

September 16th, 2018

Scripture:

Psalm 63

Jeremiah 2: 1-19

John 7: 37-39

“Only God can quench our thirst.”

Only God can satisfy our longings and our needs --- our deepest desires.

What we need at our deepest level ---- can only ever come from God.

Deep calls to deep as Psalm 42 says --- we heard it in our call to worship today.

Deep calls to deep --- only God can truly reach us at our deepest level --- and no matter how deep we go --- when we get there we find that God is already there waiting to meet us.

The Bible reminds us over and over again ---- that if we cease following God ---- disastrous things happen.

Jeremiah 2 is a harsh reminder of this truth.

Jeremiah 2 is a harsh reminder of what it looks like when leaders have gone awry --- when people have tried to go it on their own without also guidance from God.

Only God can satisfy our longings --- only God knows what we need --- only God can rescue and save us from the wiles of this world --- and the treacherous schemes laid by the evil one.

“Deep calls to deep” --- Psalm 42 reminds us ---- and we do well to listen to God speaking to us.

We live in a world often characterized by polarization and lack of trust in leadership.

Donald Trump ---- Doug Ford ----- these are figures --- people --- regimes --
- ways of leading and governing ---- that --- like them or dislike them ---

have caused fear and polarization --- and a lack of trust not just in them but in much leadership in general.

We live in a time where all leadership is heavily scrutinized.

Jesus the greatest leader --- and then some --- like so many leaders today was always heavily scrutinized.

Ours is a society in North America right now where there is a great attitude of distrust ---- and fear --- and anxiety ---- and uncertainty ---- everybody wants to know what will happen next --- if this happens then what --- if that happens then what ----- and as if this isn't challenging enough ----- ours is a culture of rabid individualism --- and need for unending personal expression.

“I can do what I want to do and express myself how I want to express myself.” ---- “Just watch me.” ---- describes our culture too often.

Living so near to the big city ---- we might think of this summer as the year of the gun in Toronto ----- the summer --- or year of the gun in Toronto --- with so many gun related incidents.

People doing what they want to do --- I'm hurt so I'll lash out.

Disregard authority --- carry a gun ---- follow no one except myself pull out that gun ---- do what I want to do --- shoot that gun --- express my feelings but sharing with others --- showing others just how I feel --- in this case how angry hurt and frustrated I am.

In other places in Canada ----- in such an extreme dry summer --- we might call it the summer ---- or the year of the fire.

The summer of the fire.

Flames running rampant doing what they want to do --- consuming everything around them ---- destruction --- a consuming fire literally.

We have water all around us here in Southern Ontario --- turn on the tap it's there.

Hop in the car ---- and drive not too far at all and there is a lake --- or a river or a stream ---- water is everywhere.

A 5 minute drive from here --- down to Lake Ontario --- and we are faced with water as far as the eye can see.

We in North America ----- we in Ontario ----- we in and around the Durham region ---- scarcely think of water as scarce ---- it's abundant ---- always there whenever we need it.

Well in the summer of the fire ---- for many the need for water is all too real.

Jeremiah 2 reminds us of the importance of water for life.

In the time of Jeremiah --- when people thinking of settling down --- the first question was always the same ----- “Where will our water come from?”

“Is there a water source near by?”

“Are we near a hill where it will run down ---- can we dig holes ---- cisterns easily to store rain water?”

“What things in the natural environment here might enable us to get water -- - keep water --- find water?”

These were the questions they asked.

“Where will our water come from and how can we store water?”

We don't ever really ask ourselves that question today in Canada ---- in Ontario --- in and around the Durham region.

We are surrounded by fresh water --- we simply take it for granted.

But maybe we should still be asking ourselves --- “Where will our daily sustenance --- where does that which we need most come from?”

With water so plentiful and easy to come by we have forgotten about the reality of dependency.

And dependency is a helpful concept for people of faith.

To be dependant --- opens up windows for spiritual growth that the non-dependant person will never come to.

