



THE GIFT OF WATER

Seasons of Creation – 4

September 27, 2020
Anglican Parish of Raymond Terrace
www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org

SEASONS OF CREATION 4

Pray:

May I speak to you in the name of GOD – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen



Last week the Israelites came into the Desert of Sin from Elim. This week we see them setting out from the Desert of Sin – travelling as the LORD commanded. And again, the people complained / grumbled about their problem instead of praying about it. Some problems can be solved by careful thought or by re-arranging our priorities. Some can be solved by discussion and good counsel; but some problems can be solved only by prayer. We should make a determined effort to pray when we feel like complaining because complaining only raises our level of stress. Prayer quietens our thoughts and emotions and prepares us to listen. And in the context of our topic of water today, this reading shows how important it is to have a safe and reliable supply of

water. The drought our own country has suffered in past years is testament to that.

Psalm 78 reminds the Israelites of their history and of all the wonders God has done: ^{^4} We will not hide them from their children; we will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.

[^]GOD also divided the sea and led them through; and brought water forth from the rocks of the desert.

[^]In his letter to the Philippians, Paul encourages us to imitate the humility of JESUS and to do everything without grumbling. Many people, including some Christians, live only to make a good impression on others. But such “selfish ambition” or “vain conceit” can bring discord. Paul therefore stressed spiritual unity, asking the Philippians to love one another and to be one in spirit and purpose. When we work together, caring for the problems of others as if they were our problems, we demonstrate CHRIST’s example of putting others first, and we experience unity. We SHOULD NOT be

concerned about making a good impression or meeting our own needs if this puts a strain on our relationships in GOD's family.

Selfish ambition can ruin a church – but genuine humility can build it. Being humble involves having a true perspective about ourselves. It does not mean we should put ourselves down. Before GOD we are all sinners – saved only by GOD's grace; BUT we ARE saved; and therefore, have great worth in GOD's kingdom. We are to lay aside selfishness and treat others with respect and common courtesy. Considering others' interest as more important than our own links us with CHRIST – who is the true example of humility.

Paul encourages us to guard against any selfishness, prejudice, or jealousy that might lead to dissension. Showing genuine interest in others is a positive step forward in maintaining unity among believers.

JESUS was humble, willing to give up His rights in order to obey GOD and serve people. Like Him, we should have a servant's attitude – serving out of love for GOD

and for others – not out of guilt or fear. Remember, we choose our attitude. EITHER we can approach life expecting to be served OR we can look for opportunities to serve others. When JESUS became human, He did not cease being GOD – but He gave up His glory and power. In submission to the Father’s will, CHRIST limited His power and knowledge. JESUS of Nazareth was subject to human limitations. What made His humanity unique was His freedom from sin. In His full humanity, JESUS showed us everything about GOD’s character that can be conveyed in human terms. Verses 5-11 are worth reading over again – when you get home. When I was on my deacon’s retreat – leading up to my ordination – our retreat conductor led us through Philippians – very appropriate given that “deacon” means “servant”. I didn’t stop being a deacon when I was ordained priest; I am both a deacon AND a priest. This section of our reading gives us several key characteristics of JESUS –

1. ^CHRIST has always existed with GOD

2. CHRIST is equal to GOD because He is GOD
3. Though CHRIST is GOD, He became a human in order to fulfil GOD's plan of salvation for all people
4. ^CHRIST did not just have the appearance of being a human – He actually became human to identify with our sins
5. CHRIST voluntarily laid aside His divine rights and privileges out of love for His Father
6. CHRIST died on the cross for our sins so we wouldn't have to face eternal death
7. ^GOD glorified CHRIST because of His obedience
8. GOD raised CHRIST to His original position at the Father's right hand where He will reign forever as our LORD and judge.

When we say we follow CHRIST, we must also say we want to live as He lived. We should develop His attitude of humility as we serve – even when we are not likely to get any recognition for our efforts.

At the last judgement even those who are condemned will recognise JESUS' authority and right to rule. People

can choose to regard JESUS as LORD now as a step of willing and loving commitment – OR – be forced to acknowledge Him as LORD when He returns – which could be at any moment.

