

**So Thirsty:**  
**November 1, 2020**

There's a story... [1 Pump]

About a man  
Who was lost and wandering  
In the desert,  
Dying of thirst.

As he wandered in that hot desolate desert,  
He stumbled upon a ramshackle, dilapidated shack.  
There wasn't much to it,  
But, at least,  
It would provide a little bit of shade  
And some rest.

He was sitting there in the shack  
When he noticed about  
Fifteen feet away from him  
A rickety, rusty old water pump.

His eyes brightened,  
And he thought, "I wonder."

He staggered over to the pump  
Grabbed hold of the handle.  
And began to work the handle up and down,  
But nothing came out.

He fell back to the ground,  
And as he fell, his hand landed on something.  
He looked over  
And saw an old glass jar  
Covered with dirt and filth.

He wiped off the dirt...  
And found a label underneath.  
It said: "You have to prime the pump  
With all the water in this jar.  
P.S. Be sure to fill the jug again before you leave."

Suddenly, he was faced with this life-or-death decision.  
He had a sure thing in his hands.  
A jar with some water.  
At least, if he drank that,  
His thirst would be temporarily quenched...  
And he would live a little while longer.

But if it were true,  
If the water in the jar...  
Was just a promise...  
Of flowing, fresh, cool water...  
As much as he could possibly want.

But could he really trust  
How old were those instructions?  
What if it all went wrong?  
Was he willing to potentially waste...  
What little water he had?

He decided to go for it.  
He popped the cork.  
Sure enough, it was almost full of water.

He walked over to the pump,  
Poured the whole jar into the pump,  
Grabbed hold of the handle.

He began to work that pump again...  
It was old and stubborn..  
Nothing came out.

He pumped again.  
Suddenly, there appeared a trickle of water.  
He kept going.  
It grew into a larger stream of water.

Suddenly, it was gushing  
All the cool, flowing, wonderful water  
He could possibly want.

He filled the jug and drank it.  
He filled it and drank it again.  
He was renewed and refreshed.  
Full of life.

Then he remembered the note.  
He filled the jug again,  
Put the cork back in place,

And added his own little note to it:  
"Believe me, it really works.  
You get more than promised."

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You know what. **[2 Challenges]**  
Right now...  
I feel like we are in a desert time.

Like the man lost and wandering...  
Contending with the heat and the sun...  
And the knowledge...  
That if he doesn't drink something soon...  
He wouldn't last very long.

We are wandering a metaphorical desert...  
Right now. At this time.  
In our history.  
There are so many things.  
That seem to be working against us.

The horrible... and yes... I mean horrible...  
State of politics in our country.  
I am disappointed...  
With the way...  
People speak to other.

There is very little dignity.  
There is almost no grace.  
The defining qualities...  
Of people who have a sense of serving our country...  
And caring about the people...  
And unifying our nation...

Seems to be...  
Gone.

And now...  
As a result...  
It's hard to trust.  
It's hard to hope.

We are wandering in the desert.

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This damn virus.

I know some people think...  
It's not real.  
Or not as bad...  
As others make it out to be.

But many of us...  
Have had family members and friends...  
Deeply affected...  
By the symptoms...  
And the consequences.  
Of this disease.

And we have guidelines.  
And warnings.  
And rules and regulations.  
That we are TRYING to follow.

And then...  
On an almost daily basis...  
I get a call... or a comment...  
About the church.

I want you all to know...  
We are working hard...  
To provide something good here.

We have worship.  
Both in person and online.

You know... we had staff reviews this week...  
And Linda pointed out...  
That every staff member...  
And an army of volunteers...  
Are working together...  
To provide a meaningful worship experience...  
For our community.

And it's important to us...  
And we want to do this well.  
And we want to do this safely.

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In addition...  
We have confirmation.  
And Sunday school...  
And Senior high youth group.

We have adult bible studies.  
We have outreach opportunities...  
To the community.

Like Fire Relief...  
And Parker Task Force...  
And now...  
There are things to be done...  
With Joshua Station.

We haven't stopped working.  
We are still the church.  
We are still proclaiming Christ.  
In our words and deeds.

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And yet.  
That doesn't seem to satisfy...  
The thirst that some have...  
For a different world.

And quite honestly...  
It doesn't always quench my thirst.  
I miss people.  
I miss the way things were.  
I miss all kinds of things.

It's hard to be patient.  
It's hard to prioritize the well being...  
Of other people...  
Over our own desires.

It's hard to remember...  
This is a season and a time.

We are wandering the desert.

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And what else?  
Fires. Hurricanes. Natural disasters.

Lack of water.  
Filling the streams...  
Down from the mountains.

What else?  
Civil unrest.  
Calls for change.  
On the one hand...  
People who don't want change.  
On the other hand.

Conflict.  
Hate.  
Anger.  
Violence.

It's hard to understand.  
What motivates people.  
People who do bad things.  
People who stand in self-righteous indignation.

Sometimes... It's hard to believe.  
That people are good.

And I've even met some who think...  
It's hard to believe that God is good.

I'm telling you.  
We are wandering...  
In the desert.

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And then... PEOPLE OF FAITH. [3 Light]  
We remember...  
We have been given a ray of hope.  
It's more than a ray.  
It's a search light of hope.  
It's a magnificent overwhelming beam...  
Of light and love and power.

That has broken into this world.

It's a promise...  
That blinds our eyes...  
And fills our hearts.  
And frees our souls.

