

July 31, 2016

Living Water

John 4:1-42



Introduction

What makes you feel alive?

shower in the morning

swimming in a cold lake

exercise

completing a difficult task

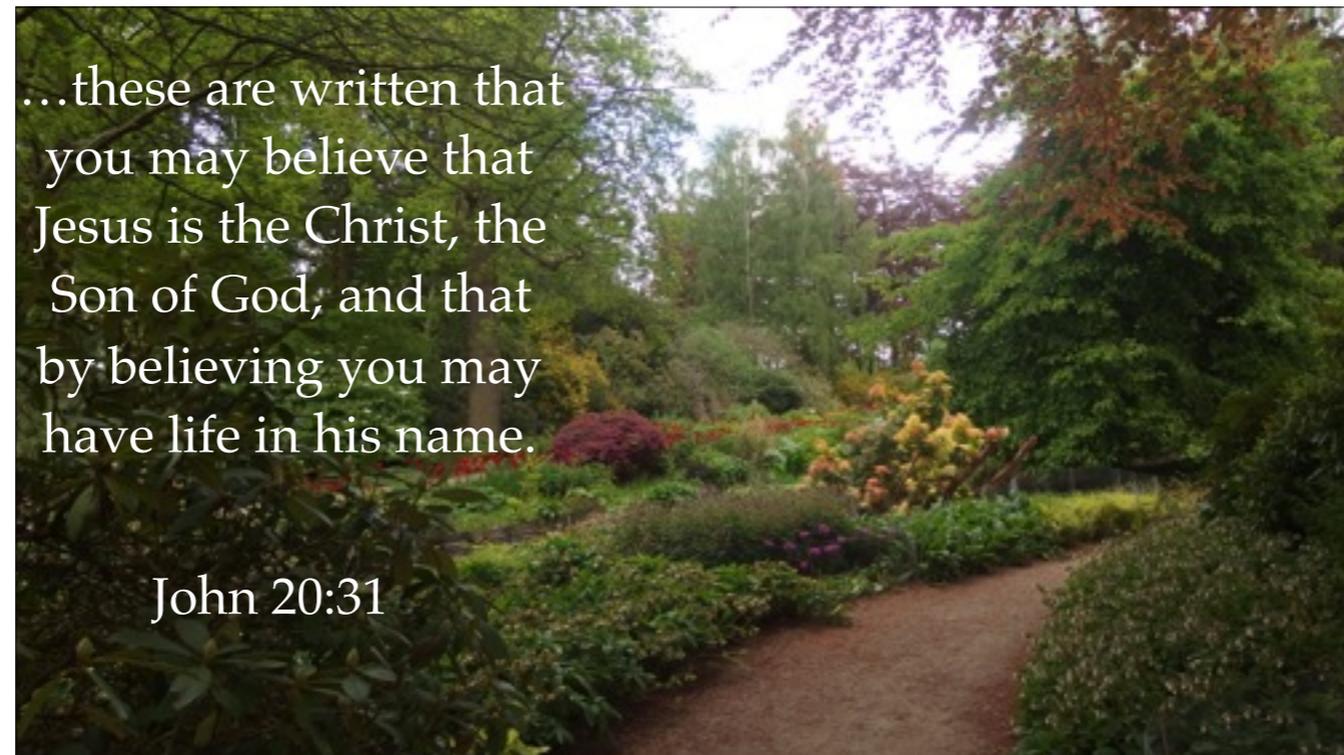
experiencing nature

vacation

being with your best friend

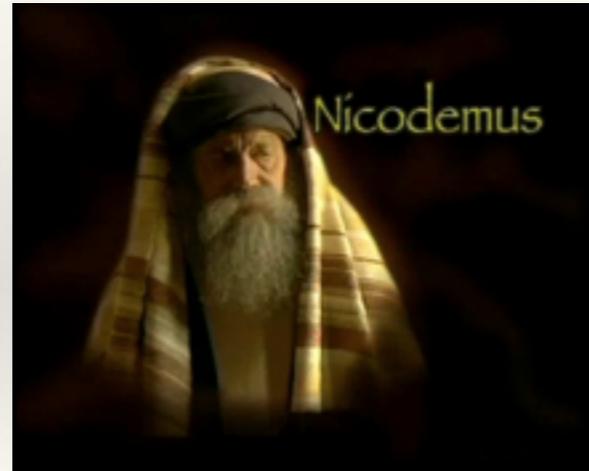


cycling - it doesn't get any better than this - combines many of the above ideas



Life is one of the key themes of John's gospel
John wrote this gospel that we might have life
today's passage is meant to help us understand and obtain this life