Our Gospel passage for today is best explained by Bishop Tom Wright – a British academic and retired Bishop of the Diocese of Durham. JESUS' reply to the religious leaders is a master-stroke. It both is and isn't a straight answer. It certainly isn't a trick, designed to get them muddled or embarrassed – though it did succeed in doing that. Imagine the crowd all around, watching a situation turning into a high pressure and high-profile public debate with this upstart from another town leaving the sophisticated city folk mumbling that they don't know how to answer his question. JESUS' question about John the Baptist puts them on the spot because whichever way they answer they will be in trouble. JESUS then presses home His advantage. They may not have believed that John was a prophet; but supposing he was, what follows? Some people did what

John said, even though they looked like rebels against GOD. Other people refused to do what John said – even though they looked like GOD’s chosen ones. Yes – just like the 2 sons – one of whom said NO to his father but then did what had been asked; the other of whom said YES, but then didn’t do it.

The first son, who rudely tells his father he doesn’t feel like working today, but then does after all, stands for the tax-collectors and prostitutes. Their daily life seemed to be saying NO to GOD; but when they heard John the Baptist, they changed their mind and their lifestyle – in other words, they repented.

The second son, who politely tells his father he will indeed go to work, but then doesn’t, stands for the Temple hierarchy and other leaders. They look as though they are doing GOD’s will – worshipping in the Temple and keeping up appearances – but they refused to believe in John’s message – not only about repentance, but also about the Messiah who was standing unknown in their midst. Now the Messiah

Himself is here to call them to account and not surprisingly, they don't like it. The challenge for us today is partly this: to make sure we are responding to JESUS, allowing Him to confront us at any point where we have been like the second son and said YES to GOD while in fact going off in the other direction. That's important, but it's not the only important thing. What we should be asking is this. What should JESUS' followers be doing today that would challenge the powers of the present world with the news that JESUS is indeed the rightful LORD? What should we be doing that would make people ask, 'By what authority are you doing that?' – to which the proper answer would be to tell, not now riddles about John the Baptist, but stories about JESUS Himself.



^How can we apply this to our Season of Creation day of water? We live in in a country surrounded by sea water but where drinking water can run short due to drought, climate issues and population growth. The Reverend Canon Dr Rachel Mash from South Africa and a person

very much involved in the “Green Anglicans” movement gives some practical suggestions that we can all have shorter showers and put a bucket in the shower to use in the toilet. Wash clothes less frequently and make sure the machine is full. Purchase water tanks for church and home and make sure gardens are water wise.

Our food choices have different water footprints. For example, to produce a hamburger requires the same amount of water as a 60-minute shower, and the water needed to produce a mouthful of steak, could run the dishwasher 22 times. One teaspoon of milk is equivalent to one flush of a dual-flush toilet and the average bathtub could be filled 6 times for 1 litre.

Nevertheless, a family of 4 could save the equivalent of 17 bathtubs of water by swapping one meal of beef per week with lentils. Cattle are fed mostly by grazing and rain-fed dry land which means they have a greater green water footprint.

And much of the plastic litter that we produce ends up in streams and rivers and eventually the sea. One of the

ways to protect the precious gift of water is to become involved in clean-ups and to put pressure on companies to stop using single-use plastic items. There is also plenty of information of the Hunter Water website on how to manage our water supplies. Water is precious gift from GOD – let us protect it.



May we pray:

Almighty and gracious GOD, we give you thanks for the grace of salvation and for the embrace of your eternal Kingdom. Thank you for the gift of water and please show us how to be better stewards of it. May the work of our hands always bring you glory and gratitude for all we have inherited through JESUS, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one GOD for ever and ever.

Amen



Life Application Study Bible

<http://sustainable-preaching.org/2020/09/20/17th-sunday-after-pentecost-season-of-creation-4/> Date accessed 26/09/2020

Daily Prayer 2020

<https://capechameleon.co.za/the-water-footprint-of-what-we-eat/> Date accessed 26/09/2020

<https://www.hunterwater.com.au/> Date accessed 26/09/2020