

Hope and Healing

Week 1: One of *Those People*

Jeremiah 2:11-13

Imagine being thirsty. Not like, *I could use some water*, but like *5 year old at bedtime* kind of thirst! Nothing is going to satisfy you until you drink some water!

Glass of Water Illustration

- 1st Glass – Refreshing, clean.
- 2nd Glass – Add dirt, salt, stir with finger.

Most of us have not experienced a level of dehydration and thirst that would make us grab this glass of water and drink it. But, dehydration causes people to do things they wouldn't typically do. It makes us disoriented and confused; blurs our judgement. And people have been known to drink water they normally wouldn't touch because they were so thirsty.

In other words, **when thirst runs deep, relief often overrides wisdom.**

There's a kind of thirst that makes people do things they never thought they would. It's why desperate people drink water from the ocean or contaminated streams. They know it's only going to make it worse, but they're willing to try anything to make the thirst go away. They're willing to take their chances.

Deep thirst changes the way we think, the decisions we make. Thirst lowers our standards of what we'd usually say is acceptable and lowers the bar of what we're willing to settle for.

And while we may not know the **physical** desperation that causes someone to drink this (2nd glass), we've probably all felt some kind of emotional or spiritual desperation that has caused us to drink something like it. To consume something we may even hate, or know is causing us harm, but our search for relief overrides wisdom, and so we find ourselves going back to it again and again.

We know what it's like to experience emotional thirst from being:

- Exhausted from trying to keep it together.
- Worn down from pretending.
- Carrying the weight of guilt, shame, regrets.
- Coping mechanisms that help us survive the things we've done or the things that have been done to us.

Emotional thirst from trying to:

- Outrun what we don't want to face.
- Numb what hurts.
- Control what feels chaotic.

Living in these spaces takes its toll. They leave our souls feeling parched and dry. And just like physical thirst, emotional thirst can make us drink from things that look less like this (clean water) and more like this (dirty).

And some people's search for relief in their life has left them with visible scars that everyone can see. So, when we hear words like *addiction*, it's easy for us to paint a picture in our minds of a certain kind of person. It's one of "those people" whose life looks more broken than ours. Whose way of coping is more harmful and less socially acceptable than our way.

But, the truth is, in our emotional and spiritual thirst, all of us are tempted to drink from wells that are actually harmful to our souls. We seek success and the approval of others thinking that will satisfy us. We keep ourselves busy, or entertained, or distracted so our souls are never quiet enough to make us have to come face to face with reality. Some of us turn to toxic relationships or unhealthy habits.

Listen, it doesn't matter if you live in the best neighborhood, or on the street, **we are all thirsty for something.** Say that with me...

Peace, connection, significance, intimacy. We are all thirsty for something. And every single one of us has turned to a broken, worn out well looking for satisfaction and relief from the thirst we feel in our souls. And even though we know the water we draw from these wells isn't good for us, we keep going back to them again and again because we are all thirsty for something. We think, *THIS will be the time it delivers*, but it never does.

The good news for us today is that this condition is not new. We've been doing this since the beginning of time, and yet, in His love and kindness, God continues to pursue us. He never stops drawing us to Himself because He knows that only He can truly satisfy the longing in our souls.

In our text today, God is speaking to His people through the prophet Jeremiah. God has watched as they have slowly drifted away from Him. They haven't stopped believing in God, they've just stopped trusting Him. They were still going through the religious motions, but they'd become self-reliant and had made a bunch of spiritual compromises that were causing them to trust in themselves more than the Lord.

In Jeremiah 2, God is confronting them about this, but the tone is more grief than anger. When we're stuck in a rut, sometimes we need something to jolt us back to reality. That's kind of what God is doing here. If you have your Bible open, look up at verse 5...(READ)

That word for "worthless" literally means *vapor* or *breath*. What you pursue shapes who you become. They were chasing after empty, meaningless idols and became empty themselves. And when Scripture talks about idols, it's not just talking about statues or little

figurines. Idols represented security, fertility, power and control. People were building their lives around these empty idols and it was leaving them empty. They were trusting in those things to give them what only God could provide. The God that they were in covenant relationship with.

