

Simon Ponsonby ~ There is a River ~ 12.05.2024

Notes provided from those taken by Paul Wright ~ remember that you can watch the message again on the Plymouth Christian Centre YouTube channel.

Psalm 46

- ¹ God is our refuge and strength,
 an ever-present help in trouble.
- ² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
 and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
- ³ though its waters roar and foam
 and the mountains quake with their surging.
- ⁴ There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
 the holy place where the Most High dwells.
- ⁵ God is within her, she will not fall;
 God will help her at break of day.
- ⁶ Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
 he lifts his voice, the earth melts.
- ⁷ The Lord Almighty is with us;
 the God of Jacob is our fortress.
- ⁸ Come and see what the Lord has done,
 the desolations he has brought on the earth.
- ⁹ He makes wars cease
 to the ends of the earth.
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
 he burns the shields with fire.
- ¹⁰ He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;
 I will be exalted among the nations,
 I will be exalted in the earth."
- ¹¹ The Lord Almighty is with us;
 the God of Jacob is our fortress.

In Chapter One of The Wind in the Willows...

'I beg your pardon,' said the Mole, pulling himself together with an effort.
'You must think me very rude; but all this is so new to me. So— this—
is— a— River!'

'The River,' corrected the Rat.

'And you really live by the river? What a jolly life!'

'By it and with it and on it and in it,' said the Rat. 'It's brother and sister to me, and aunts, and company, and food and drink, and (naturally) washing. It's my world, and I don't want any other. What it hasn't got is not worth having, and what it doesn't know is not worth knowing. Lord! the times we've had together!

The Rat declares to the Mole that the only place to be is in the river – *"It's my world."*

Simon made a parallel with the River of God and our need to get in it, to make it our favourite place, to be by it, and with it, and on it and in it. We are called to be 'river people' with the beginning and end of our story beginning and ending with rivers in [Genesis 2:10](#) and [Revelation 22:1](#).

In Ezekiel 47, the prophet shares his vision of the River of God flowing from the temple. From Jesus flowed two rivers, one of blood and one of water.

We read in Ezekiel 47 of the River of God that wherever it flows, it brings life and blessing ([vs 6-9](#)). We are called to see the River of God the same way that Rat in *Wind of the Willows* sees his river – Get in it! Swim in it! Enjoy it! Float in it! Submerge in it! Don't just look at it and marvel at it – get in it!

Simon put it to us that there are too many churches that are sitting on the riverbank, at best paddling in the river. It's time to get in, get out of our depth and get lost in his love and power.

Simon made 3 points...

1. What is the River?
2. Jesus is the headwater, the source.
3. The devil loves the desert.

What is the River?

The river is symbolic of the Holy Spirit.

Simon discussed Luther omitting the word 'river' from the German bible in his second version and instead replaced it with 'little spring'

Isaiah 43:19

**¹⁹ See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.**

Is your life a desert? God wants his river to flow through you.

There is blessing and life in the river – Job described the river as being honey and cream – such a rich metaphor of the loveliness and richness on offer from the river.

While the word ‘river’ may have disappeared from the bible for a few hundred years, *there is a river*, and it flows from God to us in a torrent.

Jesus is the headwater – the source

John 4 The woman at the well.

In their exchange about water from the well, Jesus offers the woman at the well living water – living water from the river of life that has its source in Jesus.

The woman was likely thirsty her whole life, looking to satisfy her thirst with all manner of things and relationships. Jesus promises living water that will leave her never thirsting again.

In **John 7** we read about the festival of Tabernacles where priests would go to the pool of Siloam to collect water and pour it out as an offering in the temple, symbolizing a longing for God to pour out his Spirit.

John 7:37-39

³⁷ On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”^[c] ³⁹ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Again, the invitation is from Jesus to believe in him and receive rivers of living water flowing within them. Come to me and drink.

If you want to have the Spirit, you must go after Jesus.

The devil loves the desert.

The desert is dry, barren, even the riverbeds and estuaries are dry and cracked where the river doesn’t flow. The devil wants to keep us out of the river and is a thief who will readily steal the river.

Remember Luther and his substitution of the word ‘river’ for ‘little spring’ in his second version of the German bible. The river had been lost. It’s time to bring back the river.

Simon referenced the 1986 film *Jean de florette*. This film depicts a man who buys some land to breed rabbits on, so that he can sell their fur and their meat. Initially all goes well until the water table appears to lower on the land. The man needs the water to grow the lettuces, to in turn feed the rabbits, but the water is running out. The film goes on as the man gets on his donkey every day and travels to a river to collect water in anything that he can and bring it back to the cistern. But his efforts are not enough, and the rabbits begin to die off. It turns out that a rich landowner and his nephew block up the river in order to get their land back for free. Only when the river is unblocked does the water table begin to rise and the river flow again and life is restored to the farm.

The devil will block up the river whenever and wherever he can. Remember, if you want the Spirit, if you want the river of living water, you must go after Jesus.

On holiday in Normandy with his family, Simon felt the Lord say to him that there was something He wanted to show him. (This was unusual because the Lord normally speaks to Simon through the bible) They spent a whole day out, in and around Mont Saint-Michel and Simon wondered whether the Lord had forgotten. Not long after they had returned to the house they were staying in; Simon heard his wife and children calling his name loudly. He rushed outside and was called to a large pond at the bottom of the garden. The water level had dropped and there was a huge carp stuck on the edge of the pond, half in and half out of the water.

Simon sent his children off to collect a dustbin lid and watering can and they gently scooped the fish into the lid and began pouring water on it before they carried it toward the lower edge of the pond and gently released it back into deeper water where it became revived and swam off.

Simon felt the Lord speak to him and say that this is a picture of the church. The church is like the fish, stuck in the mud and gasping for air. The church needs to be put back into deep water, back into the river.

It's time for us to get back into the river. Live in the river.

Community Group Discussion Points & Questions.

1. What do the rivers we read about in **Psalm 46**, **Genesis 2**, **Ezekiel 47** and **Revelation 22** symbolize?
2. What does the river in Psalm 46 do?
3. How do we become glad in the river? Look at how the Rat in the Wind in the Willows describes his relationship with the river.
4. How do we get in it, live in it, revel in it and stay in it?
5. What did Simon say we need to do if we wanted the Spirit? (Go after Jesus)
6. How do we see this in the account of Jesus and the woman at the well in **John 4**?
7. Are you paddling or swimming in the river of God? Or are you on the riverbank watching?
8. Does your life/walk with Jesus feel or look like a dry, cracked riverbed?
9. How do we get the river flowing again? How do we get in the river? (Go after Jesus – read His Word, Pray to Him, Worship Him, put Him at the centre of our lives, dwell on Him, spend time with Him)
10. Read **Ezekiel 47:6-9** together. Pray for each other that the river of God, the Holy Spirit will flow through you all again. Pray for those who need to jump in the river by pursuing Jesus. Pray for those who need to allow their little spring to overflow again into a river. Pray that you will all experience the blessing and life given by the river of God that flows from Jesus.