

Land

Fair are the rivers,

Meadows and forests

Clothed in the fresh green robes of spring;

Jesus is fairer,

Jesus is purer,

He makes the gladdest heart to sing.

Schönster Herr Jesu (1677) Lilian Stevenson (Trans.) (1870-1960)

Hymn 366 CPWI

The land plays an integral role in facilitating the distribution of water in the world. While the trees of the forest appear to be the ‘heroes’ of our reflection thus far, this is only so because they are sustained by nutrient rich soil which aid in their growth. The relationship between the trees and the soil is a mutual one because they depend on each other for both nutrients and stability. Soil provides a stable nutrient rich and moisture retentive medium into which trees can become anchored and be supplied with the necessary materials for them to thrive. Consequently, as the roots of trees grow deeper into the soil, they enhance the structure of the soil by breaking up hard rocks, providing shelter from heavy rain and wind which can remove topsoil, and supplying the soil with nutrients when dead leaves and branches

fall and rot. Together soil and trees distribute water; the trees by way of pulling water up the plant's body and through the leaves by way of their root systems and soil by channeling water to aquifers by way of the crevices created by root systems when they push deeper into the soil. Aquifers are essential geological features especially for countries whose main water source is underground.

In Barbados, our water supply is mainly underground. Rainwater flows through rocks and channels created by root systems into aquifers which act as holding areas. It takes about three months or longer for water to reach the water table and only 15 to 30% of the island's annual rainfall makes it to recharge the aquifers. The rest is lost mainly by heavy evaporation. Barbados' renewable water sources account for approximately 80 million cubic meters and that is just about the amount of water that Barbados uses per annum. What that means is that Barbados is a water scarce country because it uses up just about the same amount of water it saves. Desalination in Barbados supplies about 20% of the island's drinking water requirement. Imagine what is possible if we were to preserve our large trees and plant more trees with good root systems that can reach down and channel water to our aquifers. Similarly, if we aggressively seek to harvest more of the limited amount of water we receive per annum, we may be able to increase the percentage of water captured closer to 50%. Then there

will be a reduction in the use of potable water for tasks which do not require high levels of water purity.

Reflection:

In Ezekiel 47, the moist nutrient-rich soil of the riverbanks provide stability for the trees that they grew to produce fruit of every kind, like the giant trees of the Amazon are deeply rooted and sturdy to carry out their function. Jesus used this motif in the 'Parable of the Sower' in Matthew 13 cf. Luke 8. In this parable, only the seeds that fell on good soil were able to flourish. The type of soil represented the condition of the hearts of people, and the seed represented the Word of God. The dynamic of this parable is not dissimilar from the mutually dependent relationship observed between the trees and soil in the Amazon. In the parable, the soil needs to be nourished and nutrient-rich to receive the word, but it is the word that nourishes the soil. In real terms, instantaneous conversion is the exception rather than the norm. Just as natural soils are enriched over time, so too, the hearts of humanity can be enriched over time once the word has been planted on them. The call for the Christian is to daily seek nourishment of our hearts by receiving the word that it may grow and bear fruit through us.