

Season of Creation: Brackenhurst 30 August 2009
Water

Welcome

Call to Worship: Ps 42:1-2

As the deer pants for streams of water,
 so my soul longs for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
 When can I go and meet with God?

Opening Prayer

We thank you, Lord that the answer to that question is now.
Indeed, we are here to meet with you, to fellowship with you, to celebrate with you.
And we come together this morning to celebrate your gift of life to us;
Your gift of water.
As we do that we remember how, at the very beginning of creation you set the waters
apart, and watered the lands
And you promise that in the new creation streams of living water will flow from your
throne
But until then, Lord, we are nourished by the Living water of your Son Jesus Christ.
It is for this water that we thirst, and we pray that as we gather today in your name,
that this thirst may be slaked, but more than that that your Spirit may fill us.
Grant that the gift of your Spirit inspires us all this morning
And teach us to value the natural gift of water that we rely on for physical life
Help us to learn to use it efficiently so that it might be shared by all
And teach us to strive to ensure that it is available to all your people.
For we pray this in your name, the name Jesus Christ. Amen

Notices

Let's give praise to God this wonderful spring morning

- Hymn 635 — Morning has broken (praise)

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

- Hymn 352 — We plough the fields and scatter (thanksgiving)

Offering (Praise God from whom all blessings flow)

Prayer

Scripture:

Ezekiel 47:1-12

Rev 22:1-5

John 4:4-15

- Let your Living Water

Message

INTRODUCTION

- So often, especially on the Highveld, Spring is heralded with water!
 - And wasn't it lovely, this past week to have that thunderstorm? Perhaps a bit early for the first spring rains, but nevertheless, a sign that winter is over!
- In our home when I was growing up our swimming pool would be covered during winter, and the real sign of spring was the weekend my dad said okay, we're going to take the pool cover off today
 - And I guess for others when the municipal swimming baths were opened.
 - * Spring is heralded by the water of new life!
- And so our theme this morning, as we look at the third topic in our six week series, the season of creation, is that of water
 - The water of life, the living water offered by Jesus Christ!
 - * And again, you would know that water was very meaningful as an image in Israel because it is a dry country
 - And so should it be in South Africa.
 - * We often live as though there is plenty of water, but the reality is that water in our land is scarce
 - * We need to care for the water that we have and treat it as precious.
- So this morning I want to look at the difference, simply, between water that brings life
 - Water that is alive!
- And water that doesn't;
 - Water that is stagnant, and often filled with disease (Dis-ease)
 - Only allowed to swim after rains
- And to ask the question how we, as people who ought to be drinking of the living water, do that
 - And then also how we share the living water with others.
- As I look at the subject I remind you again that we are part of the earth and its systems
 - We were shaped from the earth, give life through God's breath, and sustained by the water of life

- And so the heart of God is about BEING; is about life.
 - And for people living in a dry land the heart of God is about water in the harshness of the desert
 - * And of course that is understood metaphorically as well as literally
- Ezekiel, in his prophecy, paints a picture of water that flows from the Temple;
 - Water that brings new life wherever it flows to
- In the gospel Jesus is speaking with a woman who desires the living water; the water of life
 - And the Greek word used there means water that is flowing as opposed to the stagnant water found in a well.
 - * Water that is flowing and life giving.
 - And the same is true of our reading from Revelation the water of the river of life flows from God's throne through the city, watering the trees of life, bringing healing
- As Christ followers, when we pray "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven..." it means that our task is to make the world described in Revelation a reality here
 - To take the presence of God from his throne, to the people
 - * to bring life and hope and healing to the world
 - * to offer the living water to those in need.
- How do we do that?
 - I want to suggest this morning that there are three aspects to this task
 - Firstly we have to find the water
 - Then we have to drink the water?
 - And then finally we share that water with others

(1) Finding the Water

- So firstly, then, finding the water
 - The essence of life, I think, is about finding the water of life!
- Jo'burg, I'm told, is the biggest city in the world that is not built on a major water source.
 - Usually cities are built on a river because that's where people settle
 - * Start a camp, gradually becomes more permanent
- Johannesburg was built on gold!
 - I wonder if that doesn't affect our attitude towards life on the reef?
 - * Instead of our lives being about finding the water, our lives are built around gathering wealth.
- So the first thing we have to do is discover the water of life for ourselves

- When we look at the life of the Samaritan woman we discover a person whose life is stagnant
 - Sometimes I think that's who we are
 - * Nothing changes very much in our lives
- This woman has had a succession of husbands (five + current boyfriend), but she keeps making the same mistakes - her life is stagnant.
 - I'm sure there are many people, men and women who can relate to that
 - * Keep getting caught up in the same bad relationships
- But here is the thing that we all do, just as she did, whether relationships, or churches, or governments
 - We have kept on doing the same things the same way with the same results.
 - * And we wonder why things do not change!
- Like, the woman, we drink from the water of the well
 - Water that is stagnant.
- She has a conversation with Jesus, and Jesus offers her the living water
 - Jesus calls her into a changed lifestyle
- The Greek word used there for living water, water that is alive, is the word that would be used to denote running water as opposed to water in a well
 - Water that is flowing, water that is bubbling from a spring, water that is fresh, water that makes a beautiful sound
 - * Water that is going somewhere!
- I hope you can see the metaphorical difference between the stagnant water of a well, and the living water of a stream
 - And so Jesus says come and take a drink of the water of life
 - * The water that is alive!
- Jesus offers her a new and a living way.
 - This is the water that Christ also invites us to partake of
- He invites us to turn from that which is stagnant
 - to that which is filled with life
- And the first step is recognising that the water we are drinking is stagnant
 - it may keep us living, but it won't keep us alive!
- So the Samaritan woman, first of all recognises that her life is stagnant, and that she needs the living water
 - Things have to change
- They have to change for us; they have to change for our country as we look after our resources
 - And we have to begin to drink of the Living Water
 - * Water that is Moving

