

THE BIG IDEA: God takes us deeper so we can go wider.

The Take-Off

If you were with us at all over the last month, then you know that it was a month of focusing on the one thing that we're called to do - make disciples - and even though we ended the month talking about how focus calls for a response, the mission is too important to not follow up with kind of a "what now" series.

That's what this series is about.

The last thing we want to do is have a church full of little kids standing on the side of the pool in their shimmies but never getting in the pool.

Man, how many times did I see that as a lifeguard? And how many times did I tread water under a diving board waiting for my kids to jump?

While it may be safer on the shore, the truth is that none of us were made for that.

We were made to jump [PIC OF MAN JUMPING] ... into the water.

This month we'll be talking a lot about water, and about what God is calling you and me to.

This morning, we're going to kick it off by talking about a river and what it brings.

We'll be hanging out in Ezekiel 47.

Find Psalms and then go about a half-inch to the right.

We're picking this up in the middle of a vision that Ezekiel is having about a trickle of water that flowed from the temple and eventually grew into a river.

The question we want to answer is this: what does this river of God's presence bring? I can find at least 5 things.

1. The river brings change

- a. Ankle deep, then knee deep, then waist deep, then over my head deep
- b. I love that the angel led him deeper; he didn't push him deeper
- c. Are we willing to move to places where the river's power holds us in awe?
- d. When was the last time that we were simply overwhelmed by the power and goodness of God?
- e. In the last month, this focus on disciple making has led many of us deeper.
- f. This is what you were made for.

2. The river brings life

- a. I love the fact that the angel led Ezekiel back to the bank.
- b. Most of us just want to hang out in the river, don't we? But there's more to see, more to learn.
- c. Notice the end of verse 9
- d. Everywhere the river flows there is life
- e. It is impossible to be anywhere near this river and be dead
- f. "Swarms" of creatures live where the river flows!

3. The river brings souls

- a. As we learned last month, Jesus has called us to be "fishers of men"
- b. It doesn't mean hooking men with worms, but it's Jesus' way of explaining evangelism
- c. And look what this river brings: it brings souls!
- d. Verse 9 says there will be "large numbers" of fish!
- e. What it means is simple: the more we experience this river of God's presence, the more we'll see his presence drawing men - fish - to us.
- f. And that brings us to the 4th thing the river brings...

4. The river brings work

- a. If there are souls, there must be people leading them to the Lord.
- b. There is work to do around the river. Verse 10 says there were fishermen along the shore of the river.
- c. If this river represents the presence of God, we've got to remember that we can't earn that presence.
- d. But it's important to note this distinction: Grace brings us works. Works never bring us grace.
- e. There's work to be done, lots of fish to catch
- f. We can be busy doing the works God made us for (Ephesians 2:10) or we can be busy doing works to try to get God (Matthew 7:21-13).
- g. And then finally...

5. The river brings revival

- a. Revival is one of the church words and no one seems to know what it is
- b. Does the river bring a guest speaker for 3 nights? Really long services? What is revival?
- c. Revival is when “fruit trees of all kinds will grow” - when churches (plural) are producing fruit
- d. And fruit in large quantities!
- e. The river brings a deep hunger for revival, and the nourishment for that hunger is souls.
- f. Is the salvation of a city nourishment to you or a nuisance to you?
- g. Can you rejoice in the fruit that other churches are producing?
- h. When this is taking place here and in other churches around the city, our city is experiencing revival.

The Landing

So, what do we learn from all this stuff about the river? What’s the takeaway?

I think it’s this: **God takes us deeper so we can go wider.**

Everything that is happening in our church services - the intensity, the focus on disciple making, the passion in worship
- none of it is so we can walk out a talk about the river here.

It’s all so that we can walk out and take the river there.

And so the last thing that the river brings is the church to the world.

Who are you touching every week? Who is already in your life?

The river is in you so that God can touch them through you.

And everything the river touches lives.

Our takeaway? Take life to dead things this week.

Let’s pray.