



The God Who Opens the Fountain of Cleansing Behold Our God – Read the Bible for Life #41

Zechariah 12:10-13:1

Pastor David Sunday

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Please turn to Zechariah. We've been reading through the Old Testament since last September, and our sermons on Sundays have come out of the portions that we've been reading. I want to commend you for your faithfulness and eagerness in doing this. This sermon marks the end of this series. Next week will be the last sermon from the Old Testament—the Book of Nehemiah. I've been grateful for the way you've responded to this as a church. For those of you who are new with us or haven't been able to enter into the Bible Reading Plan, the middle of next week would be a great time to jump in and read as we'll be reading through the New Testament between now and November.

We're going to look at Zechariah 12 beginning in verse 10. As you read through it this past week, what kind of experience did you have in reading this book? Was it interesting to you? Did you find it obscure or difficult in any way? I had to read through it a couple of times and I found it difficult in many parts but also very interesting. I kept thinking, "I really want to understand what this is talking about here." There's an important clue that really helps us grasp the main thrust of the Book of Zechariah—who is the focal point of this book. That's when we turn to the New Testament, to the gospel writers—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. As you read the Passion narrative, the story of Jesus' death and resurrection, you'll discover that no Old Testament book is more frequently quoted in the Passion narratives than the Book of Zechariah.

When Matthew, Mark, Luke and John read Zechariah, they saw it to be about Jesus Christ and especially about Christ's sufferings. I think that's a very important clue for us as we read the book. Look for Jesus. In fact, as you read through the gospel Passion narratives, you discover they quote Zechariah 9:9 at Jesus' triumphal entry. *"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."*

When the disciples all leave Jesus and flee from Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, gospel writers quote Zechariah 13:7. *“Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered...”* But before us in Zechariah 12 beginning at verse 10, we have in the words of D.A. Carson, an “immensely evocative” description of our Savior’s death on the cross, of His crucifixion and the effects that death has on those who crucified Him. So we’re going to read God’s Word now beginning at verse 10 of chapter 12. Let’s stand together as we hear this “immensely evocative” passage from Holy Scripture.

“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. The land shall mourn, each family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by themselves; and all the families that are left, each by itself, and their wives by themselves. On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.

Holy God, we thank You for Your Word which truly is immensely evocative. We pray that by Your Spirit, You would evoke from our hearts a fresh and deeper repentance, and a more profound appreciation for Jesus and His work for us on the cross. Grant us eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts that are obedient to Your gospel. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

This poignant and stunning text presents us with one of the leading indicators of spiritual health. Whenever this indicator is at a low level, you can be sure that there will be a corresponding lack of deep appreciation for what Christ has done on behalf of us sinners and that whatever this quality is that’s lacking, there will be at best a dim perception of the glory of the cross of Jesus Christ.

From my limited vantage point as I look at the church today, it seems to me there is a low supply of this vital spiritual indicator in the church. What am I talking about? I’m speaking about a sweet sound, a joyful grief, a radical spirit of repentance that Jesus called “blessed mourning.” “Blessed mourning.” Jesus said in Luke 6:21, *“Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.”* A few verses later in Luke 6:25 He said, *“Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.”*

There is an aspect of mourning—of weeping over sin—that is healthy because it purges us of our deadness or sin, and prepares us to rejoice in the realization of our salvation from sin. There is a need in this present age for believers to be more characterized by this sweet sorrow, this joyful grief, this radical repentance. There is a certain type of laughing that we need to do less of and a certain type of weeping that we need to do more of. And Zechariah shows us what this weeping looks like, what causes it and why it is so healthy.

In verse ten, Zechariah begins to focus on an internal work of renewal that God is going to do by His Spirit to the people of Jerusalem when they recognize their guilt in piercing to death One Whom they will later realize represented God Himself. There has been One in their midst Who has spoken and done the words and works of God, and Who has faithfully represented God to them. They pierced and killed Him. Later on, Zechariah says they come to recognize what they have done, see their guilt and begin to mourn over their sins. The wording in the second part of verse ten is very crucial where it begins to say, “*When they look on me...*” Look at what it says. “*When they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him...*” That wording seems so unusual that some early copiers and translators of the original Scriptures emended the pronoun “me.” They said, “Well, it can’t say, ‘Look on me, on him who they have pierced,’ because that would be referring to piercing God Himself.” So some translations change it to, “They will look on him, on him who they have pierced,” but that’s not the correct wording. The Bible says, “They will *look on me* (Yahweh) *on him whom they have pierced.*” There is a very close identification between the One Whom they have pierced and God Himself. In fact, the source of their intense sorrow is the discovering that this man Whom they have pierced is none other than God Himself.

