

Jan 10, 2016

Isaiah 43:1-7, Psalm 29, Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Waters of the Spirit

As I read over the Bible passages for today the first sense I got was of the love, the great love, flowing through the waters of these passages. Thus says the Lord...do not fear...I have called you by name...you are my own...I am your Savior...you are precious in my sight...I love you...Do not fear, for I am with you! All of these love words come to us from the LORD as found in Psalm 29...the LORD whose voice thunders over mighty waters...the powerful God who can strip forests bare with a word. It is this LORD whose Spirit comes to us through the waters...through the Water of Life.... through Jesus our Christ, our Savior.

These are pretty watery readings! Not watery in the sense of diminished in content, as in watered down. Watery in the sense of being full of weighty and wet imagery. These watery words don't just lay there on the page. They are infused with movement and creative force. They can bring us all the way back to the very birth of creation. They can locate us in the present time. Or they can carry us into the future. Water is a great connector of us all. ..and Spirit moves through it!

From the first creation story in Gen 1 verses 1 & 2 we hear “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” and “the Spirit of God hovered over the waters.” And in the second story of the birth of creation, found in Gen 2:6ff, water “streams up from the ground and watered the whole surface...and a river flowed from this Eden splitting into the four rivers which connected Eden to the rest of the then known world.

Adam and Eve are pushed out of the garden due to their impetuous nature but, they are not thrown into the abyss. They move from a place where all is taken care of for them out into the real world. They follow the rivers out into a world still blessed and named by God, but into a life in which they must take an active role in their self-care and care of their environment.

Rapidly we move from birth to young adulthood, from innocence and dependence to eye opening independence, from the baby Jesus to an unwed mother finding her way in a hostile world, from living amongst people who have the same skin color and traditions as you, to living in a diverse world amongst people of many different races, colors, creeds, sexual orientation, etc.

Can you remember your birth? Were you born into a family that just gobbled you up with love or were the circumstances of your birth less than ideal? Some children were conceived of a mother excommunicated from the church for being pregnant and unwed. Some babies are born already addicted to drugs due to their mother's habits. Some are born and given up for adoption. Some are born into families that fight and bicker. Some are born to very young mothers who have no clue how to care for a baby and no father or parents or friends to help. Some are born into a world where water is scarce and food even scarcer.

Yet, no matter what the circumstances of your birth these passages remind and assure us, we are loved in the way that counts the most...in a way that will never be taken away from us...in a way on which we can always depend. When we pass through the waters God will be with us. We are called and named by God as beloved.

Baptism is a passing through the waters. It is a dying to an old way of life and a being born to life anew with Christ. When you choose to be baptized you commit yourself to following a path that says

you will put love of God and neighbor before your fears.... A path that says, miracles happen when we put Love first.

There is an old Negro Spiritual that invites us to take risks that will bring us new life...that invites us to enter the waters even if they seem muddy. The slaves sang these songs to give each other support but also to pass information along to each other. This one holds a code about how to escape the horrendous conditions to which they were held hostage. It is called Wade in the Water. It goes like this Wade in the water, wade in the water children now, wade in the water, God's gonna trouble the water.

Troubled water, agitated water, muddy water can be a good thing... It tells us God is here and Spirit is moving through the waters... change is a comin' but it's all gonna to be okay... God is with us now and forever.

Let's sing it together letting the words remind us of our baptism into the life of freedom with Christ.

Sing two times

Now I'd like to invite the Putnam family and deacon Lu Anne to come up as we get to witness the baptism of Ruby and Max Putnam.

And I invite the youth to gather round as well to be close witnesses to this sacrament of baptism. Let us trouble the waters reminding us all that God is present in these waters and in this sacred act of baptism.