

Finding Strength in Dry Times

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Sermon Preached: Sunday 3rd August 2025

Preacher: Pastor Jason Sander

Location: St Peter's Lutheran Church, Loxton

Sermon Text: [Matthew 11:28-30](#)

My friends, grace, mercy and peace to you, the name of our Lord and our saviour Jesus Christ.

Finding strength in dry times.

As many of you would know, there are seasons when the land thrives.

Bring pastures, steady rains and a harvest that brings joy. And then there are seasons like the one we're experiencing at this time. We don't need to watch the news or a weather report to know what's happening, what we're going through at this time.

Little rainfall, empty dams, even big dust storms, topsoil blowing away, nearly sowing seeds covered over with more dirt than what's needed. And there's frost, paddocks that should be full of life lying barren under the sun. And even when a little green emerges from the ground, we know that without more rain, they will wither and return to the ground.

The drought just doesn't stay in the ground. Gets into our souls, our spirits too, doesn't it? Gets into the bank account too well, as well practically. For what I know, the drought's testing us in different ways, physically, emotionally, spiritually and financially.

For those of you who work on the land, you know the feeling of sitting with a spreadsheet and a sinking heart, having another meeting with the bank manager or the accountant, refinancing. You know what it's like to run the numbers and wonder if you'll make it through the next quarter, even the next week for some. We know it's just not on the dry land farming too, it's also on the fruit blocks where there's struggle and challenges too.

When prices drop or buyers won't buy produce, it's more economical to let the fruit just hang there and return to the ground. When the frost strikes or a freak storm destroys, all is ready to be harvested. Although many of our blocks are irrigated, it's not a physical drought that hangs above, it's that frustration and anguish of a failed harvest.

All in all, not as good as expected. And then there's people like me, not related to farming directly. You feel the flow-on effects.

You see the local businesses, community services, schools, shops, everywhere. The drought has a ripple effect. You see it in our family and our friends who are hurting.

Because when the land suffers, the whole region feels it. And so we look for strength in these dry times, coming before our Lord God with our hearts open, seeking the strength to endure and the hope to hold on. Jesus says, come to me all, you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is life. It's the invitation of our Lord to each one of us here this morning.

Droughts and famines can devastate a community, and that's what we heard about in Jeremiah Chapter 14. He opens with a desperate scene. Judah mourns her city's language.

They wail for the land, and a cry goes up from Jerusalem. The nobles send their service for water. They go to the cisterns but find no water.

Their jars return empty. The ground is cracked because there is no rain in the land. You can hear the anguish in these words.

The leaders of that time are helpless. The farmers are ashamed that they can't produce this crop. The wild animals pant because even creation itself is groaning.

This is more than a physical hardship. It's a spiritual crisis too. God's people don't know where to turn.

Their strength is sapped. Their systems have failed. Perhaps that feels familiar.

This drought never stays just in the soil. It gets into the spirit, as I said. It starts with failed crops.

It leads to sleepless nights. It begins with dry ground, but then it also affects bank loans, mental health, fuel bills, feed prices, the atmosphere, and the local shops. When the rain doesn't come, we feel it everywhere.

Here's what's amazing. That's when these things happen. God welcomes our honesty.

The people cry out, although our sins testify against us. Do something, Lord, for the sake of your name. We hope in you, for you are the one who does all this.

Why are you like a stranger in the land? Like a traveller who only stays at night? It's a desperate prayer and a bold one. They're not pretending. They're not putting on brave faces.

They're saying what we've all felt at some point. God, where are you? Are you still with us? Will you do something? We need you. God doesn't rebuke them for asking.

He lets their cry stand. These teachers are something important. When we are at our absolute limit, emotionally, financially, spiritually, we can still draw into God.

But even more than that, He is with us. He draws Himself into our lives. We don't have to hide our stress or dress up our prayers.

We can say what is real.

I recall hearing a story of a farmer, not from around here, but from another dry part of the country, who was going through one of the hardest seasons of his life. He'd exhausted every

option, delayed payments, temporary relief from the bank, downsized his stock, cut expenses right to the bone.

And every time he thought he might be catching a break, something else would go wrong. He sort of felt like the land was against him. Even worse, he started wondering if God was silent too, if God had forgotten him.

