

Stay Thirsty

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[0 : 00] Well, as we dive into Isaiah 41, I just have one question that I want us to think on for a moment.

Are you thirsty? On a hot day like today, it's not hot by Nashville standards, but I must have acclimated because it's hot to me.

You know, I can have a lot of connotations and it can be easy to say yes, yes I'm thirsty, but Isaiah is talking about a different kind of thirst, and we need to ask ourselves, am I thirsty?

I was in the car with, well not our car, we don't have a car, but I was in someone else's car with my kids the other day and they put on an audio book for the kids and it was Michael Bond's book, a bear called Paddington.

We love Paddington Bear and it begins when Mr. and Mrs. Brown discover a bear at Paddington Station and Paddington, as the bear comes to be called, was of course a stowaway on a ship from darkest Peru and now this bear is looking for a home and the Browns have just decided to take him home with them.

[1 : 09] This is just the beginning of the book and Mrs. Brown says, I'm sure you must be thirsty after your long journey, so you go along to the buffet with Mr. Brown and he'll buy you a nice cup of tea.

Paddington licked his lips. I'm very thirsty, he said, seawater makes you thirsty. It's wisdom from Paddington.

Seawater makes you thirsty. Only drinking fresh water, of course, is going to satisfy thirst. I mean if you've ever been thirsty and you've seen the sea just sparkling and clear on a hot day, you'll know that that twinkling sea is full of false promises, isn't it?

It looks delicious, but it's not going to satisfy. And I'm sure you would never try drinking seawater if you're really thirsty, so why do we go to anyone or anything but God with our soul thirst?

And we all do. When you're stressed, when you're overwhelmed, when you're anxious, where do you go for help?

[2 : 19] When you're ill, when you're tempted, when you're lonely, when you're longing for something, where do you go? Have you been drinking seawater?

The first half of Isaiah 41, 17 says, when the poor and needy seek water and there is none and their tongue is parched with thirst. So here's who we're talking about, is the poor and needy, they're looking for water, they can't find any and they're just parched.

Now I want to just look at these two words real quick, the poor and needy, and the commentator Alec Motir helped me see this that I hadn't seen before. The word translated to be poor means to be crushed under life's burdens, to have this weight just pressing down on you.

It's that feeling of, you know, a constant sense of I've bitten off more and I can't chew. You've been dealt a bad hand. You can't get your head above water, you feel like you're just drowning all the time.

That's what it is to be poor. To be needy, this word has two aspects to it, a negative aspect and a positive aspect. So negatively to be needy means to be flimsy or to be pliable.

[3 : 38] Motir says it means to be bending before life's more powerful forces, resourceless. I wonder if you know that feeling, kind of tossed about by the waves, right?

The things that are happening are too big for you to control and you don't have the resources to meet those needs. That's the negative aspect of needy. The positive aspect of this particular word also means to be willing, to be willing.

Needy people don't have the resources to meet their needs and they won't turn their nose up at help. That's the needy people that we're talking about in Isaiah 41, because it's really easy to let our pride keep us from asking for help, isn't it?

God describes this, this poor, needy condition as something like a soul desert, because the poor and needy are thirsty, radically thirsty, not just slightly dehydrated.

You get a little headache and you have a glass of water. They're parched, tongues sticking to the roof of their mouth parched. They're crushed under life's burdens. They're unable to help themselves.

[4 : 52] They know they need help and they're looking. They're looking for help. They're willing to be helped. They're seeking water. So I'll ask again, are you thirsty?

Let me read to you from John chapter 7, verse 37 and 38. On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, if anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink, whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

Take your thirsts to Jesus. That's all I really want you to get out of this sermon. Take your thirst to Jesus and nowhere else, not Jesus plus, just Jesus.

When Jesus has come to me, when we go to Jesus, we have to leave behind everything else. It's an exclusive coming and going, right? We go to Jesus and we go away from any other seawater full of false promises.

God is exclusively the source of our life. Everything else we turn to with our needs, our anxieties, our loneliness, everything else, I promise you, everything else will let you down in the end.

[6 : 24] Idols, which is just really what we turn to for help, for satisfaction, for meaning. Idols are full of false promises. It's all they are.

But Jesus is making you a real promise. Go to him and he says, out of your heart will flow rivers of living water. In other words, Jesus promises to satisfy you.

He promises to meet you in the place of your thirst and slake that thirst. In our passage in Isaiah 41, he goes above and beyond.

