

Lectionary Readings: Zechariah 13:1-2; Psalm 142; 1 John 1:8-2:2; John 19:28-37

Sermon Title: *The Redeemer's Refinery*

Prayer: *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of [our] heart[s] be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, [our] Rock and [our] Redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)*

Salutation: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:2)

Text: The Word from God through which the Holy Spirit comes to stir our hearts for the Fourth Sunday in Lent is from our Old Testament Reading: Zechariah, chapter 8.

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, if you have ever visited or driven by an oil refinery, the jungle of tubes, pipes, valves, switches and pumps might remind you of a Tinker-Toy set. However, an oil refinery actually does something. What does it do? It processes crude oil.

What is crude oil, you ask? Crude oil is oil in its natural state before it's refined into gasoline, diesel fuel, heating oil, kerosene, liquefied petroleum gas, jet fuel and the like.

Yet, there *is* another kind of crude oil. 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.

You see, 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?

I. Yes! There is! Again, we're in a sermon series on the book of Zechariah. I'm calling this Sunday's sermon *The Redeemer's Refinery*. Why? Jesus, our Redeemer, has set up a refinery to purify and cleanse all of the rotten and rancid stuff in our hearts. So, let's dig into Zechariah 13:1, using these questions – what, why, where, how and when. Again, *What, why, where, how and when.*

What? A fountain! Zechariah writes in verse 1: "*On that day a fountain will be opened.*" The term "*fountain,*" refers to a fountain of living water. Then in Zechariah 14:8 (part of our Old Testament Reading for Easter Sunday) promises a never-ending supply of living water!

“*Living water,*” though, implies that there is something called “*dead water.*” What is dead water?

- 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.

However, Zechariah promises a fountain of living water. This fountain refines and purifies the muck and mire in our hearts. The prophet writes that this fountain is open.

Open! This is great news! None of us like it when places are closed, we can especially relate to that with the COVID-19 mandates in place. For example:

- What does it feel like when you can’t attend to the normal daily activities that might cramp your lifestyle, such as banking, shopping for essential things and the shelves are bare?
- Or more importantly, what does it feel like not being able to attend church worship services and other church activities?

We might think that having to curtail these normal activities as a “*bummer.*” However, God’s refining fountain doesn’t maintain business hours, nor does it have restrictions. It’s *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 all of the sin offerings, peace offerings, freewill offerings, guilt offerings – slain bulls and lambs and goats and rams in the Old Testament that, Zechariah promises this fountain?”

Answer? Nothing. These Old Testament gifts point to a greater cleansing, a greater refining. Keep in mind, 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!

II. 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? The seven deadly sins! The Seven Deadly Sins originate with Pope Gregory I who codified them and made them official in AD 590. They are:

- Lust – I want what I want and I want it right now.
- Envy – I want what you have and I want it right now.
- Greed – I want more of what I have and I want it right now.
- Sloth – I have no drive or desire and I certainly don't want to do anything with my life – right now or ever.
- Wrath – I'm full of anger and rage and I'm going to dump it on you right now.
- Pride – I'm better than you, richer than you, younger than you and smarter than you right now and forevermore!
- Gluttony – I'm going to indulge myself with whatever and I will do it right now!

Let me give you an example of being overwhelmed by the Seven Deadly Sins. It's "*Binge-watching*." Binge-watching involves stringing together several TV episodes all in a row, sometimes for hours on end. It's something that more than half of all adults in America engage in.

Binge-watching is becoming an epidemic, with 50% of viewers in their 20s saying they binge-watch weekly. Researchers at the University of Texas found that binge-watching is correlated to depression, loneliness, obesity and loss of self-control. Therefore, binge-watching invites the Seven Deadly Sins right into our homes and into our hearts.

What? An open fountain of living and cleansing water! Why? We all desperately need it!

III. Where? Where is the Redeemer's Refinery? 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 splitting open our Savior's side: "*There was a sudden flow of blood and water.*"

That means:

- 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.

IV. 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!

You see, Holy Baptism connects us to the Redeemer's Refinery! Like a conduit:

- Baptism links us to the fountain of purifying water.
- Baptism deliver the gifts of Christ atonement that has been made and 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.

But this refinery won't do us any good if we look at it and think:

- *"I wish my husband or wife and kids would get under that water!"*
- *"Well! I may not be perfect but I'm a whole lot better than my parents ever were!"*
- *"I'm just as good as the next guy. I pay my taxes, coach Little League and every now and then I slip a few bucks into the offering plate."*
- *"Me, a sinner? Come on! I get rowdy every now and then, but my momma says I'm a pretty good ol' boy."*

Justification. Rationalization. Comparison. These are the stories of lost people. Don't become one of them!

Remember the refinery. Yes, a refinery to purify and cleanse all of the rotten and rancid stuff in our hearts:

- What? An open fountain of perfect living and cleansing water!
- Why? We all desperately that perfect living and cleansing water!
- Where? Mt. Calvary.
- How? Holy Baptism.

V. When? Yes, we're missing when. So, we ask:

- When does this water flow?
- When does it come to me?
- When does it purify my polluted heart?

Conclusion: It's like this, Dear friends in Christ, Jesus loves you so very, very, very much that His living, life-giving, soul-renewing water flows, *when? Right now, at this very hour!*

In the name of ✠ Jesus, Who forgives all your sins. Amen.

To God alone the Glory!