They have pierced God! They have killed God! And they weep then with an intensity that can only be compared to the bereavement of parents. Some of you know this intense sorrow or mourning over the death of your child. It’s one of those things that when any parent starts to try comprehending what it would be like, we can only go so far in our thinking before we have to stop and say, “I can’t think about that anymore. That would be too awful.” And the people of Jerusalem recognize their culpability in the piercing of God and weep like parents who are grieving the loss of their only child.

Or in verse 11 Zechariah says, “It will be like *the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.*” Hadad-rimmon is most likely referring to the mourning of the people of

Judah that took place in the plane of Megiddo when the last of their godly kings, King Josiah, died. And the death of that godly king left a legacy of mourning that was commemorated by God's people for years to come because he represented to them what seemed like the last hope of godly ruling.

As their hearts are ravaged with sorrow over their guilt and piercing the Holy One, as each one goes off to their own families and mourn, this is in any sense a "mob grief." They're all being moved profoundly by God. They're mourning alone in their families—husbands and wives going into their own rooms, mourning. Royalty mourns. The priests mourn. The common people mourn. And as they're wrapped in their sorrow over their guilt, they discover to their astonishment that a fountain has been opened to cleanse their guilt-ridden souls from all their sin, from all their uncleanness, even the great guilt of piercing God Himself. Indeed they discover that there is a direct connection between the One Whom they have pierced and this fountain that is now gushing forth its cleansing streams to wash all their sins away.

1. The Fulfillment of Zechariah 12

God says in chapter 13, *"On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness."* I want to ask the question, "When will Zechariah 12 find its fulfillment?" There are a number of aspects to that answer.

A. In the Gospel of John, as Jesus' beloved disciple describes the death of our Savior, he sees a fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy (John 19:31-37).

First of all, return to the New Testament, the Gospel of John. See in John 19 as Jesus' beloved disciple describes the death of our Savior, he makes special mention of Zechariah's prophecy. As I read now from John 19 beginning at verse 31, let your gaze be captivated afresh by our Savior's passion, which is a good preparation as we come to the Lord's Table this morning.

Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear...

John is the only Gospel writer who tells us about this piercing.

...and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: ‘Not one of his bones will be broken.’ And again another Scripture [Zechariah 13:1] says, ‘They will look on him whom they have pierced.’

The first, immediate fulfillment of this prophecy takes place in our Savior’s death on the cross. The blood that flowed from Jesus’ side is the blood that bears the guilt, the penalty, of our sins—the curse that our sins brought upon us. The wrath of God that was due us for our sins, that blood atones for the sins. It propitiates. It turns away God’s righteous wrath. He absorbs that wrath in Himself so that God’s wrath can be averted—turned away from us—and *“there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”* (Romans 8:1). The water that flows from Jesus’ side is symbolic of the ceremonial cleansing that would take place in the Old Testament temple, cleansing the people of all their impurity—sexual impurity as well as impurity of their hearts.

Together we see the piercing of our Savior on the cross opens up a fountain—a fountain that cleanses us from both the penalty of sin and from the shameful defilement that our sins bring upon us. And that’s why we sing,

Let the water and the blood
From Thy riven side which flowed
Be of sin the double-cure
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

(Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me by Augustus M. Toplady & Thomas Hastings)

B. The Spirit of God is poured out in rich measure on all the nations.

The fulfillment continues in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost as the Holy Spirit is poured out and a people from all the surrounding nations are gathered in Jerusalem. In the power of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Peter stands up to preach on that day. And in His preaching he boldly implicates all the people of Israel in the murderous rage that drove Jesus Christ to the cross. Listen to Peter’s words in Acts 2, beginning at verse 22.

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

They start to look on Him Who they have pierced. Peter continues to preach, and in verse 36 he says, *“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”* “Looking on Him, we crucified the Lord of Glory!” And they’re cut to the heart!

Luke, who wrote Acts, tells us, *“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ And Peter said to them, ‘Repent...’”* There’s that sweet sorrow—that joyful grief—because it leads to a fountain of cleansing. *“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* Notice it was the realization of their guilt in crucifying God’s Son that pierced them to the heart and that brought about the sweet sound of repentance.

C. There is coming a day sometime prior to Christ’s return when a very large number of Jewish people will experience the melting of their hearts in repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 11).

