



THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

Daily Devotion at Zion + May 2, 2021 AD + **Easter Season**

This Week: The River of the Water of Life

625: that's the number of times the Bible mentions water. It doesn't include all the references to rivers, streams, rain, floods, wells, tears, or drinks, either.

As we might imagine, water was an important element in the mostly arid land of Israel, and therefore, it looms large as a symbol of life and refreshment. In the New Testament, the beloved disciple, St. John, mentions water more than any other writer and associates it closely with the Holy Spirit. He refers to it 22 times in his gospel, twice in his first epistle, and 17 times in Revelation. All total, it's 41 times, almost half of all the references in the New Testament (85)!

Why would water so dominate St. John's recollections? Few other gospel writers recall so many of the Lord's sayings on water!

Perhaps they simply never saw what St. John saw. God once opened the future to St. John, showing him the golden City that our Lord has prepared for us, and as we're told in Revelation 22, "the river of the water of life, bright as crystal" flows all through that city and its precious pavement. We have already stepped into that river through Holy Baptism, and we live in the hope of seeing its crystalline currents once more. It therefore forms one of the many inspirations for our Christian devotion.

About the Cover Art

"River of Life" by Joan C. Thomson is a mixed media image that draws us to one feature of the City of God: the living waters flowing through the city, a verdant woods on either side (as described in Revelation 21-22). Beautifully, Ms. Thomson used pieces of hymnody and Scripture in the artwork, reminding us that Christians even now dwell in the City of God as they heed and worship their Lord in spirit and truth. Look closely and you'll see the patches of hymn pages as well as Revelation 22:3: "no longer will there be any curse."

Preparing for Pentecost: the River and the Holy Spirit

Throughout the Scriptures, God associates His Holy Spirit with *water*. It starts at the very beginning (“And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters,” Genesis 1:2), and continues through the prophets (“For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants,” Isaiah 44:3). This tradition came to its fulfillment in Christ, who said, “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, “Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”” Now this He said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive” (John 7:38-40). That imagery helps us understand the Spirit: He is the river of life, who refreshes God’s people with faith, hope, and love. As much as creation thrives on water, so does the New Creation thrive on faith and its fruit. The Church therefore prays for the Holy Spirit much as farmers might pray for rain.

Daily Readings for the Week of May 9 (Easter 6)

S Ecclesiasticus 43:1-12, 27-32 1 Timothy 3:14-4:5 Matthew 13:24-34a	Th Ezekiel 1:1-14, 24-28b Hebrews 2:5-18 Matthew 28:16-20
M Deuteronomy 8:1-10 James 1:1-15 Luke 9:18-27	F Ezekiel 1:28-3:3 Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Luke 9:28-36
T Deuteronomy 8:11-20 James 1:16-27 Luke 11:1-13	Sa Ezekiel 3:4-17 Hebrews 5:7-14 Luke 9:37-50
W Baruch 3:24-37 James 5:13-18 Luke 12:22-31	

These readings correspond to pages 1139-1167 in Volume I of For All the Saints. To acquire For All the Saints or other devotionals, please contact the church office.

Devotion Inspired by the River of Life

*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.
(Revelation 22:1)*

To speak of the River of Life in the golden City is to speak also of the Holy Spirit (see page 3). One way to let this River inspire you is to meditate on the image above in connection with these passages from the psalms:

He split rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep. He made streams come out of the rock and caused waters to flow down like rivers. (Psalm 78:15-16). Just as the Lord caused rivers to flow for the Israelites in the desert, how shall He let the Spirit flow for you in a time of spiritual barrenness? Pray to the Lord for the Holy Spirit, and expect Him, even and especially when you feel yourself most “dry” in faith.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. (Psalm 46:4). Scripture points to where you might expect the Spirit: in the City of God, that is, among the fellowship of His people. Pray for the Church and its members, and for the Holy Spirit to flow through them.

They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights. (Psalm 36:8) How much do we expect from the Holy Supper? Since it is our Lord Himself, would we not expect much? Give thanks for the river of delights found within that holy chalice, and pray to receive it often.

Let the rivers clap their hands. (Psalm 98:8) One gift of the Spirit is the gift of joy in the Lord (Galatians 5:22). But can we even expect to thank God aright, or give Him praise, without the Spirit’s strength and power? Pray for the Spirit to help you pray and to help you praise, turning your heart into a river full of little waves that “clap their hands” in joy.