

## **A Cleansing Fountain Zechariah 13:1-3**

Grace to you and peace from him who took on the powers of darkness the first Holy Week.

Did you wash your hands? Children hear that question countless times. It's asked by adults who have learned its importance. It's wise to wash your hands: before you eat, after shaking many hands in church, after working in the garage or in the yard, after using the bathroom. It's a basic step that will protect your own health as well as that of others.

God too asks: Did you wash your hands? And your hearts? David writes in Psalm 24:

*Who may go up to the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, whose soul is not set on what is false, who does not swear deceitfully. (24:3,4)*

No amount of soap and water can cleanse hands that are grimy with dirty deeds, mouths that have gushed disgusting words, minds that are polluted by unclean thoughts, or hearts that harbor hate. Isaiah describes how even at our cleanest, we are disgusting to God: *"All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags"* (64:6).

But God has provided a fountain where we can be cleansed. On this Maundy Thursday, let's hear the Holy Week Prophet tell us about that fountain in Zechariah 13:1-3.

*On that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. In that day, declares the LORD of Armies, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they will no longer be remembered. I will also remove the prophets and the impure spirit from the land. If anyone still prophesies, his father and his mother who gave birth to him will tell him, "You shall not live, because you have spoken lies in the name of the LORD!" Then his father and his mother who gave birth to him will stab him when he prophesies.*

No, we cannot scrub the iniquity from our insides. We can try to hide it from others, but that only makes us like the Pharisees. Jesus described them as *"whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean"* (Matthew 23:27).

So what are we to do? There is nothing we can do. There is nothing we need do. The Lord has already done it for us.

*On that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.*

When is "that day"? Let's back up to chapter 12, where the Lord tells us. It is the day on which *"they will look on me, the one they have pierced"* (12:10). It is the day our Savior was crucified.

The Hebrew of Zechariah 13:1 says, *"On that day there will be a fountain."* It could also be translated, *"On that day he will be a fountain."* You know who *he* is. On that day, Jesus was pierced. John's eyewitness account records the scene: *"One of the soldiers pierced Jesus'*

*side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water”* (John 19:34). From his head, from his hands, from his feet, from his side there flowed a fountain of blood, cleansing blood.

On this holy night, the Servant-Savior told Peter: *“Unless I wash you, you have no part with me”* (John 13:8). He has cleansed us of every sin that dirties our hands, our lips, our minds, our hearts. Our filthy robes have been made white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14).

On this Holy Thursday, as we drink from the cup, we also drink from that fountain. We rejoice that the same body and blood present at his sacrifice are also present in his Sacrament, with the same power to cleanse our dirty souls.

A typical hand sanitizer claims to kill 99.9 percent of germs. But what about that sneaky 0.1 percent that could still make you sick? Jesus guarantees that he removes not 99.9 percent of sins, but 100 percent. He removes even the tiniest sins, the ones that we don't recognize anymore.

As you come to the Lord's Supper, know that Satan has lost his grip on you. One day he will no longer tempt you with unclean thoughts. One day you will sit at Christ's table in heaven with completely clean hands and a permanently pure heart.

As you leave the altar, reflect on the sacrifice that opened that cleansing fountain. Consider what you can do to cleanse your life of sin. Start planning your grateful response as soon as you return to your pew and offer your prayer of thanks.

When you expect company, you clean your house, right? How foolish it would be to sweep, vacuum, dust, and scrub only to tromp through your clean house wearing muddy boots!

Peter describes those who do just that to their clean souls. After coming to know Christ and visiting his fountain, they return to their filthy habits. Peter writes:

*Indeed, if, after escaping the defiling things of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and controlled by them again, they are worse off than they were at first. They demonstrate the truth of the proverb: “A dog returns to its own vomit,” and “a washed sow returns to wallowing in the mud”* (2 Pt. 2:20,22).

Don't be that dog! Don't be that sow! Having been cleansed of sin, make it your goal to stay clean. That is what the Lord was planning for his people and their land.

*In that day, declares the LORD of Armies, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they will no longer be remembered. I will also remove the prophets and the impure spirit from the land. If anyone still prophesies, his father and his mother who gave birth to him will tell him, “You shall not live, because you have spoken lies in the name of the LORD!” Then his father and his mother who gave birth to him will stab him when he prophesies.*

God wanted a thorough housecleaning in Israel. No more idols! Not the one that your wife brought along from her country when you married her. Not the one that powerful countries worship. Not the one that you keep in the closet as a backup. None! There is only one God!

There was no First Amendment in the Jewish Torah that guaranteed freedom of religion and speech. The Lord had chosen Israel for himself. He wanted all of their worship for himself. Anyone who promoted or prophesied about any god other than the God of Abraham, Isaac,

and Jacob was to be dealt with severely. If parents realized that one of their children was advocating for a foreign god or using the Lord's name to cover up false teaching, they were to stab that child to death!

Shocking language? Yes. But worship of false gods would undermine the entire nation. It would ruin the people's relationship with the God who had rescued them. Evil must be rooted out entirely. Israel's exile to Babylon should have taught them the dangers of idol worship. Severe measures were called for, even the death penalty to prevent another such disaster.

Are you serious about keeping your hands and hearts clean? What idols need to be eliminated from your life? What is competing for first place in your heart? What is robbing your Redeemer of the commitment that he deserves because of his commitment to you? What is luring you from your Lord? Is it a job? images on a screen? a friend? a romantic interest? a hobby? a sport?

Examine your budget, your calendar, your activities. Are you wisely managing your time? your talents? your treasures? What about the temple of your body? How does the amount of time and money you spend on entertainment and pleasures compare to the amount you spend of God's Word and God's work? Identify those idols that make you look like a freshly washed sow that has returned to wallow in the mud. Then banish them from your life.

What about your stewardship of the truth? False teaching only soils the beauty of God's revelation and endangers your faith. What sort of impure prophets are whispering in your ear? What sorts of pro-world, anti-God philosophies are shouting from the rooftops? For the sake of your soul, get away from them, even if the spiritual rot comes from within your family.

Jesus spoke strongly: "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37). In Zechariah, the warning is even more striking:

*If anyone still prophesies, his father and his mother who gave birth to him will tell him, "You shall not live, because you have spoken lies in the name of the LORD!" Then his father and his mother who gave birth to him will stab him when he prophesies.*

Parents, please don't stab your children, even if they have departed from the truth. But listen how urgently God impresses this matter on us. It's a matter of life and death for one's faith. Pray for those who are straying. Don't tolerate any false teaching they may be professing or promoting.

Germs are everywhere. That is why you wash your hands often. Threats to your faith are everywhere too. Act decisively against any influence that is leading you away from your Savior—work, play, social media, friends, even family. Get it out of your life. Don't be like a dog returning to its vomit.

Do it because you have been cleansed in the fountain that flowed from that Friday morning sacrifice. Do it because you have been cleansed by Jesus' body and blood in this Thursday evening sacrament. Do it because it feels good to be clean...and you want to stay that way.

*There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains: lose all their guilty stains. (CW 401:1)*

In the Jesus' name, dear friends, and by his blood.