

Heart for the Poor When the taps run dry

What no water in the tap! Impossible, but true. What do we do? Thank goodness I had a shower early. Bless some kind soul at Metrowater who responded to a neighbour's plea and agreed to turn it back on for a few minutes before making repairs. So out came the containers, bucket and dipper in the bathroom. "Just like being in the third world" complained family members who had to wash in cold water. I remember staying in a Russian built concrete hotel in Kosovo just after the war there with my head under the tap in my room waiting for water. One could hear a whistling sound as it approached like a London Underground train, it exploded into my plugless sink with a furious gush, then nothing. Tricky, you had to choose which bit of you needed washing that day, teeth? feet? hair? because you only got 20 seconds or so of water at any one time.

Washing whenever we want to is a "right" we expect, as is access to clean drinking water. While this has improved some observers have estimated that by 2025, more than half of the world population will be facing water-based vulnerability. A recent report (November 2009) suggests that by 2030, in some developing regions of the world, water demand will exceed supply by 50%. Around New Zealand we have wet and dry regions. We have what we need even if perhaps some cannot buy what they want to irrigate land. Indexes are being created to indicate how much water it takes to produce things. Some claim it can take up to 5,000 litres of water to produce a hamburger, 6,800 litres to produce a pair of jeans.

Yet as I prepare for this talk it is pouring with rain here in Auckland. You could argue what is the problem with a litre of milk needing requiring 1,000 litres (some claim a lot more) of water to get it from the paddock to our fridge when rainwater disappears from site into the drain? The Bible has 722 references, images and verses about water. Among other things they speak to us of birth, the word of God and purification. Interestingly earth starts out covered in water, and in Rev 21:1 we are told the new heaven will have no sea.

For many the lack of water is a daily curse. I have been told of the shame associated with not being able to wash. We heard a few weeks ago on this session how the slum lords of Mumbai held slum dwellers to ransom over access to water. What can we do about all this? I suppose we could look at what we use, be prepared for it to be cut off, and maybe considers ways we can help those for whom access to water is a life or death issue. TEAR Fund's partners are working on water issues in India, Somaliland, the Philippines, Indonesia to name a few places. Supporting them would be a start.

When our water came on again I was faced with the dilemma of what to do with the buckets of water in the bath, of course it was raining outside so the garden didn't need it. I did put a full container in the cupboard for next time it is cut off.

Prayer: Father you started creation with water, you tidied things up with a flood, yet today so many lack it. Inspire us with ways we can make good use of what we have available for our use or is required for what we consume, and ways we can make a difference in the lives of those who are without. Amen.