

"The idea was to solve a global problem: water issues in areas of the world where there is very little groundwater but very high humidity," Retezár said. "My intent was to invent a machine or device that would be able to filter the humidity in the air and turn it into drinkable water." If Retezár can do this, he would change the lives of people across the globe who live in remote, dry areas where clean, safe water is not readily available.

Spiritual waters. Water is the most valuable resource on the planet. All living things - fish, animals, plants and humans - need water to survive. In a similar way, we need to stay connected to Christ, the source of spiritual, living water that nourishes our souls. Our ancestors in the faith understood the value of water for both our physical and spiritual lives. Images of water abound throughout Scripture.

- The Bible begins in Genesis with waters covering the face of the earth, and ends in Revelation with the vision of a river that flows from the throne of God.
- In the Exodus story, we read of Moses floating down a river as a baby, and later leading the children of Israel through the divided waters of the Red Sea and tapping a rock in the desert from which water flowed.
- After 40 years of wandering in the desert, Joshua led the people across the waters of Jordan and into the Promised Land.
- Jesus and his disciples, several of whom were fishermen, also spent a good bit of their time around water.
- Jesus walked on water, calmed a storm while they were on a boat on the Sea of Galilee and talked about living water with a Samaritan woman who had come to a well in the middle of the day to get water for her house.
- When Jesus healed a man born blind by putting mud on his eyes, he told the man to wash in a pool to complete the miracle.
- And at the very outset of his ministry, Jesus went out to the waters of the Jordan River to meet his relative John for baptism.

Immersion in water for religious purposes was not new to the Jewish people. One of the rituals to regain spiritual cleanliness was to be immersed in water. The *mikvah* was an important part of the religious life of Jews then and remains so today. The faithful enter the waters aware of their separation from the holiness of God due to the sin in their lives, and emerge renewed, refreshed and spiritually clean. The water serves as a reminder of how God is always ready to forgive when we repent of our sins. Faithful Jews still use the *mikvah* today to prepare for worship, a holy day or their wedding.

In this tradition, but in a new way and with a new message, John immersed people in the Jordan River for the forgiveness of their sins. The Greek word for "immerse" is *baptizo*, from which we get our word "baptism." He was calling the people to repentance, asking them to prepare for the kingdom of God that was coming in the person of Jesus.

It is no wonder, then, that he is so surprised when Jesus presents himself for baptism. After trying to convince Jesus that their roles should be reversed, John relents and immerses Jesus in the waters of the Jordan.

Matthew does not tell us what, if anything, John said as Jesus went under the water. Maybe he was silent, or maybe John's prayer was quiet and intimate as he absorbed the magnitude of what he was doing in that moment. In any case, when Jesus came up out of the water, the Spirit of God fell upon Jesus and God said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Our baptism. Today the church continues to use the waters of baptism as a sign of death to our old lives and resurrection into new lives in Christ. We celebrate the grace of God as we are born anew and receive forgiveness. In baptism, we remember that we are the children of God, loved by God and pleasing to God.

We live into our baptism by serving Christ through our service to others. In faith, we raise money to dig wells so that people in dry, remote areas can have clean, safe drinking water they need. In faith, we help supply our local food bank so that those who are hungry have enough to eat. In faith, we go on mission trips to build homes, do repairs and share the good news of Jesus Christ. We are called to exercise our faith, and when we do, the waters of our baptism flow from our pores to encourage and bless the least, the last and the lost.

The good news is that we don't need to carry a water bottle, a hydration backpack, or even a self-filling Fontus because the source of the water lives inside of us. As Jesus told the woman at the well, anyone who drinks his water will never be thirsty again. With him, we have within us the source of living water. We know the forgiveness of God that makes us clean, and we have the hydration we need to keep our spirits renewed and refreshed.

An unending supply. No matter how much we expend ourselves for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ and in the service of our neighbors, there will always be enough water to go around. We and those we serve will be renewed and refreshed.

Retezár's idea for a self-filling bottle that draws and collects water from the air around us, gives hope for those who are in need of clean, safe drinking water. If his design works, people will not need to be near a source to receive the water they need to survive.

Spiritually, however, we do not need his bottle because the source of the living water that leads to life eternal lives inside of each of us. We take it with us. We simply need to continually draw from it.

When we exercise our bodies, we expel water through sweat. Once the water leaves the body it needs to be replaced. So when we exercise, we bring water with us.

When we exercise our faith, the waters of our baptism flow from us to those we love and serve. We have been blessed to be a blessing, to share the love of Jesus with all whom we meet.

The good news is that the waters of our baptism never run out or lose their effectiveness. We are baptized only once because Jesus is living water, growing inside of us into a fountain. Once we have had a taste of that water, we will never thirst again.

Prayer: Gracious God, in Jesus Christ, baptized by John in the Jordan, you came to share our life and deliver us from sin and death. As we are baptized with water pour out your Holy Spirit upon us to make us your beloved children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sources:

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Wonder Water

Sunday, January 18, 2017

The Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

Matthew 3:13-17

When we exercise we sweat. It is our bodies' way of keeping us cool. The water we lose through that process needs to be replaced. So we fill a water bottle and attach it to our bicycle before going for a ride, fill a hydration backpack before going on a run, or take a water filtration system with us to clean lake or river water when we go on a hike with the Scouts.

Imagine what it would be like, however, if you never had to worry about carrying water, no matter where your ride, run or hike might take you. This might not be a big deal to you, but it could be a lifesaver in parts of the Third World.

Austrian designer Kristof Retezár is working on something that would allow us to do literally draw water out of thin air. There is water in the air all around us: we call it humidity. Retezár's bottle, the Fontus, is a remarkable feat of engineering. Using the speed of your cycling or a small fan in the non-cycling model, humid air flows into a small, solar-powered cooling unit. The cooling unit refrigerates a group of hydrophobic (water-repellant) surfaces that look like toothbrush bristles. When the warm humid air hits the cool toothbrush bristles, condensation forms, in the same way that a can of pop "sweats" when you take it out of the refrigerator on a humid day. The "sweat" is condensation, the humidity in the air being cooled into water droplets and gathering on the aluminum of the can.

Because the bristles in Fontus' cooling unit are hydrophobic, "they immediately repel the condensed water that they created, so you get a drop flow," Retezár explained. The condensation is collected in a water bottle, and "Voila!" You have clean water to drink without ever going to a tap or the store or finding a natural water source. Retezár claims that in "really good" conditions, the Fontus is able to produce about half a quart of water every hour. Good water production days for the Fontus have a temperature between 86 and 104 degrees and humidity between 80 and 90 percent. In other words, a good production day is a hot and humid, muggy day.