The Offer of Living Water



The Encounter At the Well

The Offer of Living Water

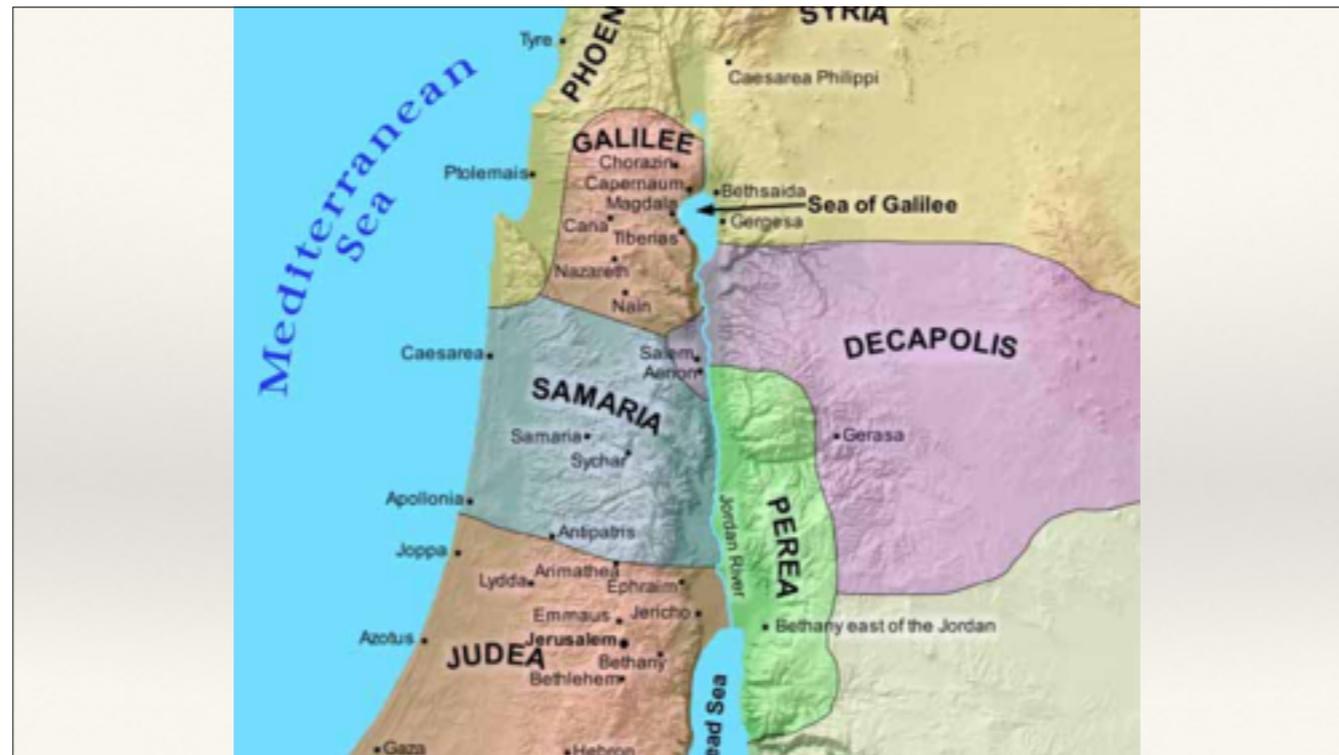
tell the story with some added background details

Midday Meeting

John has just recorded a story of a night meeting that Jesus had with one of the most influential leaders of the country. Nicodemus was a man who was well-educated, probably well-off, a member of the supreme court and a member of the very significant Jewish religious order the pharisees. He now recounts the story of a middle of the day meeting with one of the least significant people that lived in the region. We are not even given the name of our main character in this story yet John has used her encounter with Jesus to reveal very important details of Jesus teaching and His offer to the world.



