

(PPx1) The Way x21. Sunday 26 May_2019.

Wells and water on the Way. – Upper and Nether Springs.

READ: (PPx2) Judges 1:1,11 – 15 (and Joshua 15: 19). John 4: 13, 14 and 7: 37, 38

(Judges and Joshua overlap in dealing with the period of Israelite invasion of Canaan.)

JESUS declared himself to be **the Way** (to the Father *John 14: 6*) and his followers are described as those who **belonged to the Way**. (*Acts 9: 2*) Those who follow Jesus in everyday life and throughout life are on the journey, the way – daily pilgrimage. Hopefully we are learning and desiring to make choices which keep us closer to Jesus.

(* **Isaiah** passed on God's promise **to make a Way in the wilderness** (*43: 19*) continues to describe the blessings of the Way: **44: 2- 4** *I am the LORD who created you; from the time that you were born, I have helped you. Do not be afraid: you are my servant, my chosen people who I love. I will give water to the thirsty land and make streams flow in the dry ground. I will pour out my Spirit on your children and my blessings on your descendants. They will thrive like well-watered grass, like willows by streams of water.* (We are in Easter through wait the promise of Pentecost – last days.)

Sustaining spirituality – eternal springs.

We have been considering the importance of WELLS and WATER as part of the metaphor of journeying in life and said that **our relationship with Holy Spirit and places of refreshment are central to a journey of FAITH**. Walking and moving on to places of refreshment and rest at the right time and also **encountering new people – new challenges and situations is also significant in life's faith journey**.

Every long journey needs to be paced. Life's journey is interspersed with **encounters with people and new relationships challenges**. Consideration needs to be given as to how we can share the good news of Jesus as **the spring of fresh water – eternal life**. (*John 4: 14 and 7: 38 springs from our sides*). In *Jeremiah 2: 13* God describes (PPx3) himself as *"the spring of fresh water"*. **Rivers, wells, cisterns, and springs that are represented in the Bible** – are places of physical and spiritual refreshment but also meeting places and encounters.



Last week – we considered the metaphor of broken cisterns

Cisterns: Jerusalem was well supplied with these subterranean reservoirs where the Spring rains were gathered to become a constant supply throughout the year. On this basis it could withstand sieges. These cisterns were cut out of the rock and then lined with impervious masonry and lime cement. BUT if the cement gave way the cistern became broken and was abandoned. **It was Jeremiah's constant cry that from God's perspective the people of Israel had turned away from the *true spring of fresh water* and dug cisterns that were broken and didn't hold water. *Jeremiah 2: 13.***

I ended last week's talk with a reminder of the Call – invitation to come back into relationship with Trinity God and drink.

*1 Corinthians 12: 12, 13. Christ is like a single body, even though it is made up of different parts. In the same way all of us whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free, have been baptised into one body by the same Spirit, and we have **all been given the one Spirit to drink.***

ARE you drinking of the Spirit or are you still trying to satisfy yourselves with things that do not hold water and do not satisfy?

Wealth and money, relationships and family and friendships, work, leisure, fitness and body image **all have their place** BUT it is seeking and choosing God's Kingdom that keeps them in their right place and brings inner satisfaction and sustaining. (That is the message of all the Bible teachers including Jeremiah and of Jesus himself).

(PPx4) Today See Judges 1: 12 – 15 and Joshua 15: 19. Upper and Nether Springs?

When Caleb's daughter Achsah found on her wedding day to Othniel that her field was in dry country she requested pools/ springs of water. Caleb gave her **(both) the upper and the lower springs**. Owning the water – is synonymous with owning/possessing the land. Springs as natural outbursts of water are a relatively rare occurrence in the arid Middle East where water is worth more than gold.

“Nether” – lower, beneath, downwards (old Saxon, + European) : - the description of the 2 types of springs has been used by describers of spiritual experience to broadly depict different types of spiritualities - perhaps the more exuberant activist and the more contemplative...or different seasons (another type of metaphor to describe spiritual “eras” would be the – *former and later day rains* or *autumn and spring rain* – *Joel 2: 23 & 28* and flow into Peter's speech on the Day of Pentecost describing what was experienced and witnessed as a fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel. Rains coming variantly in either spiritual moderation or excessive outpourings perhaps. Pentecostals, charismatics and other Christians may pray for an even greater out-pouring so that *the earth may be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. Habakkuk 2: 14*). **These metaphors are descriptive of our different spiritual experiences rather than doctrinal statements – they are making the point I think that God gives an abundance of himself to us to satisfy every human need – the Spirit may come in dynamic power as water bursting forth or in gentle strength.**

Jesus promised living water to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well *John 4: 10* to satisfy our inner thirsts with the water he gives. ALL of our needs satisfied - our "surface-shallower more basic" and our deepest human needs. All needs satisfied and a fountain springing up internally that can overflow to bless others. (Having found an everlasting spring, we must tell other thirsty, dying people in the desert).

