

Jeremiah 2, 'Spring of Living Water', June 18th2023.
Also revelation 2, and John 7:37-39.

What words would you use to describe God whom we worship?
Rock? Father? Faithful?

In Jeremiah 2, God says he is 'the spring of living water'.
Water is a common symbol in the bible. The people who heard
Jeremiah share this message in Jerusalem, they were aware of how
precious water was and the threat of it running out.

Psalms 65 – is a song of praise to God, a God who forgives.
He is praised,
one of the reasons is his answers to prayers, a second, is his provision.

⁹You care for the land and water it;
you enrich it abundantly.
The streams of God are filled with water
to provide the people with corn,
for so you have ordained it. ^[d]

¹⁰You drench its furrows and level its ridges;
you soften it with showers and bless its crops.

Central to God's provision is rain.
Have **we** lost that sense of rain as a provision from God?

Years ago when I was in Kenya, I was struck by their new prayer book,
which include a prayer for rain. It just seemed so unreal – I was coming
from the UK, born in N,Ireland, a land known for its rain and grey
clouds, where it has been said we can have experience 4 seasons in
one day.

Water, part of God's literal provision for his people.
In the wilderness, part of God's provision as Israel travelled to the
Promised Land, was through supplies of water, both miraculously as
well as through guidance to the right places.

Water is used metaphorically – psalms speaking of ‘ I have come into the deep waters, the floods engulf me’ – of being overwhelmed, lost, struggling...

Once Jesus met a Samaritan woman at a well. Jesus said to her:

“¹³ Jesus answered, ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’ ”

A spring of water. Like what we heard God say through Jeremiah.

Later, in John 7, in Jerusalem Jesus said. ³⁷ On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.’ ³⁹ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Whoever believes in me, rivers of living water will flow from within.

And Revelation – we will be reading words from that letter each Sunday. In the final chapter of that letter, that beautiful image:
22 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”

Jeremiah proclaims in Jerusalem, that God is in the Spring of Living Water. Jesus declares whoever believes in him, they will have a river of living water, a spring of water within them. And in the New Jerusalem, there will be a river of life, flowing through it.

To the people of Israel, water was life and blessing.

God through Jeremiah, and later Jesus declares
he too offers life and blessing
refreshment, renewal,
right to the core of our beings.

Last year. When I was away for a couple of days with Callum, we
walked past a small canal – just slowly drying up more and more – the
ducks being squeezed into a smaller space, the canal bed was just mud
and you could now see stuff on the bottom.

But God says, he is a spring of living water, a fountain – he will never
dry up. There is no dry season with him. God says every day he is a
spring of living water - who offers life, refreshment, blessing.

Isaiah 55 are words to the people of Israel in exile.
They are a broken people, and the cry of the Lord to them:

55 'Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;
and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!

Come all who are thirsty, is God's invitation.

After the visions in Revelation, at the end, John tells his readers:

" And let the one who hears say, 'Come!'
Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the
free gift of the water of life.

Are we thirsty? Come to him, he is the spring.

Or are we going through the motions – it is all religion?
Can we come with expectation that God can refresh us?

Ruth Valerio: 'The Jesus who turned water into wine, is with us now – by his Spirit – and he delights in pouring his living water in our ordinariness for his glory.'"

Come.

God tells them to come, because they forsaken him, and tried to find living water in other ways...

'I remember' God says.

"I remember the devotion of your youth,
how as a bride you loved me
and followed me through the wilderness,
through a land not sown.

³ Israel was holy to the LORD,
the firstfruits of his harvest;
all who devoured her were held guilty,
and disaster overtook them,"
declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 2:1-3).

God talks to the nation, the people.' I remember how you were committed to me.' The word 'devotion' it points to the most intimate degree of loyalty, love, faithfulness that can exist between two people.

And how Israel trusted Him in the past – they trusted him through wilderness that could not produce fruit, they followed him knowing it would be okay and he would provide.

Israel trusted God as they went through those wilderness times, he was their shepherd.