The main character is a woman. Women had a very low status in society at that time. They did not receive any formal education. It is unlikely that many were literate. They had no role outside of the home. They were not to speak with strangers. They were not allowed to testify in court. Not only is our character a woman but she is a Samaritan woman. Samaritans were despised by Jews and Samaritans had similar feeling toward the Jews. In today's world we might think of the prejudices that exist between blacks and whites, Jews and Palestinians, whites and aboriginal. The woman of today's story had had a difficult life. She had had five husbands and was not currently married.



Jesus was on the road again. The Pharisees were making life difficult and he decided to head back north. He took an unusual route. Most Jews chose to detour around Samaria but Jesus goes through it. Samaritans were of mixed race. Their ancestors were people that had been brought to the land after the Jews of the northern kingdom were exiled during the Assyrian conquest. These people had adopted some of the Jewish beliefs but not all. They only accepted the first five books of the OT as their scripture. They wanted to have their own centre of worship instead of the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus chose to stop at the centre of their religious world when he came to Sychar.



It was a village at foot of Mt. Gerizim on which the Samaritans had constructed their temple 400 years earlier. The Jews had destroyed it around 160 years before our story. Jewish and Samaritan hatred went long and deep.

It was this place that boasted an ancient well. The people believed that Jacob himself had dug the well. Indeed Sychar was built near the ruins of Shechem which is mentioned in the OT as a place where Jacob lived for sometime. It is now the Palestinian city of Nablus.



The area also has a number of springs and there was even a spring in the village of Sychar. Why dig a deep well there? Maybe the quality of the water was significantly different.

a picture of the springs near Mt Gilboa - a little north of Gerizim



A well is still there today. It is enclosed in a Greek Orthodox church. It is a deep well at 135 feet. It is dug through the soil and into limestone rock at the bottom. The water is about 15 feet deep which means that there is 120 feet from the top of the well to the water. The area also has a number of springs and there was even a spring in the village of Sychar. Why dig a deep well there? Maybe the quality of the water was significantly different.



Jesus was tired and at noon he stopped at the well and the disciples went on into the village to buy food. It was then that a tremendously important conversation started. A samaritan woman came to get water from the well. Why come at noon and why to the well? Was she looking for time alone or something special from this deep well? Maybe she was on a spiritual pilgrimage to get water from the well of Jacob. What was she searching for? Much speculation has been made about the character and motivation of this woman but it may be best not to over speculate. Many think that she was an immoral women but other disagree. For those interested and who like to examine ideas from a different perspective, I recommend an article that was in CT. "Was the Samaritan Woman Really an Adulteress" - the website - <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/october/was-samaritan-woman-really-adulteress.html?share=r5T748sMCPMooF%2fa5DRgaKS%2bJqoB9Cm7>



How did John learn of the details of this conversation. Probably by hearing the woman tell it herself, in which case this is her contribution to this gospel.

Jesus took notice of her and immediately broke a number of social taboos. He spoke to a woman and a Samaritan and asked her for a drink. She was astounded that he would have the audacity to make the request and asked to explain himself



He then made a very strange statement. If you knew who I was and you knew God you would ask me to meet your desire and I would give you living water. This is profound. Much deeper than the well. She must have thought that he had been out in the heat much too long. He did not appear to have the resources to offer her a drink. What could he have meant by living water? She asked almost by chance what turns out to be a very interesting question and by it began to recognize the significance of his offer. She asked if he was better than Jacob. (Later we hear the Jews asking if he was greater than Abraham). Jesus then went on to explain the metaphor of the living water. The well water is only a temporary solution to physical thirst of life but His living water is a permanent solution for thirst and will actually result in an abundance of and overflow of living water. He was using a metaphor to explain something beyond the physical state but like Nicodemus, the woman did not see the metaphor and asked for the drink that would make it unnecessary to return to the well. I wish Jesus had clarified the misunderstanding but he told her to go and get her husband.