One morning in his ute, he broke down in the middle of a paddock. There was no miracle, no rain cloud, no voice from heaven, just him, the dust and the tears. Tears of frustration.

But later that day, his wife found an envelope, placed inside the door. No name, just enough cash to cover a critical bill. He didn't know who gave it, but it was money that helped.

It was a reminder that God still knew where he lived.

We know that moment didn't fix anything. It didn't fix everything.

The drought didn't break that week, but it shifted something inside him. He said, I realize I don't have to feel strong. I just had to remember God hadn't let go of me.

You see, God does not leave us alone in seasons like this. In fact, he speaks directly into them. In Isaiah 41, the poor and needy search for water, but there is none.

But I, the Lord, will answer them. I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will make rivers flow from barren heights.

You see, God just doesn't send his sympathy. He sends his presence. He doesn't just notice the drought, He promises to meet us in it. It doesn't necessarily mean that rain will come tomorrow, but it does mean that God is not a stranger in the land. No matter how it feels, he's not distant.

He is not done. He's still the God who provides, sometimes through practical support, sometimes through community. But always through his faithfulness.

This man can relate with the local farmers and someone who's been through more dry seasons than most of us care to count. Forecast is bleak again, as we know, the dams are low, tough meetings with the bank. He knows how draining it can be to keep going when everything seems against you, the weather, the bills, the uncertainty.

But then, he said quietly, we just have to trust in God. I still believe it will break one day. I've seen it before.

It always turns somehow. And that's the kind of faith that many of you carry, that I hear from many of you here. Not flashy, not loud, just a steady, dogged hope that the season will change, that somehow things will turn around.

But then we also know, not everybody feels that way too. They don't have the same hope. Some carry the same load, but the weight has worn them down.

The cost is more than financial. It's emotional. It's spiritual.

They become too much to bear alone. You don't always see them from the outside, but it's real. So I say to you gently that if anyone is feeling this way, you're not weak, you're not alone, you're human.

God is with you. You have a community here to support you too. And for all of us, that's why community matters.

That's why faith matters. Because even when the land is dry and the heart is weary, God is still faithful. And it brings us to the picture of James in the New Testament.

Final focus here from Scripture. James uses the example of the farmer who waits. Not with despair, but with quiet and enduring hope.

James, the brother of Jesus, and this is his letter in the New Testament. James 5 gives us a picture of what faith looks like in a season like this. He says, Be patient then, brothers and sisters.

See how the farmer waits for the land to yield his valuable crop. Patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. That's your life.

You are the ones who keep waiting. Keep feeding stock. Keep showing up.

Keep doing the mass. Keep working the land and making ends meet however you can. James calls that faith.

Not just any faith, but patient, gritty, long-hauled faith. This kind of patience isn't passive, it's resilient. He says, we believe God is still good, even when the forecast isn't.

So in these challenging days, let us bring our burners to God. God can handle your anger, your sadness and exhaustion. He listens.

Look to the prayers and psalms and lamentations and the prophets who see the hearts of people who cry out to God. And a God who promises faithfulness. We can find strength in others within our church and community too.

Don't go it alone. You might be feeling the pinch and need to speak up. Lets do this together.

Let's be the kind of community where no one bears this weight in silence. We can also see God in the valley. Watch Him working in our life.

Sometimes God care comes through a neighbour. A food box, a chat over coffee, a deferred loan, a government grant, a song on the radio. A Bible verse that lands at just the right moment.

Because even in dry times, God is not idle. We can find little bits of strength from Him through others. Now the drought may linger, the dam levels may remain low, the financial pressures may feel overwhelming.

But know that God is not a stranger in this land. He is our ever present help.

Jesus stepped into a weary world.

A world full of suffering and broken systems, disappointment and despair. Jesus knows drought. He walked dusty roads, He wept at graves, He saw hunger and hardship and He gave Himself completely for us.

When we feel at the end of ourselves, when the land is dry and the hope is thin, look to Jesus, the one who brings living water, even into the driest of hearts. He says, come to me, all you are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. The rain will return, the land will revive, and even before it does, God is already at work.

He is our strength in dry times.

And my friends, may the peace of God, which passes our understanding, may it guard your hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Amen.