

Title: The Fountain and the Broken Cisterns: The Madness of the Exchange

Text: Jeremiah 2:13

“For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”

Sermon main point: When God's people trade the fountain of living waters for broken cisterns, they are saying He is not enough. The crucified and risen Christ is the true fountain who calls them back.

Part 1: INTRODUCTION / CONTEXT

- Last week: Resurrection Sunday — the empty tomb, the risen Christ. For the world, Easter is a holiday; they celebrate and move on.
- For us, the resurrection is the ground of who we are. Our identity is in Jesus.
- Key question: If Jesus is really the only one worthy of worship, why do His people go elsewhere?

Franklin illustration

- 1845 Arctic expedition: lavishly equipped, yet the men died dragging desks, curtain rods, and silverware through the snow.
- They held onto things that could not give life while what could have saved them was right there.
- God says: that is exactly what His people do.

THE TWO IMAGES

Fountain

- Water flowing from within the earth.
- Does not depend on rainfall or outside supply.
- Flows constantly and reliably.
- A fountain meant life.

Cistern

- Hole carved into rock to collect rainwater.
- Has no source of its own.
- Cracks and slowly leaks away.
- Often empty when needed most.

God is the **fountain of living waters** — the self-replenishing source.
His people carved out **broken cisterns** — substitutes with no source of their own.

Part 2: THE SETTING: God's Covenant Lawsuit

- Jeremiah speaks in the last days of Judah.
- The temple is still standing, sacrifices are still offered, and worship language is still being used.
- But the people's hearts are divided.
- They are not rejecting God outright; they are trying to combine Yahweh with idols, alliances, and self-made security.
- This is covenant betrayal.

Part 3: Evil #1 — Forsaking the Fountain

"They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters." Before Judah ever picked up a shovel, they left a Person. Sin is not just missing a standard — it is betraying God.

- Genesis 3: Adam and Eve had everything. The serpent's lie — "God is holding out on you" — leads to the first exchange. Cisterns have been leaking ever since.
- Romans 1:21–25: "They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped the creature rather than the Creator." Creator for creature. Fountain for cistern.
- The pattern runs from the garden → universal humanity (Rom 1) → Judah. This is the human condition.

Part 4: Evil #2 — Building Broken Cisterns

They did not stop at forsaking. They "hewed" cisterns — deliberate, sustained effort.

- The heart cannot sit empty. When you leave a fountain, you have to start digging.
- Israel did not simply reject Yahweh. They compartmentalized Him to religious activity.

- For daily life, they went elsewhere.

Cisterns: Three Ancient Examples (modern counterparts):

- Security — Baal (work, finances)
- Significance/Fruitfulness — Asherah (children, family name)
- Peace — Queen of Heaven (comfort, control)

Part 5: CHRIST, THE TRUE FOUNTAIN

God's answer to the madness of the exchange is not a strategy or a resolution but a Person. The fountain Himself steps into our world.

- The answer is not a better cistern. It is a Person.
- In John 4 and John 7, Jesus offers living water.
- On the cross, in John 19:28, Jesus says: "I thirst."

This is the heart of the gospel:

- We forsook the fountain. We should have been left to die of thirst.
- But the fountain Himself stepped into our place.
- He took on our thirst, bore our drought, and endured the punishment our cistern-building deserved.

SO WHAT?

- Cisterns always crack. They hold just long enough for you to build your life around them, and then they leak.
- The fountain — the risen Christ — never runs dry.

The call of Jeremiah 2:13 is not only: "Stop digging."

The call is: "Come and drink."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. If someone could watch your Monday through Saturday — your habits, your default reactions, your worries — what would they conclude about what you really believe about Jesus?
2. Israel was called to be a display window of God's glory to the nations. In what ways does your life currently fog the glass — where do you look more like someone who needs other sources than someone who has the fountain?
3. Which of the example cisterns (security, significance, peace) is the one you are most actively defending right now? What would it feel like to lose it?
4. The fountain became thirsty for you at the cross. What does it mean for you personally that He bore the drought that belonged to you? How does that change the way you see your own failures to drink from the fountain?
5. What would "going to the fountain first" look like tomorrow morning — concretely, before the inbox, the news, the number you need to check? What is one thing you could do differently?