

SERMON FOR SEPTEMBER 24, 2023

TEXT: ZECHARIAH 13: 1-2

THEME: THE REDEEMER'S REFINERY

“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. **2** “And on that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more. And also I will remove from the land the prophets and the spirit of uncleanness.

In the name of Jesus:

The *Deepwater Horizon oil spill* was the largest oil spill in the history of our country. It began on April 20, 2010 in the Gulf of Mexico. It was called the Macondo Project, operated by British Petroleum. The oil harvested from this project would then go to a refinery, but much of the oil for a time didn't make it to a refinery because of the oil spill. The government estimated that 210 million gallons of oil were released into the Gulf of Mexico. Pastor remembers the oil spill well, as he was traveling home from Houston Texas from a Church Event, and had a connecting flight to Columbus out of Tampa. He was able to look out of the window of the airplane and actually see the spill as the plane made its way from Houston to Tampa. Pictures of the spill don't do justice to the damage that the oil caused, to the ocean and to wildlife. Oil was everywhere, on everything, fish, birds, boats, even people who tried to fix

the leak. The leak was finally sealed in September of that year, but the damage had already been done.

There is another type of crude oil that does much more damage, it is the crude oil of sin and the damage it does is to our heart and our lives. Human nature being what it is, we see the slime and grime in our hearts manifested in how we treat people. During the stay at home orders, there are many stories of people spending so much time at home that they got mad with cabin fever, and then took it out by getting mad with everyone else. Anger is everywhere, on the streets in the form of road rage, in our lives as we snap in anger over and against those whom we love, there is anger on social media, and anger in the streets. We try to cope, by eating too much food, worrying too much, sleeping too much, or drinking too much. Sinful slime and grime are more contagious than Covid-19, for sin is everywhere. We need a refinery for our hearts. In verse 1 we see that God's Kingdom comes like a refinery to purify and cleanse the sin that is in our hearts and spills out in our lives.

Zechariah tells us that on that Day a fountain will be open. The fountain is a water fountain, it is a fountain of living water. Living water is the exact opposite of dead water. Dead water is the sin that leads us down dark paths

and seeks to swallow us whole. Zechariah promises a fountain of living water that purifies and cleanses our hearts and lives.

This fountain is promised in the future, after Zechariah's time. The living water will come, and soon. And he goes on to say the fountain will be opened. Not by him, nor any other human being. God is the One doing the opening, and this is great news! Earlier in the year, in the first month or two of the Pandemic, everything closed. Schools closed, offices closed, restaurants closed. It was hard to find anything that was open. But God's refining cleansing fountain never closes, it is always open! 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. God's cleansing fountain is open always and as often as we need it.

We need this fountain because we are all covered in sin. There is not one of us righteous, no not one. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Sin sticks to us like oil, its stench is as if we ran over a skunk with our car. Our sins stink to high heaven and not one of us is able to rid ourselves of the slime and grime of sin. The entire human race reeks of sin in the presence of a holy God. And the bigger issue is because we all smell the same spiritually speaking, many go their entire lives without sensing their need for cleansing from sin. Others think their good life covers the foul odor of their rebellion.

Too often, you and I don't spiritually shower. Then what happens? We stink! A fountain will be opened because we stink to high heaven.

We can see how much we stink by looking at the Seven Deadly Sins. The Seven Deadly Sins originated with Pope Gregory who made them official in 590 AD. Lust—I want what I want and I want it right now. Envy—I want what you have and I want it right now. Greed—I want more of what I have and I want it right now. Sloth—I don't want to do anything—right now. Wrath—I'm mad and angry and I'm going to dump it all on you right now. Pride—I'm better than you, richer than you, and smarter than you right now! Gluttony—I'm going to indulge myself with whatever and I'm going to do it right now!

This is why we need a fountain, a purifying cleansing fountain, to cleanse us from our sins. But where is this fountain? Zechariah helps us out in Zechariah 12: 10: "they will look upon Him whom they pierced." He who knew no sin became sin for you and me and the whole wide world.

Nails pierced Jesus' hands and feet on the cross, a Roman soldier took his spear and that spear was thrust into Jesus' side. John records that there was a sudden flow of blood and water. This is the fountain Zechariah foresaw, the blood of Jesus being poured out like a fountain from Calvary's cross. This

fountain of Jesus' blood washes away our sins. It purifies all of the gunk and good in our lives. And this purification takes place in Baptism.

Like a conduit or pipe, Baptism links us to the fountain of living water that Jesus earned on His cross. Baptism takes what Jesus did on the cross and makes it belong to you, so in Baptism your guilt is gone, your debt is paid, sin is forgiven, and death and hell vanquished. In Baptism the Holy Spirit comes into our lives, bringing us back home to God the Father, giving us clean hearts and a good conscience before God.

But Baptism doesn't do us any good if we look at it and think: "I may make mistakes but at least I am a whole lot better than the next person." Or, "I am just as good as the other person, because I pay by taxes, try to live a good life, and now and then slip a few bucks in the offering plate." When you start to compare yourself and your righteousness to others, you have become a hypocrite and a Pharisee. God calls you to repent. Repentance is not comparing yourself to someone else, it is saying from the heart: "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

And He is! Jesus forgives you! Jesus has washed away your sins. And the reason why is because Jesus loves you, so very very much. His life giving,

soul renewing waters flow to you today, right now, for the blood of Jesus
cleanses you from all your sins.

Amen