

**May 16 The promise of healing (2) Ezekiel 47. 1-12****Life Group questions**

Ezekiel is the prophet who went into exile in Babylon with his fellow-Jews. His book begins with some overwhelming visions he had of the Lord, who charged him to deliver his message to the people. After this, the early chapters are heavy with pronouncements of the judgement of God on his unfaithful people, which has resulted in his leaving the temple, which has been destroyed. But the later chapters are full of hope, as Ezekiel shares God's promise to restore his people and change their hearts: see chapter 36. 25-28. *'I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God.'*

Several visions follow, to illuminate the promised divine work of restoration: the Valley of Dry Bones (chapter 37), God's radiant glory returning to his rebuilt temple (ch 43), and today's vision of the river of life-giving water, flowing from the temple where God dwells, bringing healing and fruitfulness.

1 Reflect on the significance of rivers in the Bible, starting with the one that watered the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2) and caused it to flourish in that perfect created world, before it was spoiled by sin; and ending with the river of life in Revelation 22. 1-2, flowing from the throne of God in the perfect new heavens and new earth, where death is defeated and creation is restored.

Note the similarity in the descriptions in Ezekiel 47 and Revelation 22. **The important difference is that Ezekiel's vision is for now, not for heaven.** See Ezekiel 36. 33-36. God was wanting to restore his people and heal their world in the here and now, and he wants to do the same today, and to use us as his agents. How might that inspire us, as we look at the needs of our community and our world?

2 With that in mind, consider how these details in the passage about the river might translate into our experience, our witness and God's activity among us.

- the way the water flows from the temple where God dwells
- the way an initial trickle grows gradually until it is a full flowing river
- the way the prophet is immersed in the river
- the year-long fruitfulness on its banks
- the sweetening of the Dead Sea, which produces such abundance of life and sustenance for fishermen

3 Our church logo shows a river flowing from the cross. Listen to this song by Chris Tomlin.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPOMJpASI98> The second verse says

*Be still, there is a river*

*That flows from Calvary's tree*

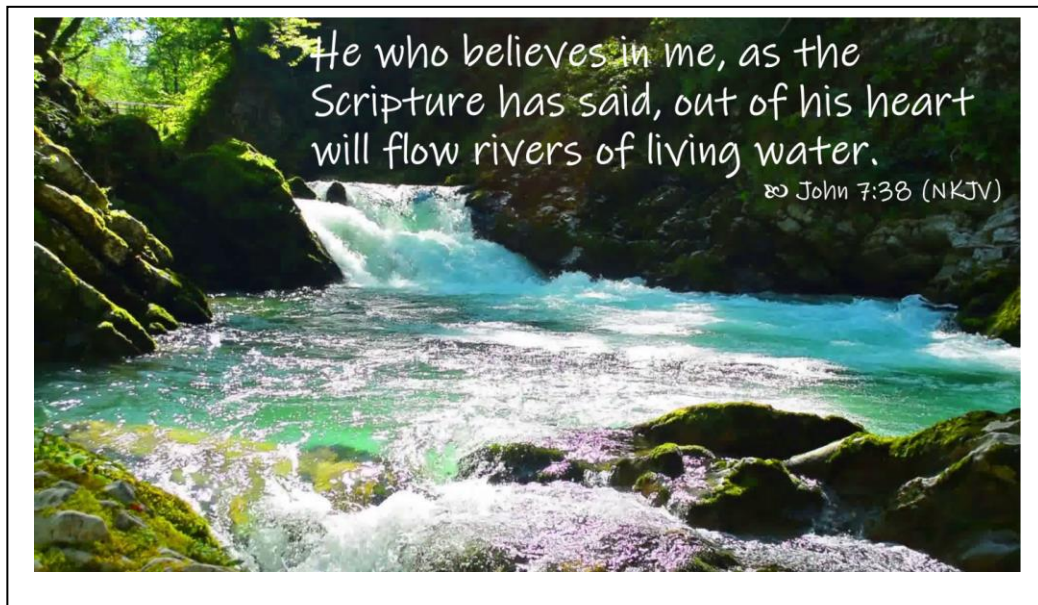
*A fountain for the thirsty*

*Pure grace that washes over me*

4 How can we as God's people be channels of the water of life to our community?

We can only do this if the Holy Spirit is within us and spills out of us! See John 7. 37-39. *'On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.'*

Pray to be filled with the Spirit, so we can be rivers, or at least trickles, to others, bringing God's healing and restoration after the ravages of the pandemic. Where do we already see signs of new life? Can we see the beginnings of a 'trickle' of living water? As we look forward to Pentecost, and pray 'Thy Kingdom Come', perhaps we could keep the imagery of Ezekiel's river in our imaginations, and picture it growing and swelling to bless and heal our land.



5 'We seek your kingdom' is a song commissioned by LICC and Thy Kingdom Come. It's an encouragement and a call to action – a declaration that each of us can join in God's kingdom work right where we are. And a prayer that through ordinary Christians like you and me, God would transform, revive, and heal our society. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Lp2mMpSa1E>