

**Brackenhurst 29 November 2009 pm**  
**Do not drink the tap water! / Fishes die in tap water**

- Forever

### **Welcome & Notices**

- Desert Song
- From God Above
- All Who are Thirsty / My Heart
- The Stand OR Fire Fall Down
- Amazing Grace

### **Offering**

### **Message**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- One's final sermon in a congregation is always a strange moment because there are all sorts of expectations attached.
  - It is a very emotional moment for me
    - \* And, I guess for members for the congregation (for different reasons!)
- But one wants to offer up something profound that the congregation can remember one by
  - Then of course there are those who suggested that I go out with a bang and something really controversial
    - \* Like, the Christmas story is all just a myth
  - And then there's the reality of a final sermon coming in the midst of a whole lot of other stuff that's happening — packing up a home, saying good-bye to friends and preparing for a move, farewells and Christmas parties
- But as I've been preparing to move I've been reflecting on some of the things that we've done over the last few years
  - You may remember this!

### **PLAY RULES VIDEO**

- If you remember well the reason for not drinking was that the water was possibly contaminated
  - Fear of one who drank water

- As I was thinking about Ruan and the tap water, I remembered how often Jesus spoke about being the living water, and I thought this will be a good thing to end off with
  - So won't you turn with me to scripture...

**Scripture:**

Jn 7:25-44 - Jesus the living water

- One of the marvels of our modern world is that of having good, mostly clean water on tap.
  - Most of us don't realise the luxury of tap water
- Imagine if the first thing you had to do was to get up in the morning and go down to the river, or the well to collect water for the day's use
  - There are many people — even in South Africa — who still live like that
    - \* Who don't have easy access to water
- So having water on tap is a great luxury, even a right, and it gives life to many, many people
  - In fact it keeps us alive
- But there are dangers to having water on tap
  - We waste water — it's so easy to turn the tap on, that we don't think to conserve as we would if we had to fetch it every morning
  - We pollute our water
    - \* You know it's different if you live close to a river
    - \* You can see when you're doing something that is damaging your source of life
  - We take water for granted, we don't worry about droughts and so on
- So having water on tap distances us from the source of life
  - I want to suggest this evening that having our religion on tap does the same
    - \* It's become very easy in the western world today to drink deeply from our religion
  - There are book stores, websites, churches on every corner catering to every need.
    - \* Christian books, Christian music, Christian friends, Christian concerts, Christian tv, Christian bookmarks, pens, bumper stickers
- If it's marketable there is a Christian version of it!
  - And we gulp down great mouthfuls of Christian culture in an orgy of Christian consumerism proudly proclaiming that we are not of the world
- Christianity is too easy
  - it doesn't cost us anything

- \* But because it doesn't cost us anything, it oftentimes doesn't really give us anything either
- Nothing for nothing!
- So this evening I'll be speaking about how pop(ular) Christianity aka tap water is not always good for you and comparing that to Jesus:

### **(1) Tap water is sterile**

- Yes, tap water brings life and billions of people on the planet wouldn't be alive if it weren't for tap water
  - But ultimately tap water is dead, it's sterile
    - \* It's been through so much filtration and chlorination to make that the same billions of people who rely on it for life are not going to get sick
  - You can imagine the disaster if a city's water supplies carried a serious disease
- But have you seen the ads for water filters?
  - They always show you the difference between water that is filtered and unfiltered
    - \* Picture of the water, pictures of tea
    - \* And sometimes pictures of plants, and how much better plants grow that are given the filtered water.
  - All the filter does is take out the impurities that are introduced to the water to make it suitable for mass consumption
- But wildlife can't live in it! Fishes die in tap water
- Same is true of pop Christianity / religion
  - It has to be sterile
- This was what had happened in the Jewish faith
  - It had become so far removed from what was intended that it had ceased to give life
    - \* It had become a source of control for the masses, and it is this control that Jesus challenges
- And so Jesus goes up to Jerusalem, and at the feast of tabernacles
  - In the temple courts, the seat of power of the Jewish authorities, he challenges what their religion has become
- Feast of tabernacles was a celebration commemorating the time that God had given the Jews water in the desert
  - They celebrated this by pouring water on the altar
    - \* Talk more here about true Jesus brings life
- Tap water is like the water that was poured off the altar

- It's symbolic, and points to something
- As much of our pop Christianity does (not bad)
  - \* But it's not the real thing
- Far better is water flowing fresh in a mountain stream — even with all the living things living and doing their thing in it
  - it makes it real; it gives it flavour!
- Does the religion that you follow give you life, or does it destroy you?
  - Does it give your life flavour, or does it make it sterile?