God sent Jesus.  
Into this world.

Again.  
GOD SENT JESUS.  
Into this TIRED OLD WORLD.

To show us the way.  
To teach us the truth.  
To give us his life.

But most importantly.  
To give us hope.  
In the midst of hopelessness.

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See... there's the problem.  
We are currently in the desert.  
And I'm afraid some people have given up hope.

BUT don't kid yourself.  
We are not unique.  
The people of God.  
Have always been...  
In the desert.

Because this world is not our home.  
This is not our goal.  
This is not the promise...  
That we have been given by God.

It's not complete yet.

We are living in the in between times.  
The now and the not yet.

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And in this world...  
The people around us...  
Are not perfect.  
Just like...  
We are not perfect.

We call this day...  
ALL SAINTS DAY.

But the saints are not saints...  
Because they are good.  
Or because they are holy...  
In and of themselves.

They are saints because of the grace...  
And the goodness of our God.  
Given to them.

I AM not a saint. Not fully. Not yet.  
I'm not done... yet.

Right now... in this moment. **[4 Saint and Sinner]**  
I'm simultaneously...  
A saint... and a sinner.  
And so are you.

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And that means...  
That we still need the grace of God...  
To make us right.

It means...  
That we are going to fall short.

It means...  
That when we look at someone else...  
And are angry with them...  
Or hate them...  
Or want to crush them...  
Because they have done wrong.

In that moment...  
We are forgetting...  
That they aren't saints. Not yet.  
Not fully. They are also sinners.  
In need of God's own redeeming.

Just like us.

Anyway... back to the story.

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Remember the jar of water. **[5 Jar]**  
That the man was supposed to use...  
To prime the pump.

Well.. pretend that jar of water is good news.  
Pretend it's the hope...  
That Jesus brought into the world.  
Pretend it's the start...  
Something to prime the pump.

Some people...  
Take that jar of water...  
And drink deeply... drink the whole jar...  
In the present.

And believe.  
That is the solution.

They believe that...  
If they can quench their thirst...  
In the here and now.

That will be enough.

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And so they hear...  
The good news...  
Of Jesus Christ.

And say... it applies...  
To the here and now.  
COMPLETELY.

Life should be good...  
Easy... breezy... beautiful.

So when it's not...  
That way for us...  
They say... you don't believe enough.  
You're not faithful enough.  
You're not good enough.  
To receive God's mercy.  
God's grace.

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They point to our current state of our lives...  
The current state of our world...  
And say... here is the evidence...

If you are blessed...  
With an abundance of worldly blessings...  
Then that just goes to show you...  
That God loves you.

But if you're not blessed...  
By the standards of this world...  
Then in fact... you aren't doing enough.  
And you're not good enough.  
And you're not blessed.

They say...  
Jesus brought the gospel for good people...  
They say... that if you believe in Jesus.  
Then everything will be ok.

You will have all the good...  
You have ever wanted...  
Right now.

But I'm telling you.

That is not grace.  
That is not good news.  
That is not anything different.  
Than living under the burden...  
Of the law.

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But Jesus... WAS different.

He proclaimed...  
In the gospel of St. Matthew...  
Chapter 5... **[6 Blessed]**

That the following people...  
Were in fact... contrary...  
To their experience...

The following people are...  
Blessed by God.  
The poor in spirit.  
Those who mourn.  
The meek.  
The merciful.  
The pure in heart.  
The peacemakers.

Those who are persecuted.  
For speaking the truth...  
About the person and the mission...  
Of Jesus the Christ.

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So in summary... in my words...  
Those who are having a difficult time.  
Those who find themselves...  
Right smack dab...  
In a time of pain or suffering.

Those who find themselves...  
In the middle of the desert.

Hungering and thirsting...  
For new life.  
And new hope.  
And new love.

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See... that's us.  
We are in the desert.  
We are mourning.  
We are meek...  
We try to be merciful.  
But the world sees mercy as weakness.

We try to be pure...  
While the whole world... around us.  
Celebrates... and glorifies...  
Corruption...

And a perversion...  
Of God's love...  
In Christ.

We try to make peace.  
But the whole world...  
Doesn't want peace.

Don't tell me that people want peace.  
Everyone would rather be right.  
Everyone would rather get their own way.

At the expense of peace.

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Jesus didn't say it was going to be easy.

But he did say.  
You are blessed.

You are blessed.  
While you walk through the desert.

You are blessed.  
In the burden of your pain.

You are blessed...  
God has not forgotten you.  
God has not abandoned you.

You are blessed...  
O CHILD OF GOD.

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So take your metaphorical jar of water. **[7 Jar]**  
That portion of hope.  
That you have been given.  
By God.

Don't drink it now.  
Instead... pour it into the pump.  
And believe.

That the water you will be given.  
That water that God is going to provide...  
Is a living water...  
That will become in us...  
A spring of water...  
That wells all the way up...  
To eternal life.

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What I'm saying is...  
Please don't forget...  
This world is not the complete fulfillment...  
Of the promise of Christ.

We have been blessed...  
Beyond what we can see.

We have been blessed...  
In ways this world will never understand.

We are blessed.  
Even... maybe especially...  
When we are in the desert...  
When we are so thirsty...  
When we FINALLY despair of ourselves...

And really trust...  
That God loves us.  
And we don't have to do this..  
All by ourselves.  
Anymore.

Thanks be to God.  
Now... for this present life.  
And for the promise yet to come.

Amen.