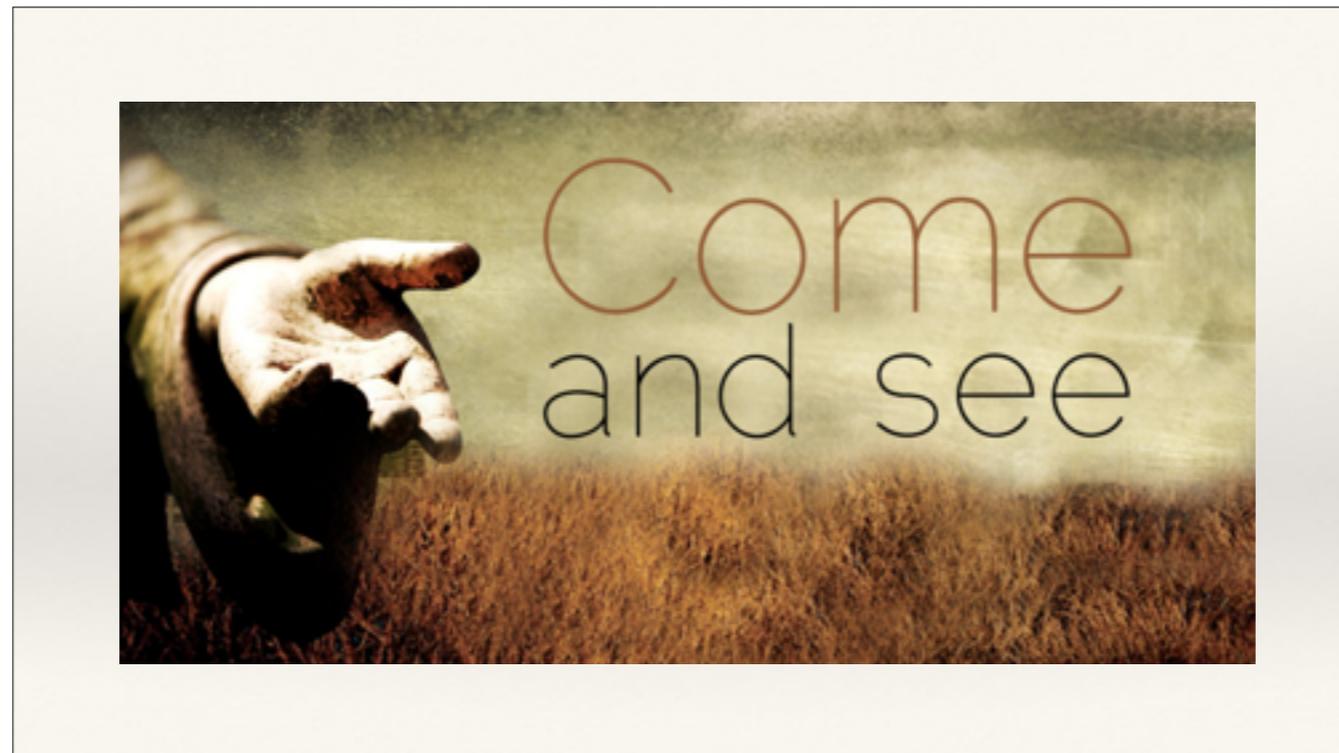
She had to tell him that she did not have a husband. Jesus revealed that he knew details of her life that were impossible for him to have known. She had had five husbands and was now with a man that was not her husband. How could he have known this? He had impressed Nathaniel with his degree of personal knowledge and now this woman had a similar reaction. She immediately recognizes his prophet status. Some think she tried to change the subject but I wonder if she was really quite a deep thinker and immediately saw the opportunity to ask an important question of one who obviously had a connection with God. After all how many times would a woman get a private audience with a prophet of God. Her question dealt with the proper place for worship. I think that the question was sincere and well thought out. Jesus did not brush it off like a distraction. Instead, he gave what was a very profound explanation of worship that we are still seeking to apply today. He said that race and place are not important rather it is the spirit which must worship because God is a spiritual being. It is how we live that will be important for our worship not where we are or who we were born. The depth of this answer demonstrated that Jesus had great respect for this woman and her ability to think and understand his answer.



This woman was also a woman of faith. She knew that a great teacher would come and instruct them regarding these things. She told Jesus that God was going to send the Messiah to explain all of these things. What an opening. Jesus then declared to her that he was that Messiah. This is one of the clearest recorded declarations made by Jesus as to who he was and it was made to a Samaritan woman.