So, in verse 11, God asks...(READ Jer. 2:11)

God's lamenting that even pagan nations stayed loyal to their false gods, but Israel had abandoned the One, True God and put their trust in these empty idols.

He continues in verse 12...(READ Jer. 2:12-13)

God paints a word picture here that I don't want us to miss. Cisterns were these human-made underground storage tanks that would be used to collect rainwater. When I was in Israel a few years ago, we actually got to take a tour of one. (Show cistern image – dug out by hand, one bucket at a time.)

Cisterns were necessary to ensure there was enough water for people and crops and livestock, but they were also problematic. The water would become stagnant, they were easily contaminated. They would crack and leak over time. They took all kinds of work to dig out and maintain.

Compare that to a spring of fresh, flowing water that was clean and reliable. God is saying to His people, "You walked away from living water (from me), and settled for something that can never satisfy and sustain you."

And we continue to do the same thing today. We forget the Lord, who is the Living Water our souls crave, and we build cisterns that look like coping mechanisms that once helped, but now harm. Habits that used to numb the pain, but now only make it worse. God isn't surprised by our thirst, but I think He's often grieved by where we go to quench it. The water we choose to drink rather than the living water He gives us.

The truth is, we've all dug our own cisterns and returned to them looking for refreshment, only to come up empty. We've all searched for meaning, connection, intimacy in places it can never be found. Each of us has some kind of hurt, hang-up, or habit that has led us to the wrong wells, leaving us thirsty for something more.

To put it bluntly, we are all one of "those people." And the broken cisterns we run to looking for relief might be different, but each of us has a place we run to and a reason we run there.

So let me ask you some invasive questions for you to think about this morning...

- Where do you turn when life leaves you thirsty?
- Where do you run when you're hurting, angry, lonely, or tired?

- What has promised you relief, but never delivered, and yet you still find yourself going back to it again and again?

Desperation has a way of drowning out wisdom, so we turn back to the same old, worn out wells that have never worked, but we're hoping THIS time will be different. And I don't say that with judgement, I say it with a ton of compassion and empathy because I find myself doing the very same thing.

So, what do we do about it? I think healing begins when we admit to ourself, to God, and to others, "Yeah, I'm one of those people." One of my core convictions is that we all have a hurt, hang-up, or habit...and only Jesus can provide the hope and healing our thirsty souls desire.

We've all been hurt by someone, or have something in our life that we can't get over, or a habit we can't break. Jesus said, "I am the Living Water," and only He can provide the hope and healing that our thirsty souls desire.

Over the next 3 months, we're going to do a deep dive into the 12 steps of recovery, because when we embrace this idea that we're all one of "those people," the 12 steps become more than just a way to get sober, they become a discipleship pathway that helps all of us find hope and healing in Jesus.

(Resources available in the lobby.)

So, our first step is to just be honest with ourselves and with God that our way isn't working and we need the Living Water that only He can provide.

Second thing we can do is look around us and pray for eyes to see people the way God sees them and love people the way God loves them. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. Everyone in this world is looking for the same thing and trying to find it in different places. Who are we to judge the wells people dig when we each have our own.

But, we have been sent into this thirsty world to point people to the source of the Living Water their souls crave. Somebody once said that evangelism is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.

We have in Jesus what people are looking for, which is why we put so much emphasis on relational evangelism. Helping the people in our life who are close to us, but living far from God, find and follow Jesus.

(Value to us, measure what matters, THIS matters...One-Awareness Survey)

Over the next several weeks, we're going to walk through a journey of hope and healing. We don't want to be a church of "those people" and everyone else. We want to be a church of thirsty people finding true satisfaction in Jesus.

The 12 steps don't heal us. Programs don't heal us. Only Jesus can transform us by His grace. And that journey starts with a first step, or a next step, towards Him.