole village participated. After it was completed everyone could share in the now abundant, life-giving waters. There was more than enough for everyone, so they offered to share.

The next settlement down the mountain happened to be a Muslim village. The inhabitants there had to make many trips every day in order to carry heavy containers of water on their heads from several miles away. The water was dirty and it tasted bad. Waterborne disease outbreaks were common.



Centel with its abundance of cool, clear, pure water offered to share with that village lower down. Centel had enough materials leftover to lay a single pipe down to the next village ~ only a half-inch line, but it could supply enough for the whole village to no longer have to carry water from miles away.

You would have thought they'd have jumped at the offer. But they didn't. They at first rejected the offer. Why? The village head feared that water from the Christian spring would infect them with Christianity.

How preposterous we think. Yet think about it again, faith comes through the eyes, the seeing. Seeing is believing, we say. Water from the 'eye of water' in Centel ~ water in abundance shared generously ~ water reflecting the abundant life in Christ would spread faith. Seeing generosity in Christians could breed curiosity about Jesus. Those fears had some foundation in fact.



Despite all these fears, the Muslim village head eventually relented. The water line was laid. The water came, the village rejoiced, and indeed some were drawn to the faith. Over time more and more became involved and a church was established in the village. The physical spring had become a spring of living spiritual water.

This true story reminds us Jesus said:

"The water that I will give will become in [you] a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."⁵

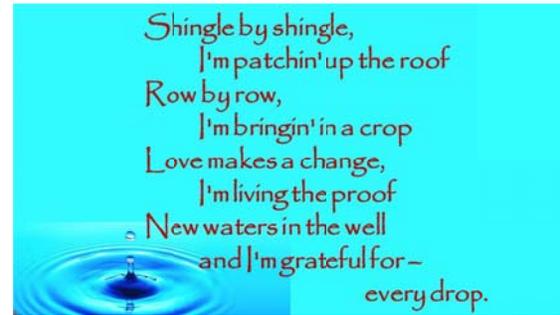


That is what living water does. It flows into one life bringing grace and peace and healing and wholeness, then flows from that life to another assuring the same. Never forget that you have passed through the waters. Never forget they bring abundant life.

Don't we long for, thirst for this water? Don't we want to share it once we get it? In the words of bluesman Eric Bibb:

Folks stumble and fall. Ain't nothin' new at all
We just keep comin' up with new ways of goin' down
Whether you're poor or rich – or at the bottom of a ditch
You can finally see the light and you can turn your life around

Shingle by shingle, I'm patchin' up the roof
Row by row, I'm bringin' in a crop
Love makes a change, I'm living the proof
New waters in the well and I'm grateful for –
every drop.



I've had my share of debts – some regrets
But I'm leaving all that behind and movin' on up
I thank my God today I can truly say
My soul's dark night has turned to dawn

Shingle by shingle, I'm patchin' up the roof
Row by row, I'm bringin' in a crop
Love makes a change, I'm living the proof
New waters in the well and I'm grateful for –
every drop.⁶

¹ Exodus 17:1-7

² Ezekiel 47:1-12

³ John 4:13-14

⁴ Revelation 21:6

⁵ John 4:14

⁶ Eric Bibb “*Shingle by Shingle*”