Romans 11 fills me with great hope that there is coming a day sometime prior to Christ’s return that doesn’t depend on a certain interpretation of the Millennium. What I’m about to say here can fit into many different views of how everything’s going to be mapped out in the End Time. But one thing I think is very clear in Romans 11 and that fills my heart with much hope, is that there’s coming a day sometime prior to Christ’s return when a very large number of Jewish people will experience the melting of their hearts in repentance and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

Listen to what Paul says in Romans 11, beginning at verse 25. *“Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”* Until all the Gentiles that God is gathering are saved, but as God is gathering the Gentiles, Israel, the Jews, are going to be provoked to jealousy through that. And Paul says,

*And in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written,
“The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob; and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.” As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*

Friends, when I read a prophecy like Zechariah 12, I make a connection to Romans 11 and it stimulates me to remember to pray fervently for God’s Spirit to be poured out among

the Jewish people—to pray that God would pour out a spirit of grace, that pleas for mercy would arise from millions of Abrahams’s descendants, and that there will be a vast gathering of Jewish people into the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ. A passage like this should fill us with a vision, hope and commitment to support the work of the mission of the gospel to the Jewish people.

D. By the end of history, no one who has ever lived on the earth will be able to escape the grief and sorrow of our sins and our guiltiness.

There’s an even further fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy that will take place at the time of Christ’s return. We read about this in the last book of the Bible, Revelation 1:7. Revelation borrows a lot of inspiration from the Book of Zechariah. In Revelation 1:7 we read about the return of our Savior, Jesus. . *“Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.”*

All the tribes of the earth will wail when they see the One Whom they have pierced. What’s clear to me, friends, is that ultimately, no one is going to be able to escape the sight of the crucified Lamb of Glory. No one who has ever lived on the face of the earth is going to be able to avoid forever having to fall before the Lord of Glory and having to see what sin had done to God’s Son. Everyone is going to see Him. And there’s going to be deep wailing when the Savior, Who is the Judge of the universe, returns. There’s going to be terror and dread at the realization of what our sins are and the guilt that they bring upon us every day. One day, every eye will look upon Jesus. The only question is will your sorrow at the sight of the crucified Savior be a sweet sorrow or will it be full of terror and dread?

The good news is that there is a way to be forgiven—cleansed—to avoid being consumed with the deep wailing, dread and terror of beholding Christ at His coming. That way is by experiencing now the sweet sorrow of deep repentance. Jesus said we are blessed if we weep now for our mourning will turn into laughter. There is a present day fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy that needs to take place in your life and in mine.

2. The Sweet Sorrow of True Repentance

This prophecy was not just for the Day of Pentecost; it’s for today. It’s not just for the Jewish people in the future; it’s for all people today. It’s a very penetrating word from God to you and me about the need for us to experience today--right now—the sweet sorrow

of true repentance because that sweet sorrow will lead us to that fountain of cleansing so we know we can stand before God unafraid and with great joy in the wonder of what He has done for us. That level of sweet sorrow in your life is a chief indicator of your spiritual health. The more you experience the sorrow of repentance, the deeper will be your joy and delight in the wonder of the cross.

As I think about this, I remember Keith Green's song that I used to listen to a lot when I was in Junior and Senior High.

My eyes are dry, my faith is old,
My heart is hard, my prayers are cold.
And I know how I ought to be
Alive to you and dead to me.

Oh, what can be done for an old heart like mine?
Soften it up with oil and wine.
The oil is You, Your Spirit of Love,
Please wash me anew in the wine of Your Blood.

(My Eyes are Dry by Keith Green)

What can be done when your eyes are dry, your heart is cold, when you should be mourning over what sin has done to Jesus, and instead, it is not melting your heart? How do you and I receive this sweet sorrow of true repentance? Our text in Zechariah 12 gives us two important pointers.

A. Realize God must do something for us.

If your heart is cold, your eyes are dry and you know little of this sweet sorrow, you can't fake it or conjure it up. You can't make it happen—God must do something for you. God did something for His people in Zechariah 12:10. He said, *"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy..."* "I'm going to graciously send them a Spirit—a Helper—Who will convict the world of sin."

When your heart is convicted by sin, when that arrow of conviction pierces your heart, Robert Murray McCheyne said,

"Look at the arrow; it came out of the bow of Christ. It was Christ that took it out of His quiver. Christ aimed it at your heart. He made it pierce your heart. The feather is marked with the blood of the pierced hand. That arrow came from the hand of love, from the hand that was nailed to the cross. Ah! Then take it as proof that Christ wants to save you."

It's a wonderful thing when God sends forth the Spirit of Grace, and in His grace He moves your heart to sorrow over your sin, which causes you to plead to God for mercy.