And they were special to him, they were 'the first fruits of the harvest' – the best of the crops were to brought into the house, as Exodus 23 commanded. Israel were the best of the best. They were the ones at Top Gun, they were God's first and choicest treasures.

God protected them – from harm, attack, disaster.
And he brought them safely to the land.

I remember your full devotion, I remember your love – I was
number one, you sought to love me with everything you had – you
were my treasure, valued, I remember you trusted me in hard and
challenging times, and I protected you.

But as God goes on to say, 'it had all changed'.

In Revelation 2, Jesus speaks to the churches, real historical church
communities. To Ephesus, he says – you have forsaken your first love.
It had all been going well, it was only 40 or so years, since Paul had
founded the church community. And 'it had all changed'.

All Saints, how are we doing?

Do you hear those words, and think back and say – yes, in my youth,
or years ago, I was more committed, I can tell you stories of how I
trusted God in some pretty bleak times and he got me through, I knew
I was special, accepted, treasured by him, and I knew nothing could
stop Him and I was held by his hand.

But Grant, you know, that was then and to be honest, things are
different now...

Could that be you? What happened?

The last Indiana Jones film is about to come out...

And Indy once said, "it is not the years, it's the mileage".

Maybe that is us.

It is what we have seen and experienced and perhaps it has left its
knocks on us. Some of our experiences have, of course, brought us
much good wisdom, But other parts of it, perhaps, we have picked up
wounds, loss of confidence, maybe it is has become hard being a
Christian and it is grinding us down...

Perhaps it is time to come again to the Father,

To bring the loss of confidence, the pain, the wounds, the mileage of disappointments...

Come to the Father.

Father, this is how it was, and this is how I am now...

You may want to right now pray where you are. Or during the serving of Communion, to see that reception of the bread and wine, a step forward to going back. You may want to pray about this with others our prayer ministry team is available today and each week.

Or. Wonderfully. You are in another place.

You maybe where in that place I've described— but it has changed, you have returned or you are returning... Like the words to Smyrna 'you have been afflicted and poor, yet you are know you are rich' through Christ. You know or have rediscovered he is that fountain of living water.

Share your testimony. As Tim Keller reminds us, in Galatians 1, Paul shares his testimony, not because he enjoys putting a spotlight on his personal experiences. He shares it, in that letter, because he believes it will help his listeners to find Christ and encourage them not to lose him or encourage them to return to the Lord and the gospel and what it means. He uses his testimony to help his friends, the ones he cares about in that church community...

As Keller reminds us, Paul shows us that we need to have courage to be vulnerable and speak personally about what the gospel, the good news of Christ, means to us, how it shapes us, or how it has restored us.

When we share testimony we share the story not for ourselves – so people may think better of us – but it is to help others understand and find Christ, to point people to the Father, to the grace, to the gospel, to the living waters, which we know can change their lives too...

If you are returning, have been restored, please share it with others...

Conclusion.

Jeremiah's first public message. God declares he is a spring of living water, a fountain, yet his people have turned from him, not to something almost as good, but in fact to something pretty rubbish and worthless – like turning from a fountain, to instead build a cistern or well, but this well is so full of cracks the water keeps seeping out. They are becoming dry like the rivers in parts of Europe...

He says to all of us: Come all those are thirsty,
God invites them, come to the spring that never ends...

God says he remembers their devotion, their trust, how they allowed him to lead them, how he protected them and how precious they were to him.

Yet things have changed, how they act towards him.

God reaches out, in his faithful unchanging love, through Jeremiah, for them to return; like Jesus reaches out through John to the church of Ephesus...

Come to the One.

The spring. Seek that water, that life, blessing, refreshment.

To be again how things were – we may have the mileage, but we can still have the relationship.

And for those of you renewed, restored; share what God has done, to help others understand and find Christ, the one who offers the living waters.

that he says to all : Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

In the following song 'Jesus Victorious' you may give you the words, to draw again near or to celebrate his faithfulness...