

Chapter 05

The Well We Keep Returning To

There is a difference between drawing water... and becoming a well.

At first, we don't notice the distinction.

We spend much of our lives moving from one source to another.

One conversation encourages us, another disappoints us.

A success lifts our spirits; a failure drains them.

Approval becomes water; *achievement* becomes water.

Recognition becomes water, and without realizing it, we spend our days carrying empty buckets.

...Always searching for the next place to fill them.

Then, every so often, we meet someone different.

They are not untouched by sorrow; they know disappointment.

They have buried dreams; they have carried grief.

Yet something within them remains strangely undisturbed...

Not untouched... Anchored.

They do not seem to live from what happens around them.

They live from somewhere deeper.

I've met people like this in hospice.

You might expect them to be the caregivers.

Sometimes they are.

More often, they are the ones who are dying.

There have been moments when I entered a room expecting to bring comfort...
only to leave having received it.

How does that happen?

How can someone whose body is failing somehow strengthen the people standing
beside the bed?

Perhaps because life is measured by a different kind of strength than we imagined.

I remember sitting beside a man whose words had become few.

The room was quiet; the machines spoke more often than he did.

After a long silence, he looked toward his family, then he smiled.

Not the smile of someone pretending everything was fine.

The smile of someone who had stopped negotiating with reality.

Peace had become larger than fear.

No sermon was preached that afternoon, yet everyone in the room learned
something.

It has taken me years to realize that peace cannot be borrowed for very long.

Eventually, every borrowed source runs dry:

Applause fades, certainty wavers, health changes, people leave...

Even our own understanding grows and changes with time.

If everything we depend upon can disappear...

...where does lasting peace come from?

Perhaps that question has always mattered more than its answer.

Because the question itself begins turning us toward the well.

Jesus once spoke to a woman beside an ordinary well.

At first, the conversation sounded like it was about water, it wasn't; it was about thirst, not the thirst of the body...

The quieter thirst we spend our lives trying to satisfy.

The longing to belong, to rest, to stop proving ourselves, to finally come home.

I wonder if we have misunderstood thirst.

Perhaps thirst isn't evidence that something is wrong with us.

Perhaps it is evidence that we were created for communion.

Every thirst points toward a source.

The tragedy is not that we thirst.

The tragedy is how often we drink from places that cannot sustain us.

The people who have most deeply shaped my life all seem to share one quiet characteristic.

They stopped living reactively.

They no longer rose and fell with every compliment or criticism.

Their joy wasn't fragile; their kindness wasn't conditional.

Their hope wasn't dependent upon circumstances cooperating.

It was as though they had discovered an underground river.

Something invisible; something constant.

Perhaps that is what Acts 4 has been whispering all along.

The courage of Peter and John wasn't manufactured in the moment.

Courage rarely is, it flowed from somewhere.

When the religious leaders said, *"They have been with Jesus,"*

perhaps they weren't identifying where Peter and John had gone.

Perhaps they had recognized the source from which they now lived.

I have begun wondering if the deepest question isn't, *"Who are you?"*

Nor even, *"Who have you been with?"*

Perhaps the deepest question is, **"From what well do you draw your life?"**

Because eventually... whatever nourishes us... becomes visible.

Sit With This...

When life becomes difficult... where do you instinctively go?

Not where you think you should go, but where do you actually go?

We all have a well; some leave us thirsty.

Others quietly teach us that Living Water is less something we possess than
Someone who patiently invites us to return.