

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
COMPASS, PA

March 8, 2026 – THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT, YR. A

The Rev. Dr. Nina George-Hacker

Homily: “*The REAL Smart Water*”*

Exodus 17:1-7 (God provides His people with water in the desert)
Psalm 95:6-11 (Shout to the Lord, the Rock of our Salvation)
Romans 5:1-11 (We are saved by faith, resulting in peace with Christ)
St. John 4:5-26, 39-42 (Jesus is the Living Water of eternal life)

Human beings can live for up to two months without food, but we will last only *three to five days* without water. Next to the air we breathe, water is the most important element in the universe. Every life-giving and healing process that happens inside our body involves H₂O. Yet most experts insist that approximately 75 percent—or one third—of Americans are chronically under-hydrated and should drink more water.⁺ Some studies have shown that insufficient intake of water is the number one trigger of daytime fatigue. Common symptoms of dehydration can include an elevated heart and pulse rate, high blood pressure, nausea, fatigue, shortness of breath, headaches, dry mouth, and reduced mental focus. Severe dehydration can result in fainting, convulsions, organ bloating, cell damage, and heart failure. But when we experience extreme thirst, we merely have to drink several glasses of water to feel the body’s almost instant response to hydration.

A few years ago, during a sizzling hot summer, I discovered “Smart Water” by the Glaceau company. It’s water with electrolytes—like in Gatorade—but this has no sugar, coloring, or taste. It’s the most thirst-quenching water I’ve ever drunk!

Jesus knows how important water is to our physical survival—even *He* got thirsty, as we read in today’s Gospel lesson. Because our Lord is not prejudiced toward anyone, He willingly asks for a drink from a Samaritan woman. However, in doing so, Jesus violated two religious traditions at once: First, He spoke to a Samaritan, with whom Jews did not associate. Second, He—a male rabbi—was conversing with a female, another no-no. So the woman at the well is a bit shocked that this strange Jew is talking to her at all. But, what the heck, he seems like a nice guy. That is, until Jesus calls her out on the immoral life she has led and is still living. Not in a mean, judgmental way. He’s just telling the truth. And she knows it. The fact that this foreigner knows the intimate details of her life is not only startling but humbling, and opens her to what Jesus is trying to share.

The woman is focused on drawing water for her physical needs—but Christ is there to provide Living Water for her spiritual needs. At first, the woman thinks it’s a “my water is better than yours” contest between Samaritans and Jews. But gradually, she comes to realize this intriguing man is talking about something much deeper than H₂O. He’s speaking right into her soul, which she knows full well needs to be washed clean with water more powerful than what comes from Jacob’s Well.

Last Sunday, we heard Jesus tell Nicodemus that he needed to be reborn through water and the Spirit. So today’s Gospel is yet another text on the importance of water in our spiritual lives, but this time, St. John reveals that Jesus is the *Living Water*.

Think for a minute about dead water: A pond that is stagnating in the summer heat, or a creek that is barely flowing at all, its bed nearly dried up. Or rivers like the Potomac in my hometown of Washington DC, that was once so polluted it literally caught fire! Or the Dead Sea in Israel, whose water is almost completely still and has such a high salt content, it’s rumored you can practically walk on it.

Dead water stinks from the plant and animal life that is dying beneath its clogged and filthy surface. It's toxic to drink or bathe in, and unfit to irrigate crops. Contrast that to the beauty of a rapidly descending waterfall, or a sparkling stream that's rushing along, or a strong clean rainfall that cleanses everything in its path.

Jesus understood not only the importance of water for our health and survival, but also He knew how much better is clean, flowing, living water. It feeds our aquifers and nourishes our crops. And Jesus, as Himself the Living Water from Heaven, feeds our souls and nourishes our spirits. He invites the woman at the well—and all of us—to “drink deeply from My endless reserves of sin-cleansing, life-giving water from which you will never thirst again.”

A story is told about a man who got lost in the desert. After wandering around for a long time his throat became very dry, and then he noticed a small shack in the distance. He made his way over to it and there found a water pump along with a small jug of water and a note. The note read: “Pour all the water in the jug into the top of the pump to prime it. If you do this, you will get all the water you need.” Now, the man had a choice to make. If he trusted the note and poured the water in and it worked, he would have all the water he needed. If it didn't work, he would still be thirsty and he might die. Or, he could choose to drink the water in the jug and get immediate satisfaction, but it might not be enough, and he still might die.

After thinking for awhile, the man decided to risk it. He poured the entire jug into the pump and began to work the handle. At first, nothing happened and he got scared, but he kept going and water started coming out. Then, so much water came out he drank all he wanted, washed himself, and filled all the containers he could find. Because he was willing to give up momentary satisfaction, he received all the water he needed. The note also included this: “After you have finished, please refill the jug for the next traveler.” The man refilled the jug and added to the note: “Please prime the pump—believe me, it works”!¹

This illustration can help us as we continue on our Lenten journey. It is a lesson in faith and obedience. If we believe Christ will fill us with Living Water, and prime that pump with faith, we will receive. This story also reminds us that if we are willing to give up certain selfish, temporary, and empty pleasures, and pour ourselves into the source of all life—who is God—Christ will gush forth into us His endless flow of grace to slake our spiritual thirst and nourish our souls. Like the man in the desert, we, too, have a choice to make.

Speaking of choices, most of you probably like some sort of soda. Take Coca-Cola; it comes in several flavors: original, cherry, vanilla, orange cream, lime—sugared or diet, regular or caffeine free, and so on. But when shopping or dining out, how often do you pass up water—that God-given Kingdom drink, the life-sustaining benefits of which are incalculable—for soda? Coke? That teeth-dissolving liquid continually costs money, and leaves behind litter that's not biodegradable.

What if, instead, you turned on the faucet for a life-giving, free drink, while remembering that God's gift to you is eternal-life-giving Water, the price of which Jesus already paid in full.² That's the *real* “Smart Water”! And, as you continue to strive for Lenten discipline, pray about giving up soda altogether until Easter and drink more water—even as you seek to fill your heart and soul more and more with the Living Water of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

¹ Adapt. N. George-Hacker, “Drink Deeply of the Living Water,” 23 March 2014, [St. Christopher's Episcopal Church](#), Cobleskill NY. Used with permission.

² “Water, water everywhere, but are we drinking enough drops?” March 2007, [Curiosus, Barnes-Jewish Hospital](#) <<https://www.barnesjewish.org/Curiosus-Mag/Article/ArtMID/6756/ArticleID/969/Water-water-everywhere-but-are-we-drinking-enough-drops>> 2 March 2026.

¹ Adapt. Randy Leckliter, “Faithful Instructions,” [SermonCentral.com](#), December 2001 <<http://www.sermoncentral.com/illustrations/illustrations-about-living-water.asp>> 22 March 2014. Used with permission.

² Adapt. Andrew Moffatt, “The Will of God, Coke, and Honour,” [SermonCentral.com](#), September 2012 <<http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/the-will-of-god-coke-and-honour-captain-andrew-moffatt-sermon-on-gods-sovereign-will-169895.asp>> 22 March 2014. Used with permission.