

THE STORY, OUR STORY, MY STORY

LENT 3 2025 All Souls' **LIVING WATER** dtw

Isaiah 55.1. Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come buy and eat!

Ps 63. 1,7 O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you, my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a barren land where there is no water. For you have been my helper, and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.

There I was with one arm in a plaster and splint, the other arm with an antibiotic drip stuck in it and a nurse saying to me, "It's time for your shower, love!" I thought to myself, "This is going to be fun, taking George to the shower (that was the name I gave to the portable drip-stand), not to mention holding the soap!" I didn't say a thing, struggled out of bed with the nurse all smiles, and shuffled to the shower with George and his three wheels, the nurse in hot pursuit.

"See how you go love, but I think I'll have to help." Help – me – shower – her?! I don't know how many times I dropped the soap before I gave in. It wasn't easy, especially seeing her look of uncompassionate triumph! Being in a shower with a nurse may be every man's fantasy; the reality was different. I felt quite humiliated.

Lord, every time I think I can go through this life on my own, making my own decisions, I fall flat on my face. I like to think I can get by just being of service to others and never needing any help myself. Yet it's when I realise how much I sometimes need others' help, that I am brought face to face with your care for me. Thankyou.

That reflection comes from my little book, *If Fish is all you want...* I wrote that piece not long after a stay in the Royal Perth Hospital in the 80's. I'm sharing it with you today because, once more, our readings are chock-full of the preemptive providence of God versus human willfulness; the overflowing resources of God versus our meagre attempts to control life, and its outcomes, in our own strength. From Isaiah we hear: The Lord says this: Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters...why do you labour for that which does not satisfy?... For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. (55. 1, 2, 8) and from Paul: God is faithful, and will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide your way out I Cor 10,13,

In our Eucharistic *Prayer of Preparation* to the one 'to whom all hearts are open, all desires known and from whom no secrets are hidden' we come to God to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his infilling presence, the Holy Spirit, that we might perfectly love God and worthily magnify God's holy name, through Christ our Lord. We are asking Jesus to gather us together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, rather than go our own selfish ways. That prayer is too good just to leave for Sunday worship. Try saying it in first person under the shower or in the car before your day begins: "...cleanse the thoughts of my heart today, by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that in all I do I might worthily magnify your holy name..." I'm sure that most of you actually know it by heart. I am also reminded of that lovely saying that a true friend is someone who knows everything about you and loves you just the same.

In my sermon on the Feast of the Baptism of Christ, I mentioned that all the way through the Hebrew Scriptures and the NT, water carries with it rich themes: redemption, salvation, cleansing,

silence, refreshment, blessing, life or death. The words water, thirst, drink, appear a good number of times in today's readings. The Psalms in the *Message* translation by Eugene Peterson offer a refreshing and renewing ring to today's Psalm 63: 1-3

*God-you're my God! I can't get enough of you!
I've worked up such hunger and thirst for God,
travelling across dry and weary deserts.
So here I am in the place of worship, eyes open,
drinking in your strength and glory.
In your generous love I am really living at last!
My lips brim praises like fountains.*

In her little book *Meditations on Silence*, Sister Wendy Beckett reflects on the painting *The River Brème* by Gustave Courbet 1865, with a meditation entitled *Cleansing*. (I suggest you let your body completely relax, eyes closed, as you listen to these words)

*Entering into silence is like stepping into cool clear water.
The dust and debris are quietly washed away,
and we are purified of our triviality.
This cleansing takes place whether we are conscious of it or not:
The very choice of silence, of desiring to be still,
washes away the day's grime.
The soft-flowing stream disappears into the darkness of the cliff,
a happy image of the mystery to which we surrender ourselves
when we accept the balm of silence.*

And 'surrender' is the word; surrendering to Living Water, the water that heals, restores and brings new life. Our Gospel reading today is about repentance: political, religious, spiritual, and social. The leaders and Jesus don't see eye to eye, and that is because there are two different playing fields: corruption and righteousness. All of Luke 13 exposes true versus false religion and the frustration of Jesus. It exposes the real thirst of the People Israel. Like those people, someone here today may feel that they are just wandering in a wilderness, uncertain, confused perhaps, or just very tired and thirsty. Let Jesus gather you under wings of holy love, hold you, and quench you.

Here are some things for all of us to ponder during the rest of our Lenten journey:

- For what does my soul thirst?
- What needs cleansing and purifying in my life?
- Is there anything undisclosed that needs to be laid bare?
- How well do I know myself?
- How is my self-esteem?
- What things, situations, people, are life-giving for me right now?
- How can I respond to the needs of other thirsty voices in my church and community?

Let us pray:

Jesus, Fount of Living Water, only our thirst compels us beyond complaint to conversation, beyond rejection to relationship. Pour your love into our hearts, that, refreshed and renewed, we may invite others to your living water. Amen.