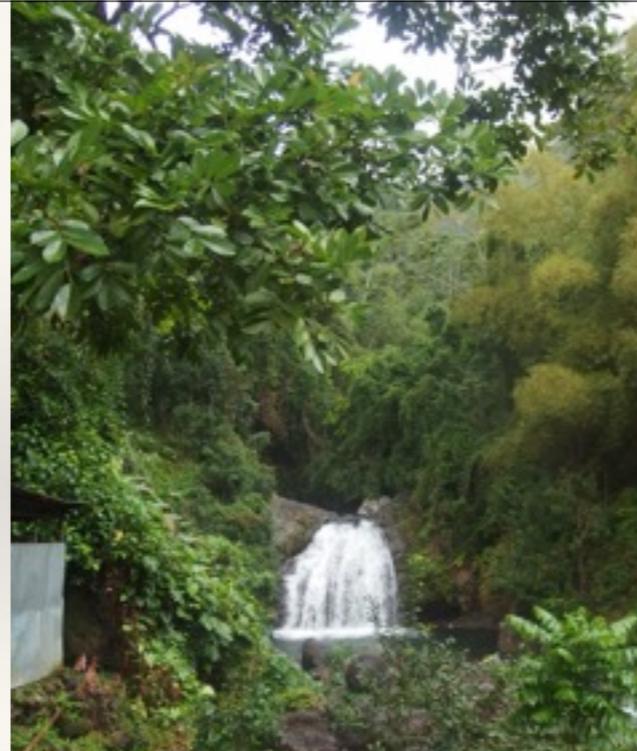


Right on cue the disciples arrive back with lunch. Their jaws dropped with shock when they saw what Jesus was doing. They didn't say anything but their judgement was written all over their faces. The woman got the message and left without even stopping to get her water jar.



But she took with her the words of Jesus and went excitedly to the villagers and told them to come and meet someone who knew everything about me and said that he was the Messiah. Could it really be Him? It seems that this woman enjoyed a degree of credibility in the village because they listened to her and believed her report. They came and saw and heard from him themselves. They asked him to stay and he did for two more days. Incredible! A two day stay in a Samaritan village. The disciples must have been very uncomfortable learning the lesson that Jesus was here for all people and that the harvest fields extended beyond the Jewish borders. Indeed he was they learned the saviour of the world.

The Living Water



The Living Water

What did Jesus offer this woman? How did it change her and the villagers who believed?

Water and life are closely related

desert - no life

watered field - green and lush

water is a common OT picture for God's sustaining provision

those who drink of Him live

Psalm 1 and Jer. 17:7-8

7 "But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.

8 He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

those who forsake His water wither and die

Jer. 17:13

13 O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you will be put to shame. Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the LORD, the spring of living water.



Jesus was offering the woman life -

living water is a metaphor for life - eternal life - life forever - real life - spiritual life - satisfying life - life with purpose - life with meaning - God's life in us
she didn't immediately understand the metaphor but neither did Nicodemus (or the people regarding eating his body or the jews seeing their blindness)



John's purpose in writing - John 20:31

That we might believe - 7 signs

that we might have life - 7 I am's

All of the "I am" statements in John's gospel are metaphors that have something to say about life - God's life in us

all of them mention life in the same verse or with in a few verses except for the vine which is a picture of life itself

bread, light, gate, shepherd, resurrection, way truth, vine

Water is another metaphor for life (also see ch 7)

John has collected his stories that we can see the life that is offered from a number of different perspectives

like a diamond with different facets



Why do we need life?

apart from God there is thirst, hunger, darkness

lack of satisfaction

no purpose

no meaning

spoken of as condemnation, death, - John 5:24

Paul writes to the Eph. and Romans about being dead

it is a spiritual deadness

an emptiness and lostness - darkness and futility



Are there any other options for apart from the offer of Jesus
many try various ways to fill the void and numb the feelings
achievements - goals of career or personal challenge
relationships - friends, life partner
travel, vacation, pleasure
exercise

substance abuse - food, drugs and alcohol
danger and thrills

BASE jumping - here are some testimonies that I found on line

“I live in a constant dilemma. I hate the feeling of being scared on the edge and feeling like I'm going to die - but I love the feeling of how alive I am after my canopy opens; and that I am addicted to it. That's the bit I remember after the jump and why I keep going back for more!”

Glenn Wainright

“I like being afraid, I like the fear, I enjoy it,” he said. “In BASE jumping, every small thing dictates life or death. It makes me feel vibrant.

