

The Waterfall

It was not so much a waterfall, as a mighty cataract. Thundering down from higher than any tall building or church steeple.

The locals called it, in their native language, the 'Cascading-River-Of-Superabundant-Strength.' None of them knew where it came from, or where it was flowing to. They only knew that its flow was mighty and measureless, and that it never ceased.

That was why, in years past, a village had grown up near the base of the great waterfall, where the growth was lush and green, and there was a never-ending supply of water.

Over the years, however, the village had moved away to higher and drier ground. It was now run by the Committee Responsible for Organising Sufficient Supplies. In and around the village, the Committee had placed open water tanks. When the wind was in the right direction, the open water-tanks could catch some of the spray from the mighty waterfall. Used sparingly, there was usually enough water in the tanks for the villagers to eke out an existence.

Although they were still within sight and sound of the great waterfall, few of the villagers now looked in its direction. They all knew it was there, but they had come to fear its rushing surge and its thunderous roar. They thought it best to keep a safe distance away from it, and as long as there was some water still in the tanks, they felt they could make do.

A significant role in the community was played by the Tap-Turner-Onners, appointed by the Committee. You would have thought that turning on a tap was a quite straight-forward matter, but over the years the Tap-Turner-Onners had made this into a highly-developed skill. Whenever the villagers came to any of the tanks, one of the Tap-Turner-Onners always had to be there. It came to be expected that



Artist: Christopher Reynolds

none of the villagers could obtain any water except from the tanks, with the Tap-Turner-Onners being present.

The Committee Responsible for Organising Sufficient Supplies occupied their time for the most part ensuring that there were a good number of open tanks in and around the village. They also decorated the tanks by painting them different colours. Sometimes arguments broke out on the Committee over what colour a particular tank should be painted.

Prevailing winds one year meant that for a time little spray came in the direction of the village, and the supply in the tanks diminished. This threw the Committee into a mild panic, and they feverishly set about the placement of more open tanks. This didn't seem to be the answer, however, as there still never seemed to be quite enough. Dissension broke out amongst the villagers, as they fought over the diminishing resources, and argued with one another as to what should be done about it. Tap-Turner-Onners feared for their employment prospects, and sought retraining in other fields.

What really put the wind up the Committee, however, was a rumour that some of the villagers were venturing back closer to the great waterfall, and coming back with bucketfulls of water! There were reports that some children had been diving and splashing and swimming not far from the base of the great waterfall. Some villagers had even set up camp down on the banks of the Cascading-River-Of-Superabundant-Strength, and were now rarely seen in the village.

Eventually the whole village became deserted, and the Committee was left with a number of faded rusty water-tanks, wondering how they were going to fix them up.

Martin Bleby, 1990

Related Scriptures:

Jeremiah 17:7–8; 2:12–13; 17:5–6

Matthew 23:13

1 Corinthians 3:3

John 7:37–39

Isaiah 55:1–2; Revelation 22:17; Luke 6:38

Questions to ponder and discuss

Are there aspects of this story that remind me of anything?

What, or who, do I think the waterfall represents in the story?

Who are the villagers?

Why did the villagers move away from the waterfall?

What happened as a result of moving away?

The 'Committee Responsible for Organising Sufficient Supplies' has the same initials as the 'Cascading-River-Of-Superabundant-Strength' (CROSS), so that one might be mistaken for the other. How are they different?

Who are the Tap-Turner-Onners? What is their job—to turn the taps on, or off?

What do I think the tanks represent in the story?

Why might there be arguments about what colour a tank should be?

What brought about a change in the situation? What were the different responses?

Where do I think I might be in the story?

Is there somewhere in the story where I would rather be? How might I get there?

Consider the Related Scriptures opposite. What light do they throw on the story?

Look at the accompanying image over the page. What do I notice about it? What different perspectives does it give to my reflections on the story?

How might I think and act differently in the light of this story?