The need for water in Jeremiah today ---- is a reminder about the people's dependency on God day in and day out --- to simply get by day by day.

The people thirsted.

And we still thirst.

For water yes ---- but also for God.

We know where our water will come from --- the tap --- or the store --- we can buy purified water or spring water by the gallon within minutes of our homes.

Someone can get for us the water we need.

What about this question --- what about this one -----

“Where will I get God from today -- where will I get the God I need to survive today?”

How are we going to be fed by God today?

Someone can get the water we need for us ---- but it doesn't work that way with faith.

We have to have our own relationship with god --- someone can't do it for us.

So how do we --- how do you --- get the God you need – connect with God in a way that is true and real ---- and a two way street --- where you hear God speaking – nudging ----guiding ----- you?

Do you ever think of this --- when was the last time you thought something like ---

“How will I connect with God today --- what will I do today to enable God to speak with me --- and reveal something about Himself to me --- how will I glorify God today?”

Are you going to pray --- read scripture --- both --- other things --- listen to a song about God --- look at a painting about God ----- what is your plan for tomorrow ---- this afternoon --- tonight to get your God --- to interact with God --- to glorify God?

Jesus said in John gospel today ---

“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” By this he meant the Spirit ...”

Water --- flowing water ----- meant life --- water --- flowing water meant survival.

Who ever could access water --- who ever had access to flowing water --- had the most valuable thing of all ---- access to life.

To say you had access to flowing water --- meant you had access to life itself.

Because of the ease with which we access water --- it’s difficult for us to grasp the profound depth of what Jesus was saying in talking about flowing water.

At the time of Jeremiah --- at the time of Christ ----- people built cisterns --- massive storage troughs --- like in ground pools the size of bungalows to store water --- no one does this now in our culture --- no one has giant cisterns dug out for themselves in my neighbourhood I can tell you that.

At the time of Jeremiah and of Jesus ---- crevasses would be carved by hand if necessary --- to carve out pathways for rainwater to drain so it could be stored.

Any way to access store and capture water was treasured.

The way we always think of money --- “How much do I have can I cover the costs ---- mortgage or rent ---- groceries --- hydro bill --- or water bill ---- dentist bill --- car payment --- gas --- cell phone --- and so on.

The way we think of money --- is how the people, of God in the Bible thought of water.

Where to get it ---- how to get it --- how to hold on to it --- where to find even more ---- how to keep it once we got is.

The way we think about money they thought about water.

And the way they thought about water and we think about money is really the way we should be thinking about God and His goodness.

Do we ever stop to concern ourselves with God --- the will of God --- the Holy Spirit of God with that same level of concern and dedication that we do money?

That’s what our passages are about today ---- the way the Israelites thought about water is how God wanted them to think about Him.

The same depth of concern and dedication they had for water --- God wanted them to have for Him and His will.

God says to Jeremiah --- tell the people that they have stopped relying on me and they are going their own way.

You have committed 2 sins God says ----

1. --- you have neglected me --- you have forgotten about me -----
and then
2. ----- you are trying to quench your thirst outside of me and my will ---
you are trying to get from other things what only I ----- God ---- can provide.

Verse 13 from Jeremiah today.

“My people have committed two sins:
They have forsaken me,
the spring of living water,
and have dug their own cisterns,

broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”

“My people have committed two sins:
They have forsaken me,
the spring of living water,
and have dug their own cisterns,
broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”

The people have neglected God and they have gone and dug out --- or made up ----- cisterns to try to store up what they need instead of trusting God to provide what they need.

The things they have tried to put in place of God --- cisterns ----- won't work --- they're cracked --- faulty --- broken ---- useless.

When the inner limestone lining cracked in the great cisterns they were rendered useless because all the water simply leaked out of them into the surrounding soil.

Any time we try to replace God in our lives with anything else --- money --- material things --- food --- cars --- experiences --- and so on --- it doesn't work.

