

Sunday Thought

28th August 2022 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings

Jeremiah 2: 4 - 13

Psalm 81: 1, 10 - 16

Hebrews 13: 1 - 8, 15 - 16

Luke 14: 1, 7 - 14



Living at the Source

Parched fields, cracked earth, dried out watercourses, and drought has been declared in parts of our land. With it has come the usual question – *who is to blame?* Many people stand accused – gardeners, car-washers, and the Water Authorities responsible for a multitude of leaking pipes and reservoirs. The prophet Jeremiah used a similar situation in Judah to illustrate his message from the Lord. It is another instance of his costly commission as a preacher-prophet. Especially costly because this tender, gracious man of artistic temperament must speak words of judgement and condemnation out of the sorrows of his own heart. Like Jesus, he shares the awful hurt of the Father over the immoralities and injustices of his people. He hears God cry – *'What did I do wrong? Why have you rejected me?'* The prophet sees an analogy in the contrast between bubbling spring waters merging in flowing streams, beside neglected, broken cisterns, just like the one Joseph was thrown into many years before as his passport to Egypt.



On this occasion Jeremiah was probably an uninvited preacher at some festival in Jerusalem. Some people would not have liked his messages, but others enjoyed his preaching. The book bearing his name uses over two hundred different illustrations to enrich his words, from bird's nests to burglars, doctors to donkeys, ploughs to penknives, and even lambs to lions and linen underpants! Now he contrasts the years spent by God's people in the dried out wilderness of the Sinai desert against life in their divinely gifted home in Judah with its rich, watered pasturelands and abundant harvests of wheat and wine. It is akin to the difference between fresh spring water and the unhealthy, tasteless residue from neglected water storage tanks. His people have rejected the freshness of life in God's Spirit and become dependent on stale diseased supplies. The result is idolatry, war, and famine, producing disaster after disaster.

I am reminded of Jesus' conversation with a Samaritan woman [John 4] who found it socially inappropriate to give him a drink of fresh water. Jesus offered her life-giving, spring sourced water – God's Spirit! And she took it! With Jeremiah he was telling her how a new personal and national life both begin when we turn back to the source of God's words – like drinking in his life, his love.

Today's psalm echoes the prophet's words about God's longing for all people. *'How I wish my people would listen to me and obey my words. Then I could quickly be with them as the solution to all their problems and satisfaction of their greatest desires.'* The source of God's life is in our hearing and obeying, just like drinking from the fresh spring. The verses from Hebrews give a clear account of what a life lived at the source and pleasing to God involves. *'Loving one another as Christ's family.'* Through centuries there has been so much suffering in and through the Church for failures in practicing this. *'Welcoming strangers into your homes as though they were angels. Caring for the suffering and for prisoners as though you were personally wrapped up in all their pain and loss. It means 'being bold in your faith – reaching out for God's help and expecting it.'* Add to that everyday things like, *'Honour marital faithfulness; Don't allow financial gain to dominate your living. Imitate the best Christian examples.'* Best of all, *'remember constantly the unchanging example of Jesus. Let your life be one constant act of praise and all for his glory.'*

The Gospel reading guides us as to how to access this 'source-life' That is by humbly kneeling down to drink from the Source – the Spirit of Jesus. He tells a story about how his people should live the humble Kingdom way. It reminds me of a friend's dream of her arrival in heaven! *'It was like being in the hall of a great mansion,'* she said. *'There was music, more beautiful than anything I have ever heard in church. The hall was crowded, though there was no roof, or walls that I could make out. Just light which grew brighter the further away I looked until the crowd merged into one all around me. In that vast crowd though, there were voices I recognised, but I hesitated to go forward into the light. I turned back and found myself in a small room, playing with a group of children. I was happy. Suddenly, 'the light from'out there' filled our little room. The Lord sat with us, a huddle of small children on either side of him. I felt such joy! Then he rose, smiled at me and said, 'Come and meet the others. Welcome to my Kingdom!'*

The way of the Kingdom, now and then, is to stay close to the life-source with childlike trust and happiness. It's far safer and healthier than drinking from all those faulty water-pipes!

A prayer of gratitude

[based on Psalm 81]

Lord, I am so grateful to you, I want to shout aloud my thanks.

I have not always appreciated your gracious gifts,
nor shown my thanks in the way I live,
nor trusted you to go on supplying my needs.

Yet you have provided the best for me, even when I asked for much less.
You have left me free to accept or reject your gifts, yet still ask for more.
I have at times, closed my ears to your words and my heart to your love,
but you go on loving; you go on speaking.

Lord, give me humility to return often to you for a fresh supply of your Spirit - the source of my life, my hope, my faith, my peace,

