

REAL WORLD GOD 6: MIXED MESSAGES?

“My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”
(Jeremiah 2:13, NIV)

WHEN IT COMES TO GOLF COURSES, we don’t often think of brown as pretty. Nor tan, nor golden, nor any other color that makes us wonder if the superintendent has forgotten to run the sprinklers of late. When it comes to golf, we are much happier to see green.

Green grass on a golf course means water—enough of it to sustain the turf’s roots and create healthy, even growth. But when that water stands alone, our love for it quickly goes away. Casual water from a broken pipe or heavy rain is just a mess. And water hazards? Well, they are ever and always something to stay away from, unless perhaps you’re hoping to fish your way to a few free balls.

Water on a golf course is a mixed blessing, often beautiful and forbidding all at once. In Scripture, we likewise find mixed messages in words about water.

In the opening pages of your Bible, where we have a record of the early earth, we read that shrubs and plants had not appeared because “the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth... but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground” (Genesis 2:5-6). From the beginning, life depended on water.

But not long after, water brought death. God sent the flood, covering the earth with water for 40 days and nights, and “wiping mankind from the face of the earth” (Genesis 6:7). It was a judgment so great that none could doubt the power of the LORD, but also so strong that God promised never to do it again.

What is true, though, is that humanity never lost track of how to pronounce judgment on themselves. Consider the words of today’s verse from Jeremiah. Not only are we prone to forsaking God—even as “his people”—but we try to come up with designs of our own that end up broken and useless. So God had to rescue us again. He had to send living water.

When Jesus talked with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), this is exactly how he identified what he had to offer. Not a water that only leaves you thirsty again and not an atonement that has to be renewed next year, but a water that sustains and an atonement that lasts once and for all (Hebrews 9:26).

Opening questions What is the most attractive water feature you’ve ever seen on a golf course? How about the most daunting? • What does the idea of “living water” mean to you?

READING Jeremiah 2:13 & 18; John 4:7-15; Ephesians 5:25-27

Useless cisterns (Jeremiah 2)

How are we guilty of digging cisterns that do not hold water? What has this looked like in your own life?

The sustaining Savior (John 4)

What differences exist between physical water and the living water Christ supplies? What was the woman’s response to Jesus’ offer? How does this prompt your response?

Washing with water (Ephesians 5)

How might the word of God provide a cleansing for us? What is the purpose of such a cleansing? How cleansed would you say you are?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2016 Links Players International. This study is accompanied by a 5-minute video here: https://youtu.be/ZT0-U_Dktrw.