So he says he makes rivers and springs. He takes the dry bits and he makes them just flowing with water. And he even goes above and beyond that and he provides trees for shelter and shade and beauty.

Now some people say, I'm thirsty. I have a soul thirst, but they turn down the living water that we have to offer.

[7 : 30] Maybe you were like that. Maybe you have a friend who you share the gospel with and they say that they're looking spiritually for satisfaction and meaning and you share the good news of Jesus with them and they just don't, it doesn't work.

They don't click with them. They don't want it. Maybe they're not really poor and needy. Maybe they need to get really thirsty first.

That's a bit of my story really is God had to let me get really, really thirsty before I would take of that water.

Some people, and maybe this is you, maybe this is your friend, some people just don't know how accessible the water really is.

So by way of illustration, this is an old story that I heard from Charles Spurgeon. Not personally, I read it in the book. There's an old story of a ship sailing near the coast of South America and this ship happened upon another ship and that second ship, it was clear that the sailors on it were in great distress waving their arms and shouting.

[8 : 40] And so this first ship sailed nearer and they heard the sailors crying, help us, we're dying of thirst. To which the crew of the first ship said, well dip some up and drink then.

You're in the mouth of the Amazon and that's freshwater. Do you know how near Jesus is? Do you know how accessible he is?

Are you like those sailors who thought that they were in the middle of an ocean but were actually in the mouth of a wide river full of fresh drinkable water?

Jesus doesn't make you jump through hoops to satisfy those thirsts. He just says, you thirsty? Just come to me.

All you have to do is go to Jesus, you're in freshwater, just dip some up and drink. He promises to satisfy you.

[9 : 44] But how do we know? I always have a portion of my sermons of like, well how do I really know? I think that says something about my own psychology. I always want some sort of certainty that this is real, that this is going to happen, that I can count on God to be who he says he is.

So how do we know that God will meet us with our need? How do we know that if we go to him with our thirst, he won't embarrass us? So that's what some of us are afraid of when we ask for help, right? When our pride keeps us from asking for help.

We just don't want to say, I need help and then to be laughed at or to be let down. So how do we know Jesus will satisfy our soul thirst?

Well, I could tell you about how he sent his son, Jesus, to how God sent Jesus to die for your sins so that he could send his Holy Spirit, God himself, the Spirit to live in you and to comfort you and to make you holy.

Or I could tell you about how Jesus rose from the grave and defeated death and ascended to heaven where he sits at the right hand of the Father, ruling and reigning this universe for your good and his glory, interceding for you every moment to the Father, turning all your sorrows into good.

[10 : 59] I could get into all of that and I would if I had more time. But in this passage, Isaiah does something different. He's reasoning with us. God is reasoning kindly with us and he's not just telling us what to do.

He's in fact telling us, showing us that he's committed to two things that we can absolutely count on. He's committed to you and to his glory.

And those two things are related. So first, God is committed to you. Look again at verse 17. When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, their tongue is parched with thirst, I the Lord will answer them.

I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. Look at what he calls himself. He doesn't just say, God, I, God, will not forsake.

He says the God of Israel. Israel is his covenant people. God belongs to his covenant people and they belong to him.

[12 : 07] They're in a, well, it's a covenant. The deepest, tightest, most loving, most committed, serious relationship that there is, God has tethered himself to his people and he doesn't just say, I'm God.

He says, I'm the God of Israel. And second, see that little word at the end, forsake. I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.

For God to not satisfy the thirst of his people is the equivalent of him forsaking them. In other words, God is deeply committed to you.

And if you trust in Jesus, you are the Israel of God. You are his people and you belong to him and he miraculously belongs to you and he won't forsake you by letting you stay thirsty without being satisfied by Christ.

So God's committed to you. Second God is committed to his glory. Look with me, verses 18 to 20, and then we'll slow down and look at 20. He says, I will open rivers on the bare heights and fountains in the midst of the valleys.

[13 : 28] I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water. I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive. I'll set in the desert the cypress, the plain, and the pine together.

That, stop there for a second. That's a purpose word, that. We're supposed to get to all that and say, why will you do that?

What's your reason for that, God? And then he tells us that they may see and know, may consider and understand together that the hand of the Lord has done this.

The Holy One of Israel has created it. That's why God promises to make the wilderness into a lush garden for his people, as it were.

It's for his glory that we'll see and know that God did it. God has committed to his glory.