- * Water that is Alive
- * Water that finds its source in God

(2) Drinking the Water

- And that brings me to my second point for today
 - The necessity of drinking the water of life
- It's no good saying "I've found the water"
 - or I know where the water of life is
 - It's no good saying, "I'm carrying the water with me"
- We have to drink it.
 - They tell me that in order for a rescue to be effective, in terms of survival, the most important person is not the person being rescued, but the person who is doing the rescuing
 - * If the rescuer dies, both die
- And in the case of a wilderness rescue it is most important to stay hydrated
 - There is no point in saving your water; ration it, yes, but to not drink for the purposes of saving the water for later is very dangerous because it more difficult to re-hydrate the body than to keep the body hydrated on little water
- Very often we are in danger of drinking from stagnant water, and then trying to offer living water to others
 - And they don't see the point because they look at our lives and say, but there's no difference
 - * If we are to offer the living water to others, we have to be drinking of it first!
- That's why I've been saying over these past weeks that your faith has to be life-giving to you and to those around you!
 - If it is not life-giving you are drinking stagnant water
 - * Your faith is going nowhere
 - * You keep making the same mistakes!
- We have to change the way we think, and change the choices that we make so that we can discover a life that is worth sharing with others!
- I believe deeply that the way of life that Jesus taught and lived is a lifestyle that is alive
 - And that when we seek to be in a relationship with God through Jesus we too discover, and drink from, the streams of living water
- But it requires change and work, and is something that takes a lifetime, rather than something accomplished in an instant.

- When we look at the story of Jesus and the woman, it simply begins with a conversation
 - A very unusual conversation!
 - * Firstly between a Jew and a Samaritan
 - * but also between a man and a woman
 - * And particularly between a holy man and an unclean woman.
- But it is simply a conversation which invites relationship
 - Maybe that is all that the gospel is about
 - Maybe that is all Christianity is about
 - Maybe that is all drinking the living water is about
- Being willing, simply as we are, to engage in a conversation with God, the ground of all being
 - And in that to drink the water of life
- Water that will not only sustain us, but will become a full life for us, and a life which bubbles over into changing the lives of others around us.
 - And that brings me to my final point for today

(3) Sharing the Water

- Do you remember in the 80s, that terrible drought we had?
 - And there were all these water restrictions; when you were allowed to use water, and when you weren't
 - * And how much you were allowed to use
- And all those slogans came out, encouraging you to save water?
 - If it's yellow let it mellow, if it's brown flush it down!
 - Save water, drink beer!
 - Save water, bath with a friend!
 - * It's that last one I want to speak about
- Jesus, in speaking to the Samaritan woman, tells her that when she drinks the living water that he offers, as indeed, does anyone, the water that Jesus gives will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life
 - Jesus invokes the image which Ezekiel used to describe God's temple
 - * And which is used later by John in Revelation
- And the woman misunderstands at first
 - But as she and Jesus talk more she begins to understand what Jesus is saying
- After speaking to Jesus, the first thing that the woman does
 - And so often this is the way that people respond to Jesus
- The first thing that she does is to go back to town and calls others to meet Jesus

- She says to them, “Could this be the Christ” and they all go out of own to meet Jesus
 - * and these are the very people she was doing her best to avoid by coming out to the well in the middle of the day instead of at dawn, when everybody else would have been there.
- It seems to me that everybody in that town was drinking from the same well.
 - The very fact that they avoided each other demonstrates that they were all stuck in the destructive patterns of their old habits
 - * And in that were longing for the living water, that Jesus offers.
- One person, the one who would have been judged the worst of the people in town, discovers the water
 - The others see the change that it makes in her life
 - * She no longer hides, but goes to find the rest of the community, and calls them into a place of conversation with God
- She doesn't try to convert them, but she invites them into a conversation, to drink the water and to see for themselves
 - I think that sometimes a mistake that we make when sharing the water of life is that instead of inviting others to share the water, we try to drown them!
- We share the water by inviting others into the conversation

CONCLUSION

- When we care for creation we are called into a harmonious relationship with God, creation, ourselves and others.
 - In our own lives we often find ourselves stuck in a place of stagnancy
 - * And we find our communities stagnant, in less than helpful ways of living and doing things
- I wonder if we have not reached this place in our relationship to the earth?
 - The way we live is destructive, and things are not really changing
 - * we continue to abuse the earth's resources, waste water, pollute our limited resources, and plunder what God has given.
- Christ calls us to the living water, the flowing water which doesn't only call us to change, but changes things.
 - Something that I noticed in this passage:
 - * The age of the well
 - “Our father Jacob gave us this well” the woman says, and you can still see that well today.
- Water that is stagnant doesn't change much
 - But the living water does!

- * There's power in flowing water! Look at the grand canyon, flowing water over millions of years.
- * And for those of you who are more technically minded high pressure water is used to cut metal
- Flowing water causes erosion
 - this is the life that Jesus calls us to.
 - * When we enter into relationship with Jesus, and begin to walk with him, it affects how we do life
 - How we relate to others, and how we interact with our environment
- I hope that as you reflect on your relationship with God, that it would be a living one, rather than one that is stagnant
 - And that it would challenge you also to reflect on how you care for, and use, the water that we depend on for life
- Amen

Prayer of Response and Intercession

- Hymn 437 — Guide me O thou Great Jehovah

Benediction

Doxology (Now unto Him)