

SEMON: WATER IS LIFE

At present, India is reeling under a massive drought which affects as many as 12 states. Due to this severe drought condition, a huge majority of farmers have lost their livelihood and food supply due to the damage inflicted upon crops. Water scarcity has affected over 90 lakh farmers in Maharashtra alone, which is almost equal to the total population of Sweden. This agrarian crisis has induced as many as 57 farmer's to commit suicide in Maharashtra. This dire situation is a reflection of the importance of water as all life forms depend heavily on water for life. It is impossible to imagine any life on earth without water.

All living things depend on water for existence. Without water, orchards and fields will be barren, livestock will suffer, cities will crumble, and nations will perish. God has created the world with a perfect balance of all essential elements for life. However, due to our callous attitude, greed, and selfishness, we have destroyed this balance. The results of our actions and misdeeds are evident in the kind of problems we face in the world today – water scarcity, air pollution, water pollution etc. The air we breathe and the water we drink are no longer safe. These changes in the earth's life-supporting systems are indicative of our role in destroying the life supporting systems on earth. We have become careless consumers rather than good stewards of God's gifts to us. Nevertheless, we must ask ourselves, "As God's children, do we have a responsibility to speak, or act on this issue? Are we responsible to protect and conserve these God given natural blessings?"

The images of water run through the Bible, from the very first verse of Genesis to the very last chapter of Revelation. Read Genesis 1:2 *".....The Spirit of God was hovering over the water."* In the Old Testament, water symbolised God's sustaining provision, His faithfulness, and His love. In the New Testament, water symbolised new life or redemption.

Today as we meditate on the theme "**Water is life,**" may God help us to understand that He has called us to be the good stewards of all the essential elements in nature that He has given us.

1. Water: A blessing to be cherished and protected.

Are you conscious of the way you use water? Do you think about your water bills when you use water? We may be conscious of the way we use electricity and petrol but not water. We have taken water for granted since it is often easily available, with little or no cost. However, water is a blessing which is essential for life and in the Bible we see many instances of God blessing his people with water. Let's look at few Bible portions:

- Deuteronomy 8:7 *"For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills."* We see God's promise of abundant water to the Israelites after they wandered for forty years in the desert experiencing the difficult and rough times now they came in to the land where milk and honey flow and where water is plenty. We know that God promised

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that He will give them a promised land and this is the fulfilment of God's promise and blessings on people of God.

- Exodus 15:22-27, When Israelites came into the desert of Shur “.....for three days they travelled in the desert without finding water.” And after that when they came to Marah and Elim they found water but it was bitter and the people grumbled against Moses. Then Moses cried out to the Lord and the Lord showed him a piece of wood and water became sweet. God's love and concern for His people doesn't stop there, Bible tells us that they found twelve springs and seventy palm trees.
- Job 5:10. “He provides rain for the earth; he sends water on the countryside.” Rains are blessing from God. How many of us enjoy the rain? We all have the experience of enjoying in the rain. Rain water brings life to human beings, birds in the air, trees, plants, mountains, and hills. Water is at the heart of His blessing and His promise.

2. Water: A source of hope and a future

There are many incidences of God providing water to people, and with it giving new hope and life. One such incident is the story of Hagar, the mistress of Abraham and her son Ishmael

- We can see in Genesis 21:15-19. On Sarah's insistence and God's instruction, Abraham sends Hagar and her son away. After a while, Hagar wanders in the desert of Beersheba without any hope. Her water jar is empty, and she gives up all hope. She leaves her son under bush thinking, “I cannot watch the boy die.” In her pain and hopelessness, she thought that God had forsaken her, but the Word of God says “God heard the boy crying” the angel of God called Hagar from heaven and said, “Do not be afraid...Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water.” In this situation of hopelessness, God gave her hope and life by providing a well full of water. This story shows not only God's love and mercy but also our desperate need of water for survival. He not only gave hope to Hagar and her son Ishmael, but He also gave a future to the boy by promising that He would make him into a great nation. (V. 18)
- Numbers 20:2-11. We see that God provided water to his people from the rock, making impossible things possible for His people so that they may live.

Our God is a God who gives hope and a future to His people - “For I Know the plans I have for you.....plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11) Providing water in time of hopelessness also shows the fulfilment of his promise of giving us hope and a future.