[14 : 31] And because you belong to him and he belongs to you, if you're thirst, your soul thirst was to go unsatisfied when you go to Christ for a drink, his glory would be diminished.

That's serious. So take your thirst to Jesus. He won't leave you unsatisfied because God's glory is at stake.

This is the same sort of thing where in Exodus, I think, 33 or 34, Israel's just being utterly obstinate. And God says to Moses, I'm going to wipe them out and start over with you.

And Moses pleads with God on the basis of God's glory to bear with Israel and to forgive their sins.

He says, well, if you wipe these people out, what will the nations say? They'll say God didn't love his people, obviously. He just brought them out in the wilderness to kill them. Your glory is at stake.

[15 : 35] David, prays in the Psalms constantly, for your namesake, deliver me from this evil. For your namesake, not mine. That's really the basis of prayer, isn't it?

We go to God and say, not because I deserve it, but because of your glory. Would you do this? Would you satisfy me?

And no one has ever gone to God and said, I'm thirsty, only you can satisfy me. I give myself to you. Will you satisfy me? And God says, no.

That's never happened. No one has ever gone to Jesus and said, Jesus, I'm such a sinner and you're such a savior. Will you forgive me? And then Jesus withholds his forgiveness.

That's never happened and that never will happen. He's the source of life and it's his glory to impart life to the lifeless, to give water to the thirsty.

[16 : 42] So are you thirsty? Do you want that? If so, then you are mentioned in this passage two times.

So in verse 17, you the thirsty, we the thirsty, we seek water. That's one thing that we do. We seek water. We look for something to satisfy us.

And then in verse 20, we see and know and consider and understand that God is the one who saves and satisfies. That's all we do. We're willing and then we see.

And everything that comes in between, verses 17 and 20, has God at the center of the action. God says, I will answer them. I will not forsake them. I will open rivers on the bare heights.

I will turn wilderness to waters. I will plant trees in the wasteland. In other words, if you're thirsty, you can't satisfy yourself.

[17 : 41] Only God can. Now if you need money, you can always invest, right? Theoretically. The very rough, I'm just going to show how naive I am about investments.

The rough idea, you take a pound, you give it to someone, they invest it for you and hand back to you two pounds, right? Wouldn't that be nice? Quite a return on investment. The idea is though with investment, you take a little, you pour it into something and then you get a little bit more back.

But God is no investment broker. If we're poor and needy and thirsty, He does not take our resources and start rewarding us for what we have. It's not investment.

He takes our nothing. He takes our need. He takes our lack and He creates life from them.

That's why I think the last word of verse 20 is created it. God created it. It's an act of creation from nothing.

[18 : 44] This is the Creator God, water from wilderness. It's our thirst that He blesses. It's the empty hands of faith that He fills.

He makes lush gardens full of water and shade and shelter and beauty from your wastelands.

It's hard to believe, but it's glorious. And if that's true, we don't ever have to be afraid to take our need to God, to take it to Jesus because it's in the very place of your lack, in the very place of your deepest needs.

It's your thirst that His glory is most beautifully displayed, most clearly displayed. So being a Christian isn't do good things, help yourself, and have God bless your efforts.

Being a Christian is going to Jesus and saying, God, help me. I'm thirsty. I have no plan B. I have no backup strategy.

[20 : 03] Anything else can satisfy me. I'm done with drinking seawater. That's why we're here tonight.

We're thirsty, and we need Jesus. And Jesus is so willing to give Himself for our need.

So in a moment, I'm going to invite Billy up to lead us in Holy Communion. But as we prepare to receive this Lord's Supper tonight, I want us to hear and reflect on these words together from Isaiah 55, a few chapters later, verses one to two.

Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and he who has no money, come, buy, and eat.

Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

[21 : 10] Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Amen.

Let's pray together before we take communion. Lord Jesus, we're creatures of need.

We're little bundles of need. We can't order our lives the way that we like to pretend that we can. We can't order our emotions the way that we wish that we could.

Our relationships, there's brokenness in everything, and there's such need and such thirst in our souls, and we believe that you are the one who can satisfy.

And would you give us more faith in you? Would you help our unbelief and draw us to yourself by your gentleness, by your kindness, by your beauty, by your power?

[22 : 14] And as we go to communion this evening, would these, this bread, this cup, would we hear and would we taste and feel the truth of how you gave yourself for us, that we may have life with you forever?

In Jesus' name, amen. stretch to■■■■illah.

Amen. breastfeeding.