Dr Omer Mei-Dan, an Israeli BASE jumper, stuntman and orthopaedic surgeon



“It's a crazy rush. The moment you jump there is a surge of excitement, but seconds after, as the canopy snaps open above your head, the feeling of survival fires one of the hardest adrenaline kicks I've ever had. And it makes you not just feel alive but that being alive is unquestionably worth it. I've yet to contain myself from yelling 'Woo-hoo' at that exact moment. And honestly, I'll be disappointed the day it doesn't happen.”

Josh Miramant

all of these things and activities provide only temporary relief from the the thirst for significance and purpose - for meaning

like the woman who sought the water from the well

Jesus offers an endless and ever increasing volume of satisfaction - it will overflow and pour out of us

it is not an endless high or freedom from problems but is eternally satisfying



“If you knew the generosity of God and who I am, you would be asking *me* for a drink, and I would give you fresh, living water.”

How do we get this life

Jesus says that we just need to know who he is and the generosity of God and then ask him for it
stay tuned for the rest of the gospel

John 5:24 - he who hears and believes - eternal life - crossed over from death to life - now



What is this life like?

What is this life like?

it starts with the gift and continues for ever

it is here and now - not just for after life here ends

It is dynamic

our choices affect the flow

we need to continue to drinking from the fountain

eating the bread

walking in the light

keeping to one gate

following the shepherd

continuing to trust the saviour

saying on the path

abiding in the vine

We will become less aware of the life if we are not close to Jesus



“Flow”

energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity

Back to BASE jumping for a few ideas

quoted Josh Miramant earlier - reason for base jumping

another reason for base jumping is that it achieves a “flow” state or “being in the zone”

In psychology “Flow” is defined as

the mental state of operation in which a person performing an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity.

I was thinking that this would result if we were aware of Jesus’ presence with us

we would be energized and focused

we would have joy

The woman became energized, focused and joyful

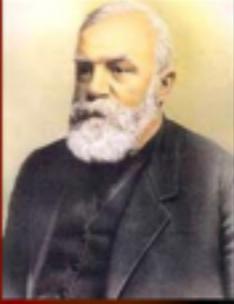
she couldn’t wait to tell the village about Jesus

her new life was already changing her

although somewhat achievable by our efforts - true flow would result from drinking the living water of Jesus’ life in all of life’s tasks and activities

I have a way to go yet - I will need to drink and eat more and spend time in the light

When evangelist D. L. Moody described his conversion experience, he said: "I was in a new world. The next morning the sun shone brighter and the birds sang sweeter ... the old elms waved their branches for joy, and all nature was at peace." Life in Christ is abundant life.



Reflective - A Changed Perspective

another reason for jumping - the achievement of a post jump reflective state.

The post-BASE reflective state forces away trivialities and allows me to reflect and ponder without ego and self-importance being wrapped up in every decision. It reminds me, contradictorily, how finite, remarkable and unimportant life is. This is the perfect mindset for coming to new conclusions, which is ultimately the perfect foundation for personal growth.

The life that God offers would offer even better conditions for this reflectivity

God's perspective on life would truly show how finite physical life is and how much greater is the life that he offers

DL Moody wrote that the day after his conversion the sun shone brighter, the birds were singing to me, I was ready to take all men to my heart



How will God's life in us make a difference

We can have unquenchable joy, peace, love in the face of hardship

we can be fruitful

We can have the energy and vitality needed to serve God

We can be an oasis in a dry world and be help and testimony to others

I Then Shall Live (Finlandia)

I then shall live as one who's been forgiven
I'll walk with joy to know my debts are paid
I know my name is clear before my Father
I am His child and I am not afraid
So greatly pardoned I'll forgive my brother
The law of love I gladly will obey

I then shall live as one who's learned compassion
I've been so loved that I'll risk loving too
I'll know how fear builds walls instead of bridges
I'll dare to see another's point of view
And when relationships demand commitment
Then I'll be there to care and follow through

Your Kingdom come around and through and in me
Your pow'r and glory let them shine through me
Your hallowed name oh may I bear with honour
And may Your living Kingdom come in me
The living water may I share with honour
And may You quench the thirsting souls through me
And may You quench the thirsting souls through me

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