What we need for life --- isn't more money ---- or more vacations --- or more experiences.

What we need for life is a relationship with God that is real and true ----- and personal and ever evolving.

The most basic elements we need for life ---- are all found in God --- and His providing hands.

If we trust in God --- all that we will ever need --- including material things -- -- will be taken care of as God sees fit.

God first or disaster --- that's the message of Jeremiah --- that's the message of Moses ----- that's the message of Isaiah ---- that's the message of the Bible ----- that's the message of Jesus.

God first or disaster.

“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” By this he meant the Spirit...” --- from John 7 today.

And even more blunt ---- Jesus puts it this way ---- in John 11-----
 “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.”

Without the Holy Spirit of God in our lives --- without belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour ---- all the water in the world --- all the money in the world --- doesn't mean a thing.

Without the Holy Spirit of God in our lives --- without belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour ----- we are like a cracked cistern ----- broken --- purposeless.

The people in Jeremiah were more concerned with material things than they were the will of God.

And so disaster was about to ensue.

When we need something in life ---- we have to turn to God first.

Not money --- not food --- not another vacation --- not a good book ----- not anything but God first.

He has provided the Holy Spirit to be with us ---- and we need to turn to Him and trust Him --- and obey Him and depend on Him --- lean on and into Him.

The people in Jeremiah's time had turned away from God --- and built things of their own making ---- cisterns --- to try to store the water of life.

We turn our back on God too ---- and try to do it our way.

Instead of turning to Him --- we look to the bank --- or our liquor cabinet --- or the grocery store or a restaurant --- or a vacation spot --- --- or a book ---- or a song --- or a painting ----- or something else other than God and think that it will rescue us --- provide for us --- help us out in our time of need.

But only God can help us --- only God can rescue us --- only God can truly provide for us in our greatest need.

Deep calls to deep.

Faced with deepest challenges --- we have to turn to He who runs even deeper ---- God.

When we're in a real mess ---- we need the deepest --- beauty --- goodness and truth of God.

And until we not only get this --- getting it isn't enough --- we have to live it --- until we live this way ---- no amount of money --- or vacations --- or days off --- or good food ---- or books or art or music or whatever will ever cut it --- we will only ever long for more and more and more.

And God doesn't just want us to speak the words that we are putting Him first and trusting Him and doing what He asks --- and following His ways --- - He also wants us to live it out.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven...” --- Jesus says in Matthew 7 verse 21.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven...” --- Jesus says.

Just saying we trust in God --- just saying we will follow God's lead --- just saying we will depend on God doesn't cut it --- we have to live it out as well.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven...” --- Jesus says.

And we don't get the how until God first knows we're serious about actually following.

God never gives the how until He knows we are actually ready to act on it and follow through on it.

The next steps ----- the how arrives when God knows we're actually ready to listen and follow.

The people wandered for 40 years precisely because God knew they weren't ready to do anything else but walk and learn to follow destinationlessly.

I read recently that the people could have reached their destination from Egypt to where they were headed in the Promised Land in 12 days.

12 days it could have taken them to go from Egypt to the Promised Land --- instead it took them 40 years --- not 40 days ---- 40 years.

God knew that it was 40 years of walking they needed not 12 days.

For every 1 day it could have taken ----- God made it take 1,216.

40 years is 14,600 days.

What could have taken 12 days God turned into 14,600 days.

That's a ratio of 1 to 1,216.

For every one day they needed 1,215 more to get ready for what God had in store for them.

It took God 40 years to soften them up.

They thought they were ready ---- but they weren't --- not even close.

Let that ratio sink in for a minute --- for every 1 day God needed 1,216.

Imagine if you said God I only need a few days to get back on track --- or I just need a few months ---- or a few years --- and God said for ever 1 day you think you need you will need over 1,216.

That

Shows us just how far off our calculations can be from God's --- He knows better --- He knows best and always.