3. Water: God's Sustaining Power

- In 2 Kings 3:17-20 the King of Israel set out with the King of Judah and the King of Edom, and after marching seven days the army had no water for themselves or for the animals with them. Then Jehoshaphat asked, “is there no prophet of the Lord here?”, Then they went to Elisha and God spoke to His people through Prophet Elisha, ‘for this is what the Lord says “You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you, your cattle and your other animals will drink”. Through this, we see how God sustains His people by providing water in an unusual way.

This passage is a beautiful expression of El-Shaddai God who is almighty who has authority over everything. He has the ultimate power to sustain and uphold us in His hand.

- Isaiah 41:17-18 says *“The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But I the Lord will answer them, I the God of Israel, will not forsake them; I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys, I will turn the desert into pool of waters, and the perched ground in to springs.”*

These verses show that God is concerned for the poor and needy, and He will never forsake them, He will do unimaginable things for people who are powerless and marginalised to sustain them.

4. Water: God’s Power of restoration and new Life.

There are many instances of God’s people rebelling against God and walking away from Him, but God always restored them and gave them new life and hope in His unfailing love. In the last few chapters of Ezekiel we see that after the fall of Jerusalem He brought peace and a bright future for the Israelites.

- If we read Ezekiel 47:1-12 God asks Ezekiel to walk in the water and that water was not normal water but water which was flowing out from under the threshold of the temple. Ezekiel walked in that water and after some time we see that it becomes a river *“He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in – a river that no one could cross”* this river symbolises the abundance of God’s new blessing. This passage shows how God restores and blesses His people in abundance. He will not only restore what was lost, but He will do much more than we imagine. As it says in verse 9 *“...wherever the river flows everything will live”*, it implies that the river of God has power to restore what was lost and can give a new life. If we compare this to today’s situation, it is the same - we have rebelled against Him and disobeyed His commandments and now we are in pain, but if we obey and return to Him, He is always there to restore what was lost.
- Read Revelation 22:1-2 *“...the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal”*. In these verses, God used water to symbolize new life and future blessings.

We see throughout the Bible how God showed His love to His people and sustained them by providing them whatever they need, He healed them and promised them a new life and future, restored them and blessed them and gave His own creation to us to enjoy and cherish it.

In Gen 1:28 *“God blessed them and said to them “be fruitful and increase in numbers; fill the earth and subdue it...”* often we misinterpret the word “subdue” and think that the creation is our property and we have the license to do whatever we want to do with it. We forget our God-given responsibility to take care of His creation as written in Genesis 2:15, *“The Lord God*

took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it". Instead of caring for His creation, we have played a major role in destroying it.

Today as our country goes through severe drought with many people are unable to access drinking water or forced to drink dirty water, we may locate the cause of the present drought situation to poor rainfall, or poor monsoon. However, the underlying cause which we need to realize is that it is because of our greed and sin. Our actions, our lifestyle of greed and selfishness has its impact on God's creation.

- Jeremiah 12: 4 says *"how long will the land lie parched! And the grass in every field be withered? Because those who live in it are wicked, the animals and birds have perished....."*

Today God is asking us the same question - how long will His land suffer because of our wicked and greedy action. Psalm 24:1 says *"The earth is the Lords and everything in it....."*

Conclusion – God has blessed us with enough natural resources to fulfil everyone's need but not for everyone's greed. In our greed, we have become blind and numb to those suffering around us, human or nature. We fail to see that the current crisis, which causes great human suffering, breaks God's heart. We ruthlessly exploit His creation which He has given us freely out of His everlasting love. We forget that we are a part of His creation not the owner as it says in Leviticus 25:23 *".....The land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners."* We forget that God's love is not limited to human beings but extends to all His creation as it says in John 3:16, *"God so loved the World..."*

Now we need to decide whether we want to enjoy God's blessing and cherish it or will we still want to live a greedy and selfish life. We cannot forget that because of our sins the earth was cursed and today because of our exploitation of creation the earth is suffering. It is time now to come out of our ignorance and cry out to our God that He may restore us back in to His abundant blessing heal our land and shower his mercies upon His creation, so as to let the earth rejoice once again!