Brothers and sisters, whatever God brings into your life to make you plead for mercy, receive that as a gift. Whatever God brings into your life that causes you to feel conviction for your sin, that melts your hardened heart, do not resist it. Realize it is a gift, an arrow of love sent from Christ's bow with a loving design to move and melt your heart. Apart from the gift of conviction, we will never experience the sweet sorrow of repentance. But without the sweet sorrow of repentance, the sorrow upon seeing Christ will be full of terror and deep wailing. So whatever the Holy Spirit brings into your life to make you plead for mercy, welcome it.

B. Direct your gaze to Christ, Whom you have pierced.

If your eyes are dry, your heart is cold and you need more of that sweet sorrow of repentance, direct your gaze to Christ Whom you have pierced. Notice, the text does not say, "First, mourn; then look to Jesus." There's an erroneous teaching that sometimes pops up amongst well-intentioned Christians which says something like, "You've got to experience a certain amount or period of mourning before you can look to Jesus," as if somehow mourning must precede faith. But that's not the order of our text. Actually, the text says, "They will look on Him Whom they have pierced, and then they'll mourn."

The gospel is not, "Feel really sorry for your sins and then look to Jesus." The gospel is, "Look to Jesus. Behold the Lamb. Get your gaze on Him. Look at a pierced Savior. Look at the One Who is crucified for you. See Him in His beauty. See Him in His purity. What has He done that deserves this rage and spite? He made the lame to run! He gave the blind their sight!"

Yet, we crucified Him. Look at Him! Realize what He has done for guilty sinners, and as you see Him as the Spirit of Grace, and supplication gives you a true believing sense of what Christ is doing on that cross, then you will mourn. To see Christ in His sufferings is to be melted by those sufferings. And to whatever extent we see Him, we will be melted by it. And to whatever extent our hearts are not melted but are hard, it's because we're not really seeing Him.

There are people who grow up in Arizona but never see the Grand Canyon. It's written on their license plates but they've never been there. There are many people who go to church and they are looking around Christ, at the people, at Bible lessons—they've never seen or looked on Him. "Look on Him and you will mourn." The clearer you see Him, the more vivid will be your sense of sin. When you see what your sins have done to Jesus, then

you'll mourn with that sweet sorrow—that godly repentance—that doesn't lead to regret. When you consider all the treasures of grace that He purchased for you there—forgiveness, cleansing, peace with God, adoption into your Father's family, being a new creation—realize that Jesus paid it all, and say to Him in the words of that Puritan, “Lord, what am I that such mercies as these should be purchased by such a price for me? For me, when thousands and ten-thousands of sweeter dispositions must burn in hell forever!” What wondrous love is this!

Friend, do you realize that if you were the only person in the world, your salvation would have required that cruel death on the cross? So great are your sins, so heinous your rebellion that Jesus would have had to suffer all of this simply to die for you, simply to save you. Don't think, “Well, I only have a miniscule interest in the cross, as if my sins only amounted to .00000001 percent of Christ's sufferings.” No. If you were the only sinner in the world that Jesus intended to die for and to save, His sufferings would have been no less intense for you than what He suffered for the whole world.

Look at Him! Say, “It was my sin that held Him there until it was accomplished.” Let the cross dissolve your heart in thankfulness and melt your eyes to tears. You'll see these are sweet tears and sweet sorrow, because this sorrow doesn't leave you wallowing in your misery but fills you with wonder at His mercy. This sorrow is sweet because it doesn't plunge you into the depths of despair, but instead it plunges you underneath that His fountain of forgiveness.

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

(There is a Fountain Filled with Blood by William Cowper)

As we come to this communion table, do you know the sweet sorrow of true repentance? It's one of the open secrets of the Christian church that a lot of us are riddled with ongoing feelings of guilt. Some might say that Christians feel guilty because we focus too much on sin and repentance. But I think much of the haze of guilt that hangs over our heads is because we've treated repentance superficially. True repentance is like a beam of sunlight—it dispels the gloomy clouds of remorse. True repentance doesn't leave you feeling guilty. It doesn't leave you licking your wounds saying, “I can't believe I did such a horrible thing. I'll never forgive myself! This just proves what a worthless person I am!” That's not repentance—it's self-pity.

The Puritan, John Owen, nailed it on the head when he said, “If you will not believe forgiveness, pretend what you please; it is in truth because you hate repentance.” Repentance probes much deeper than just disappointment with myself. It says, “Yes, I’m going to look at my sin closely, but for every one look at my sin, I’m going to take 10 looks at my Savior.” I’ll see what my sins have done to Him, and I’m going to mourn. But then I’m going to see what He has done to all my sins and I’m going to rejoice! Worthy is the Lamb!

O love divine, O matchless grace—
That God should die for men!
With joyful grief I lift my praise,
Abhorring all my sin, adoring only Him.

(My Jesus, Fair by Chris Anderson)

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