They thought they were ready for the next step --- take us to the next place -- - but they weren't even close --- they first had to wander for 40 years.

God wanted to know they would walk wherever it was He would tell them to walk before He was ever going to let them arrive at the next step.

General George Patton ---- United states Army General --- one of the most productive one of the most victorious general of all time ---- tells the story of how when he wanted to find new leaders among his troops --- he would line them up and ask them to do something below them ---- something that may not have made sense to them --- appeared and maybe even was pointless.

For example he tells the story of lining his men up and asking them to dig a trench 2 feet deep ---- 3 feet wide and 40 feet long.

He then walked away and watched his men --- from afar he watched them.

And as he watched some men questioned and threw their arms up in the air - -- and whined and complained because they couldn't understand why he would have them do what he was doing.

And after the job was done --- he went and selected the ones who just did as he asked.

They were his next leaders --- and they got promoted right then and there.

And he did this --- because he knew that in the heat of battle when he wouldn't necessarily have time to explain to them what he needed them to do they would trust in his judgement and just do it.

His men of course performed better than any other in war.

Because he knew they would follow without questioning.

God doesn't owe us an answer or an explanation ---- we owe Him an answer and an explanation.

We don't ask the Bible questions --- it asks us questions.

Sometimes when we think we're ready and we're not even close.

We're ready the Israelites thought to themselves.

I'm a good follower some of Patton's men thought.

What should have taken 12 days God turned into 40 years.

They thought they were ready they needed 39 extra years --- 39 years and 353 extra days before they were ready for the next step.

Patton needed to ensure his men could follow a small task before he could give them bigger ones.

God needed to know His people would learn to follow before He would ever lead them to the Promised Land --- 12 days turned into 40 years --- that's a long lesson.

Verse 6 from Jeremiah today --- refers specifically to the 40 year journey in Egypt --- the Exodus.

The Exodus teaches us the same lesson as the Cross does ---- the need and the ability to follow God's lead without question --- we grow better in faith when we ask God less questions and we invite Him to ask questions of us.

The Bible isn't there for us to take in our hands and ask questions ---- the Bible is there to take us in its hands and ask questions of us.

Only God can quench our thirst.

Only God can provide us what we need.

Only God can show us the way.

And we have to trust Him and follow Him for as long --- The Exodus -----
40 years ----- and as painful as it might be --- the cross --- brutal death to
ourselves and our wants --- needs --- and desires.

By human --- worldly standards --- all the people need was 12 days ---- by
Godly standards they need 40 years.

Only God knows what we need.

Only God knows how long.

The cisterns the people had built to catch the water --- what they thought
was all they needed --- were useless --- they were cracked and useless.

Often what we think we need --- is also misguided and broken --- useless.

God wants us to replace everything about us ----- with Him.

Only God can quench our thirst.

Listen again to Psalm 63 --- our Psalm for today.

If we can say it with sincerity and then live it in total dependency to God ----
God is glorified and we participate in something grand and marvelous ----
far beyond just us ---- His beautiful ---- saving --- majestic --- splendid ---
and marvelous glorious will.

Psalm 63

You, God, are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you,
my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land
where there is no water.

I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.
Because your love is better than life,

my lips will glorify you.
I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my hands.
I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods;
With singing on my lips my mouth will praise you.

On my bed I remember you;
I think of you through the watches of the night.
Because you are my help,
I sing in the shadow of your wings.
I cling to you;
your right hand upholds me.
Those who want to kill me will be destroyed;
they will go down to the depths of the earth.
they will be given over to the sword
and become food for jackals.
But the king will rejoice in God;
all who swear by God will glory in him,
while the mouths of liars will be silenced.

Only God can quench our thirst.

And so we turn to Him.

Thanks be to you God --- you are awesome --- you are good --- you are true
--- and you are beautiful.

Teach us to follow you wherever you lead us God ---- and for as long as it
takes to break our wills to give over to yours.

Only God can quench our thirst.

Amen