(PPx5) The "Nether Springs" - name taken by the Northumbria Community.

<https://www.northumbriacommunity.org/nether-springs/>

'See the land so black and barren, God will make a watered garden. Fruitfulness where once was parchedness, light to break into the darkness, Upper Springs and Nether Springs in the field that Father's given.' Celtic Daily Prayer – Meditation for Day 14.

The Nether Springs is situated quite deliberately in North Northumberland as a fulfilment of *Joshua 15:17-19*, a foundational scripture about the Father's gift to us of both the Nether Springs and the Upper Springs. In the early days (late 1970's early 1980's. Roy Searle mission in Northumbria) this story of Caleb, Othniel and Achsah inspired us 'to seek for the Nether Springs'. Holy Island (Lindisfarne) was so clearly the place of the Upper Springs; but somewhere further inland would be a place where people could seek the nether, hidden, deeper springs of spirituality rooted in the history and heritage of Northumbria.

This spirituality had at its heart the desire for God, of seeking Him and knowing Him, which was expressed in 'a faith that is active and contagious (Upper Springs) and a prayer that is quiet and contemplative' (Nether Springs). We needed (and still need)



both the ebb and the flow of the tide of life.

The priority of finding 'the Nether Springs, a residential monastic centre, and home of Northumbria Ministries' was realised in October 1992 when the Nether Springs found a home in North Northumberland. (*A dispersed and semi residential intentional community and retreat house*). After 18 + years the Nether Springs found a new home a little further south but still in North Northumberland at Acton Home Farm, between Alnwick and Morpeth. So in early 2011 we were able to finalise the move amidst much thanksgiving for God's provision. (*We visited together to pray in 2014?*)

The Nether Springs is the Mother House, administrative centre and home of the Northumbria Community. It is a semi-residential expression of what is at the heart of the Northumbria Community – the exploring, embracing and expressing of 'a new monasticism.' A monastic school of life, not a monastery but a centre where monastic values and spiritual disciplines from the monastic tradition are outworked, lived, taught – living what we teach, by teaching what we live – with the Rule of Availability and Vulnerability, the rhythm of the Daily Office being our framework.

The Nether Springs is a sign of the Community's contemplative heart, a symbol of hope in a fragmented world, a reminder to the wider Community of the need for liturgical prayer and a daily rhythm, in expressing a different way to live. It is 'a demonstration that God exists.'

Among its many functions are the provision of Heart, linked to the question, 'Who is it that you seek?' by being a place of Retreat, at the centre of which is seeking God for Himself. The provision of Home, linked to the question, 'How then shall we live' by being a place of Reflection on the issues of the new age and changing culture. The provision of Hospitality, linked to the question, 'How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange



land? By being a place of Refuge for spiritually unsettled people. A safe place where a stable instability and a certain uncertainty offers Hope, because 'the future belongs to those who have hope.'

All of this is to serve the Lord and his Church. To touch individual lives so that they in turn can touch the lives of others. In this all Companions are moving in and out of both the Nether Springs and the Upper Springs aspects of Monastery and Mission. A going out and a returning. A sending out and a welcoming home. "*May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you, wherever he may send you; May he guide you through the wilderness, protect you through the storm. May he bring you home rejoicing at the wonders he has shown you. May he bring you home rejoicing once again into our doors.*" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxUAeTDW3c0> (Link Facebook) **(PPx6)**

Why did I tell you this story? I want to encourage you in your journey to be sustained by Trinity – to seek to drink but also to know the “upper & nether springs” bursting & bubbling up within you and from you to others.

My own call has further developed in last 6 or so years to seek to accompany others on this journeying. At this stage in my journey (and our journey) the church here needs a new Minister and leader and also I am not just laying things down but taking things up – but you and I know we must empty our hands before we can pick something else up. I want to encourage you and myself: ***Blending of prayer and mission + and sustaining worship.....in community. At this time – pray for our worship team who help to sustain us week by week as a church gathering together to glorify God and be re-sourced for mission in the world.***