Today I want to speak about getting water from a rock. You can’t get water from a rock, well-funded science projects can’t get water from a rock--only the Bible holds the secret of how to get cold, pure water from a rock.

In the book of Numbers (chapter 20) we find the story of the LORD telling Moses to call forth water from a rock. This is during the people’s wanderings in the wilderness. We know how important water is to life, and there was none. The people quarreled with Moses and said, “Why did you bring us to this place...that we should die here? Moses and his brother Aaron went to the tent of meeting and fell on their faces to pray, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared, and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So, you shall bring water out of the rock for them...” And Moses took the staff from before the LORD, as he commanded him. Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?” And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock.

This story is fantastic. It is a true miracle, water from a rock. But it is also a story that inspired what we call typology, that is, that things in Christian belief are prefigured or symbolized by things in the Old Testament. We know this is absolutely legitimate to do. Why? Because the apostles did it, and in this case it is in the New Testament.

The Apostle Paul wrote the following in 1 Corinthians 10: For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did...Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

Now I’d like us to turn to Ezekiel’s vision he had while in exile. In the 39th chapter he writes, “In the twenty-fifth year of our exile...the hand of the LORD was upon
me, and he brought me to the city. In visions of God he brought me to the land of Israel, and set me down on a very high mountain, on which was a structure...behold, there was a man whose appearance was like bronze, with a linen cord and a measuring reed in his hand. A lengthy description follows for which we haven’t time but in the 45th chapter we find water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple...flowing down from...the altar. Ezekiel says it became deep enough to swim in. The man of bronze asked, “Son of man, have you seen this? On the bank of the river very many trees on the one side and on the other. This water flows toward the east to the Arabah, and enters the sea; when the water flows into the sea, the water will become fresh. And wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live...its fish will be of very many kinds...And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither...Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.”

And so, we see that the river of God has a context, freedom from slavery, a season in the Wilderness, entry to the Promised Land, and being sent into exile for a season before eventual return, that is, Law and Gospel. The fountain of life (Prayer of the Day), the River of Delight (Psalm 36) is not just a blessing, it is a blessing for a purpose, life and salvation, because we are sinners deserving of God’s wrath, but Jesus was sent to save us and bring us to eternal life. We have been warned and we are also invited to learn more and even partake of the Water of Life. Let’s turn to the Gospel of John, the woman at the well, to whom Jesus says, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.” Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.” The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet... Jesus said to her, “Woman...the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Whoever drinks of the water that he will give, we have the word of Jesus here, will never be thirsty again. An amazing promise of God. In chapter seven we have the fourth of our five texts, not as well-known perhaps as the Samaritan woman, but a text that has been a favorite of mine, John 7:37-39: On the last day of the feast, the
great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 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, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

So, this is the water that Jesus gives, or as we say in the Nicene Creed: We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Now, near the very end of the Bible, turning to Rev. 21, verse 22, “And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book 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 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.”

Beloved of God, the Spirit-led life, the new-birth right of every baptized Christian. The Christian life is made possible with the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." The spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 includes wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, speaking in tongues, and interpretation of tongues. Similar lists appear in Ephesians 4:7-13 and Romans 12:3-8. They are given by God to empower the church to be faithful. 2 Peter 1:3 says, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness." Every Christian is empowered to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Some are prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, some preachers,
some teachers, but everyone can give testimony when it’s time to share what God has done in your life and why you love Him.

And all of this by way of answering the somewhat vague words of Christ in Matthew 10:41-42: The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.” Christ wants his followers to be his church, he sends his Spirit to us all, asking us to give testimony to his Father’s love and mercy. You see, we have the living water, in fact it can well up in our hearts.

Now in closing, I’d like us to return to the prophet Ezekiel, for just a few words from chapter 36, where the LORD says, “I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean...And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.” (Ezekiel 36:24-28). From hearts of stone can come living water.

When Jesus says, “And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward” he is speaking to you. Thanks be to God who can call forth cold, pure water from the hardest of stones, a heart of stone, mine, yours.

What does it matter if the one listening thinks it strange? It is. It is fantastic. God calls forth water, not some little trickle, but as Jesus says, water gushes forth from the believer’s heart. Not for the sake of a miracle, to save us, surely, but not ours alone, but to call us into the mission field of Manhattan and beyond. Amen.