## **(2) Tap water is convenient**

- While tap water may be sterile and chlorinated to death the one thing that it is, is convenient
  - What a joy it is to go into your kitchen, or bathroom, or to stand outside and drink from the hosepipe
    - \* Tap water's convenience is an absolute joy!
- And I think that the same is true for much of our popular Christianity
  - It's convenient
  - You can turn on the medium of your choice and it's there!
    - \* TV, radio, internet
  - It's easy to understand, accessible and generally has a nice encouraging message
    - \* Positive thinking, God wants to bless you, it's easy to follow Jesus
  - Just give your heart to him, and your money to me, and your life will never be the same!
- But I struggle with this because if we follow Jesus
  - And if we hear his call to the cross
- Then we have to acknowledge that Christianity is profoundly inconvenient
  - Because Jesus will always take us to the places in our lives where it is difficult to live
  - Jesus wants us to live lives that are transformed, and the only way we do that is by going with him to the dark places that we would rather not confront.
    - \* And that's just the journey within!
- The outer journey is just as inconvenient
  - People aren't always excited about the fact that we choose to follow Jesus,
  - and a Christianity that proclaims popularity
    - \* is not Christianity or is a lie
- Jesus speaks very clearly in John's gospel about the world rejecting the disciples.
  - Just in the previous chapter 6:60 & 66:

“On hearing [Jesus’ words] many of his disciples said, ‘This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?’” then v 66 “From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.”

- Jesus, the living water, is profoundly inconvenient — you may have to go for miles to find it for yourself
  - It involves a journey that sometimes is costly
- And that brings me to my last point

### **(3) Tap water is for the masses**

- Part of the appeal of pop Christianity is its popularity
  - All your Christian friend believe that same as what you do — as does the whole of the Christian world
    - \* Everybody sings Hillsongs
  - It creates a popular identity
    - \* IN America in the Bible belt everybody votes Republican
- And so, I believe, the Christian message is watered down — the hard parts are missed out to make it palatable
- Rich Mullins was speaking at a university
  - Eternal life? “You must be born again”. What about “You must sell everything you own”?
- See, the message is distorted to make it easy and to make it palatable for the masses
  - Somewhere we got this idea that we have to have full churches, so we must preach a popular message that attracts the crowds
- Now this is not bad
  - As I said earlier, if it weren’t for the convenience of sterile tap water, many people would die
    - \* So there’s life in popular Christianity
- But I’m not sure that it is always the living water
  - We need to discover the living water for ourselves
- I’m sure you know the story of the Samaritan women at the well whom Jesus encounters (Jn 4)
  - Another living water story
- The masses are at the well early in the morning when it is cool
  - Fearing rejection, the outcast woman comes later in the day when everybody else has left
  - Standing at the well in the heat of the day by herself is where she encounters the Saviour

- \* Not in a crowd of people, but on her own
- In a place where she is forced to look at the darkness of her own life
- While we have to worship God as community, it's also easy to hide in community
  - We sing the songs, raise our hands, do all the right stuff and we can all ourselves a Christian
  - \* And that may be so
  - But are we encountering Jesus one on one, in the places we don't like to go?
- I think that the reason so many people leave the church is because they never get past the emotional 'pop concert' feel of so much Christianity to a place where Jesus really can make a difference
- I often will have left if I didn't have to go back on a Monday!

## **CONCLUSION**

- So, to close off with
  - My last thoughts for Brackenhurst Methodist Church
- As Christians, are we just drinking what comes out the tap to us without questioning as to whether it really is good for us or not?
  - Without questioning as to what is added to the water or removed from it
- Can we say with certainty that the the message we often get from pop Christianity is what Jesus really taught?
  - Or has it been sterilised, made convenient and accessible to the masses?
- And then just to touch on the theme of this week
  - If we are to be agents of hope in the world, people who are waiting for the coming Messiah
    - \* We need to be people who are drinking deeply from the well of the water of life,
    - So that we can share that living water with others who have no hope
- Let us go out into this week, and let us approach Christmas with an attitude of hope for good things to come that flows from our own nourishment at the well of life.
- Amen

## **Prayer of Response and Intercession**

- My Glorious

## **Taryn and prayer**

## **Benediction & Doxology**

- We weren't born to follow