

Sermon – Sunday, March 12, 2023

Deacon Martha

Be The Change You Want To See In The World

Small feet stuffed into rain boots, yellow slickers front buckled, the construction crew was outfitted. My two older siblings and I gleefully ran from the side door of our old farm house and into the outdoors. Grabbing sturdy sticks that had fallen from the chestnut tree, we were ready to begin working; self-proclaimed civil engineers, or perhaps, environmental engineers. After the heavy rain, puddles filled the cinder-covered driveway and we were anxious to build tributaries to connect the smaller bodies of water to the larger ones. I suppose we must have learned the word tributary in a science class because I clearly remember us using the word as we decided the day's activity would be helping to create these waterways. Should we come upon a water shortage, the full, marshy ditch across the seldom traveled country road (unless one counts the John Deer or Massey Ferguson tractors) would provide an extra source. Besides, once we tired of our excavation, how excited we were to explore the grassy, waterfilled conduits that might possibly be the home for tadpoles, frogs, or other amphibious life!

Today's readings from Exodus, John's Gospel, and to a degree, our psalm, reference water. I was led to ponder and reflect upon the readings as they might relate to World Water Day, a UN sanctioned remembrance, that will be recognized and celebrated on March 22nd. I will stray a bit from the actual readings in today's lectionary posts, while staying connected as the theme and stream of Living Water dominates.

If inclined, one may find that reading and contemplating the beginning chapters written in the Book of Genesis, might reawaken a child-like imagination, energy, wonder that enables one to appreciate how the Creator of all envisioned then and now, how the precious resource would be used: birth, nurture, growth, sustenance, and available to all. And, I have to ask...how am I, are we doing as co-creators and stewards?

I think it's safe to say, that we can agree that water was, is, and forever will be a vital and imperative element in the survival of all of creation. The adult human body contains up to 60 % water; the earth's component is 96.5% salt water and 3.5% fresh water, made up of freshwater lakes and frozen water locked up in glaciers and polar ice caps.

For most of us, turning on the tap whether to wash dishes, shave, take a shower, fill a pot to boil water for spaghetti, water the garden or wash the car is given barely a thought. Though filling a glass with H₂O probably isn't as common as it used to be, with many preferring to drink bottled water (a topic in itself), sometimes the faucet runs gallons till it's suitably cold enough to satisfy one's thirst or hot enough to kill some germs.

A recent notice put forth by Environment America reports a 2.5-mile-wide plume of toxic PFAS- a group of chemicals used to make fluoropolymer coatings and products that resist heat, oil, stains, grease and water-has spread in Lake Michigan, leached from a plant that makes firefighting foam into groundwater that leads to the Green Bay area. The chemical

contamination can be tracked back to just one plant. That's just one plant, making one product, and yet is endangering the drinking water source for more than 10 million people. This substance is connected to many health risks, including high blood pressure, birth defects, certain cancers, and reduced immunity.

I came across this piece from UN Water, while researching resources for today's sermon: Be the change you want to see in the world. There is an ancient story of a hummingbird and it is about how we react to a crisis. Right now, we face a water and sanitation crisis. Do we stand and stare? Or, do we act?

'One day in the forest, a fire broke out. All the animals ran for their lives. They stood at the edge of the blaze, looking at the flames in terror and sadness. Up above their heads, a hummingbird was flying back and forth to the fire, over and over again. The bigger animals asked the hummingbird what she was doing. "I'm flying to the lake to get water to help put out the fire." The animals laughed at her and said, "You can't put out this fire!" The hummingbird replied, "I'm doing what I can.'"

Writer Sean McConnell had this to say: "In our relationship to creation, we are called to be Christ's living water. This is God's work of reconciliation. God the acting agent in our lives, seeks to be reconciled to all of God's creation. For the waters of creation to live, we must be a part of the living water, too."

From our Book of Common Prayer, we have these words: We thank you Almighty God, for the gift of water. Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation.

At the end of our reading from Exodus this morning, we hear the Israelites demanding to know, "Is the Lord among us or not?" Might it be more truthful, honest, self-searching to ask, "are you and I with the Lord?" Will we honor our Baptismal covenant? Will we commit to "Be The Change You Want To See In The World"? Drop by drop, from hummingbird-sized beaks, will we proclaim, act, acknowledge our responsibility, our promise, our love of God, neighbor and self, and be conduits, tributaries that allow our faith and abundance to flow into and onto others?

When we see injustice, are tempted to overuse, waste and even if unintentionally, close our eyes and hearts to the myriad who cannot even cry tears because they are so dehydrated, do we feel troubled? Can you envision-placing yourself in empathy, being a sibling in Christ, made in the likeness and image of our Creator, unable to shed a liquid tear because you yourself are so dehydrated, holding in your arms, the dead child you grieve because the gift of water-so simple, so available...and yet not...because... I invite you to consider the small sacrifice as you turn off the faucet, cease to luxuriate in lengthy hot showers, let the tap or the hose flow, while our siblings roam cracked, dry deserts, remembering the crops that once grew, and the flocks that once roamed, the water that fell, or was available from a "living stream" nurturing the landscape and it wasn't a tortuous journey for survival. I can't, won't answer this question for anyone; only will I address what it means for me...and invite you to do the same...

I've provided some information on the table in the narthex, for anyone interested in learning how a few simple steps can make a difference. The hummingbird story gives hope-we aren't asked to, or expected to do it all. Yet, we can, one by one do **something**; and together we can act rather than stand and stare in the face of crisis.

Indeed it seems appropriate that God troubles the waters. If not, calm complacency and tranquil reticence allows no space for sharing the living water. The well is dry, the bucket empty, the landscape barren...no pure groundwater, to be struck from "the Rock" ... Be the change you want to see in the world...

Wade in the Water....