

(This sermon was adapted from Rev. Dr. Reed Lessing’s sermon series, Zechariah: Your Kingdom Come)

When I was young, my family would drive past a wastewater treatment plant on the way to the park. Being young and naïve, I would often comment that the plant looked like a water park. Don’t worry, this isn’t a story of me hopping the fence to go down a water slide. My dad explained to me that’s where all the waste water goes after we’re done using it. The job of the plant is to take sewage and make it safe to put back into the environment.

There *is* another kind of sewage. It’s the gunk, slime and dirt in our hearts. You know. When someone barks at us and we bark right back. When our schedule is too tight and we lose our temper. When someone gives us a piece of gossip, marinated in slander, and we pass it on—full throttle. When we see a needy child as a burden to be borne rather than a person to be loved. The gunk and slime and dirt fills our heart. Is there somewhere we can go when our hearts become so contaminated, so dirty and so polluted?

Yes! There is! We’re in a series on the book of Zechariah. I’m calling this evening’s sermon *The Prince of Peace’s Purifier*. Jesus, our Redeemer, has set up a treatment plant to purify and cleanse all of the rotten and rancid stuff in our hearts. Let’s dig into Zechariah 13:1 using these questions—what, why, where, how and when. *What, why, where, how and when.*

What? A fountain! “On that day a fountain will be opened.” (Zech 13:1) The term “fountain,” refers to a fountain of living water. Zech 14:8 promises a never-ending supply of living water!

“Living water,” though, implies that there is something called “dead water.” Dead water is the raw sewage that oozes from our hearts. Dead water is the same gossip, day after day. Dead water is the same argument, day after day. Dead water is the same obsessive sin, day after day.

Zechariah promises a fountain of living water. It refines and purifies the muck and mire in our hearts. The prophet writes that this fountain is open. Open! This is great news! With the COVID-19 pandemic, what places are still even open anymore? Even mainstays like grocery stores that run 24/7 are now on limited schedules. On the other hand, God’s purifying fountain doesn’t maintain business hours. It is *always* open. We can come for refining and purifying as often as needed—24–7, 365. And get this! There is no charge. The services are absolutely free!

“Wait a minute,” you say. What was wrong with the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament that Zechariah promises this fountain? What was wrong with all of

the sin offerings, peace offerings, freewill offerings, guilt offerings—slain bulls and lambs and goats and rams?

Answer? Nothing. These gifts point to a greater cleansing, a greater purifying. Zechariah couldn't see the whole story, but God showed him at least this much: a fountain of living water will be opened and it will forgive and refine our hearts.

What? An open fountain of perfect living and cleansing water! **Why?** Let me put it this way. You've been working out in the yard on a hot summer day. Your sweaty body has attracted dirt like a magnet. You're caked with grime. You need to attend a wedding that afternoon, so you go inside, put on your best clean clothes, and head out the door.

Wait a minute! What's missing? A shower! Nobody would just change clothes without first washing off the dirt and sweat. When you're hot and dirty, nothing feels better than a shower. This physical picture has a spiritual analogy, but there's a difference. The entire human race reeks of sin in the presence of the holy God. But because we all smell the same, we tend not to notice how foul we really smell. Many go their entire lives without sensing their need for cleansing from sin. Others may think that their good works cover the foul odor of their sin, and so they put on their clean clothes without showering.

Why is there an open fountain of living water? Because we're all dirty—really, really dirty! What pollutes us so thoroughly? Today more than ever we are a country and a people who are concerned about hygiene. Wash your hands. Disinfect surfaces. Maintain social distancing. These are all important things and I want us as a congregation to take this seriously.

But I think our world, our country, and even each one of us would look a lot different if we were so repulsed by the sludge of sin in our own hearts that we had no choice but to cling to and lean on our Prince of Peace to purify us. What would it look like if we took sin and unbelief as seriously as we do COVID-19?

We can get upset when leaders declare victory over COVID-19 before the battle is won. We rightfully react in outrage over COVID-19 patients refusing to self-quarantine. We curse those who hoard and resell medical supplies as a get-rich quick scheme.

But do we get upset when we fall into the same sins over and over? Do we get upset when someone who claims to be a Christian flaunts their sin, saying they've done nothing wrong? Or do we turn a blind eye? Do we lash out in anger when a Christian friend gently and kindly calls us to turn from our sins? Saying

back to them, “Who are you to judge me?” Our hands may be soaked in sanitizer, but our hands aren’t always clean.

Why do we need a fountain of living water to clean us? We’re covered in sin!

What? An open fountain of living and cleansing water! Why? We all desperately need it! **Where?** Where is the Prince of Peace’s Purifier? Zechariah 12:10 helps us. In this verse God says, “They will gaze upon me whom they have pierced.” God? Pierced? God pierced with what? The razor-sharp tip of a spear. Where? Calvary. John 19:34 describes a Roman soldier taking his spear and spitting open our Savior’s side. “There was a sudden flow of blood and water.” Water flooding from the one whose body is blistered and burned. A gushing river of life surging from the one who hangs dead upon a tree. Living water flowing from the one who cried out, “I thirst.” Here is Jesus—crushed and cursed by the dirt, slime and grime of the world.

What? A fountain that is always open for you! Why? We desperately need it! Where? Mt. Calvary. **How?** How does the fountain of water, gushing from our Savior’s side, purge, purify and refine all of the gunk and goo in my heart? Two words. Holy Baptism!

Holy Baptism connects us to the Prince of Peace’s purifier! Like a conduit, baptism links us to the fountain of purifying water. Baptism deliver the gifts of Christ atonement that has been made a satisfaction for sin that is complete. Baptism announces that guilt is gone, our debt is paid, our sins are forgiven, hell is vanquished and heaven is open. Baptism empowers us **to hear Christ’s voice calling us back, bringing us home, and renewing our spirits so that we flee to no other refuge, build on no other foundation, and wash in no other fountain.**

What? An open fountain of perfect living and cleansing water! Why? We all desperately need it! Where? Mt. Calvary. How? Holy Baptism. **When?** We’re missing when. When does this water flow? When does it come to me? When does it purify my polluted heart? It’s because Jesus loves you so very, very, very much that his living, life-giving, soul-renewing water flows ... when?

Right now! Amen.