

### Cracked Cisterns or Living Fountain?

What do you think? Do we have cracked cisterns here at the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church? Or a living fountain? We have a drinking fountain—actually we have several. The one downstairs wasn't working for a while. Roger, did that ever get fixed? No? Just curious—what kind of water comes out of those? Is it living water? Or just water? I wonder what it would cost to put in a fountain of living water. We should look into that.

Regarding cracked cisterns, fortunately we don't have any of those, so we're off the hook on that accusation. Of course, we do have cracks in our air conditioning system. Roger, did that ever get fixed? It did? Great! Let's face it: our building is old. Things break. Fortunately we have a team of Trustees that keeps close tabs on our building, and when something breaks they either fix it themselves, or they call in the professionals. If we could just get the Trustees to put in that fountain of living water, we'd be in good shape! Unless . . . we already have one?

We don't get very far into this morning's text before figuring out that God is a bit put out with the children of Israel. Not just put out—miffed. Not just miffed—it sounds like God's feelings are hurt. After all that God had done for them! First God brought them out of the land of Egypt. Then God led them in the wilderness, a pitted land that no one passes through. Finally God brought them into a plentiful land, where they could eat of its fruits and other good things. God had it all planned out. God was going to make a covenant with the people. He would be their God; and they would be her people. And all the nations of the world would see, and would say, "You know, those Israelites have an amazing God. We should worship him too."

Unfortunately, that's not what happened. As soon as the people entered the land, they defiled it.

There are many different ways of defiling a land. We here in the United States of America know all about that. Killing the indigenous people who were already here when we arrived and whose land we wanted for our own—that defiles a land. Gathering up men, women, and children in Africa and forcing them to be their slaves—that defiles a land. After slavery is finally abolished, continuing to treat people with darker skin as second-class citizens—that defiles a land. Exploiting the natural resources without regard to the future—that defiles a land. Fracking for oil defiles the land. Polluting the air and water defiles the land. Perpetuating a society where the rich get richer and the poor poorer, that defiles the land. Calling this the land of the free and the home of the brave, then kicking out immigrants and refugees from other countries, that defiles the land. Turning away from the one who created the land, to worship false idols—that defiles the land.

This was precisely what the people of Israel had done. They had turned away from Yahweh their God (capital G), and went after other gods (small g). Or as Jeremiah puts it, they went after worthless things, and became worthless themselves. Ouch!

We here in the United States of America know all about chasing after worthless things. We have our shopping malls and strip malls and outlet malls, our casinos and State Lotteries, we

have our adult video stores and on-line pornography. Thanks to the internet, we don't even have to leave home to chase after worthless things. We can even do it 24/7 if we don't want to eat or sleep. And with a smart phone, we can do it anywhere in the world!

We here in the United States of America know all about worshipping false gods, or idols. Do you know what America's number one idol is? Ourselves. We worship ourselves. We worship our freedom and independence, our autonomy and self-sufficiency. We worship our appearance, our wardrobes, our wheels. And before long, God is completely forgotten.

Let's go back to our worship of self-sufficiency. We don't need God! We can do it ourselves. In fact, we can accomplish anything if we work hard enough. By the way, that's another false god we worship: hard work. God wants to be our fountain of living water, and instead we stubbornly dig out our own cisterns. "No thanks, God. Got it covered." Which is fine until the cover cracks.

Be appalled, O heavens. These people have forgotten all that I have done for them, and now they think they don't need me. All they need is a full day's work and a healthy bank balance.

"I don't need fresh, living water; rainwater is fine." But the fresh, living water is so much better. Take a sip, you'll be amazed at the difference.

Here at the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church, we constantly flirt with digging our own cisterns, so we can pat ourselves on the back. But we've floundered enough, and failed enough, that deep down we know we need God's living water. The good news is, we have it.

Today at least, we are worshipping it, bathing in it. We drank deeply while the women's ensemble sang just now! But what about tomorrow? What about when we're at home, or school, or work?

Let's not turn away from God, and the living water God wants to give us. It's the water of grace and forgiveness, healing and love. And it refreshes like no cistern water can.

Let us come to God, who is the fountain of living water. Let us come to him in prayer. Let us come to her in singing. Let us come God in silence. Let us find God in Scripture. Let us find God in the beauty of nature. And Let us drink deeply, every chance we get!

Amen.