

## MONDAY, FEBRUARY 19

EZEKIEL 47:1-12

Take a few minutes and scan through the book of Leviticus. Its many rules and regulations for maintaining purity in the presence of God can easily lead people to suspect that the holiness of God must be protected from corruption. Temple priests must diligently supervise who and what enters the temple so that they won't be consumed, lest they defile the holy.

However, Ezekiel's vision of the new temple shows an alternate, almost reverse view of God's holiness. Ezekiel is taken to the east entrance of the temple, and he finds water trickling out of the gate. The water grows deeper and turns into a mighty river, eventually running into the Dead Sea. Everywhere this river runs turns into lush, green vegetation. Even when it reaches the Dead Sea the water becomes fresh and the home to fish and other creatures. Wherever the river flows, life grows.

Rather than sin and death contaminating holiness, God's holiness is shown flowing out of the temple and decontaminating whatever it touches. The dry, arid desert becomes an oasis of food, healing, and life. Ezekiel's vision shows us that God is the source of all that is holy. The river springs forth from within God's temple, from God's very sanctuary. The desert doesn't do anything to make itself into fertile soil, suitable for life and growth. The Dead Sea isn't capable of desalting itself so that it can sustain life within its waters. God alone is able to make holy that which was previously unholy.

As God's people, God's desire for us is to be like the Dead Sea. In sin we are barren and devoid of life. But if God's holiness flows into us, making us holy, then our very nature is changed. We go from lifeless to full of life, from barren to fertile, from dead to life-giving. God's own holiness transforms us in ways that allow us to be bringers of life into a bleak and desolate world. The fruit of our new holy lives provide food and healing for the people around us - our neighborhoods and communities.

When evaluating our development as disciples of Jesus Christ, we often focus on easily quantifiable and measurable things: How often do I attend a Sunday morning worship service, how much/often do I tithe, how much of the Bible do I read a day, how many minutes/hours do I spend in prayer? Sometimes all those activities, while not bad themselves, can become attempts to manage our own salvation. Every once in a while, we might need to step back and ask, how much of God's holy river am I surrendering myself to? Am I being transformed from desolated to cultivated? Is the fruit produced from that transformation bringing life and healing to the people around me?