

LIFE-GIVING WATER AND SPIRIT



Scripture:

Psalm 98

¹O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory. ²The Lord has made known his victory; he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations. ³He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

⁴Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises.

⁵Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody. ⁶With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord.

⁷Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it. ⁸Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy ⁹at the presence of the Lord, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

To better understand today's passage in Acts 10, I want to give you a summary of the previous episode (like they do with TV series) so you will be less confused about this part of the story that is sometimes called The Second Pentecost (because the Holy Spirit comes upon the followers of Jesus and they have a similar response to the disciples in the first Pentecost described in Acts chapter 2). We will celebrate that first Pentecost on May 20th.

So in the beginning of this chapter in Acts, we meet a Roman Centurion named Cornelius who has been very faithful to God evidenced by his giving generously and praying often. Then one day an angel appears and scares the daylights out of him!

He asks what the angel wants of him. He is instructed to go to Joppa, get Peter, and bring him back to Caesarea where Cornelius lives. (Has anyone here been to Joppa? It is a gorgeous town on the Mediterranean, a suburb of Tel Aviv thirty miles south of Caesarea.)

After having a vision that was interpreted to mean his ministry should be inclusive of Gentiles as well as Jews, Peter agrees to go with the three men that Cornelius sent.

As Peter went with the men he brought along some of his followers to the house of Cornelius. It took them two days to travel the thirty miles. In the meantime Cornelius gathered his relatives and friends together to prepare for Peter's arrival. He assumes Peter is somebody very special since an angel summoned him. And Peter is willing to speak to the whole family of Cornelius and later baptize them, young and old. (This is one of the passages the protestant churches use as rationale for doing infant baptisms.)

Verse 34 says: Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed..., for God was with him.

We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.' (Now we are finally up to today's passage. Listen now....

Acts 10:44-48

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. ⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, ⁴⁶for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷"Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" ⁴⁸So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



LIFE-GIVING WATER AND SPIRIT

"The believers who came along with Peter to Caesarea were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles!"

How does that make you feel as a gentile? Has anyone ever been astounded when you were included in something that you didn't expect? Have you ever been rejected? Jesus was very inclusive and welcoming.

Peter is still in training mode as the rock of the church, so it was important for him to

learn that Jesus approved of the Holy Spirit being poured upon the Gentiles and that they were allowed to be baptized, too. Up to this point in time only Jews who converted to following Jesus had been baptized. Through water and the spirit the Gentiles were now also given new life, a new community of support and new hope in Jesus.

Water and the Holy Spirit go together well, like chocolate and peanut butter.

Jesus demonstrated these elements together in his own baptism: John baptized Jesus in the water of the Jordan River and the heavens opened up and a dove

representing the Holy Spirit came down upon him.

Still today in our Christian tradition, water and the Holy Spirit are key symbols of a life of faith. They are also keys ingredients to life in general.

The word “pneuma”, is the Greek word for breath. The Latin equivalent of pneuma is “Spiritus” meaning spirit. God breathes the Spirit upon us. The Spirit dwells within us and the Spirit guides us. It flows like water, which gives us life, cleanses and is within us.

WATER

About sixty per cent of the human adult body is water. According to H.H. Mitchell, in the Journal of Biological Chemistry, the brain and heart are composed of seventy-three per cent water, and the lungs are about eighty-three per cent water. A human can go about three weeks without food but only about four days without water.

Simply to breathe you need four-hundred milliliters of water per day. Breath is dependent on water. You lose four-hundred milliliters of water from perspiration, too. In a normal day with mild temperatures, your body loses four-hundred milliliters from respiration and four-hundred milliliters from perspiration. We are amazingly balanced organisms aren't we?

PLASTICS

**God created the miracle of water
so we could breathe.**

Without water, we can't breathe.

God did not create plastics.

**Man has created something that
could kill our water and breath.**

Our drinking water supply is heavily contaminated with micro-plastics. People exposed to certain forms of plastic

contamination have a higher likelihood of developing serious health issues.

This may partially explain the increase in cancer in the United States. Some countries in Europe have banned the use of certain plastics in packaging that comes in contact with food and drink. Already, the ocean is filled with about one-hundred-sixty-five-million tons of plastic.

By 2050, plastic in the oceans will outweigh fish, predicts a report from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, in partnership with the World Economic Forum.

An article published by the National Institutes of Health says: Promotion of plastics substitutes and safe disposal of plastic waste requires urgent and definitive action to take care of this potential health hazard in future. It takes between one-hundred and one-thousand years for plastics to decompose depending on their thickness and other factors. This video will explain.

A video was shown to the congregation. <http://time.com/4928759/plastic-fiber-tap-water-study/>

Micro plastics also get into our water from washing polyester and nylon clothing. Wear Cotton!

ALBUMIN BASED MATERIAL

Bio-degradable plastic bags are now available and other alternatives to plastic are being developed such as spoons made of potatoes instead of plastic. Scientists are also looking to develop substitutes for plastics with the use of Albumin from egg whites, whey protein, and soy protein. Not only did they produce effective and biodegradable material like plastic but there was a bonus attribute.

Albumin-based material has a strong antibacterial effect. The bacteria would not grow on the material in their experiments. Facing up to the need to rid our environment of plastics may lead to much healthier inventions like these!

OUR WATER THEN AND NOW

Think of what condition the water in the world was in when you were a child (fifty plus years ago) and what condition our water is in today.

How has our health been affected by corporate pollution and the increasing use of pesticides and plastics in our environment?!!

The good news is that God calls us to do something about it and we are empowered to do so through our larger Presbyterian Church USA and the Holy Spirit.

Oscar Romero said, "A church that does not provoke crisis, a gospel that does not disturb, a word of God that does not touch the concrete sin of the society in which it is being proclaimed—what kind of gospel is that?" I don't know.

AN "EARTHCARE" CHURCH

We can touch the concrete sin of polluting our holy waters by becoming a PCUSA certified "Earthcare" church. But we need a taskforce of people to accomplish this effort. The goal of the program is to inspire churches to care for God's earth in a holistic way, through integrating earth care into all of their church life. As a basis for fulfilling this goal, our church would affirm the Earth Care Pledge, which begins:

"Peace and justice is God's plan for all creation. The earth and all creation are God's. God calls us to be careful, humble stewards of this earth and to protect and restore it for its own sake, and for the future use and enjoyment of the human family."

What we need is a Third Pentecost (according to Keri Day in the Christian Century blog). She says, "The joy of Pentecost is that it gives us a vision and hope for a community made possible

through the work of the Spirit. This miracle involves being open to the shocking and surprising ways of the Spirit, which empowers us to reach across differences in order to experience radical and insurgent communions."

Today, over one billion people worldwide lack access to water and every fifteen seconds a child dies from a water-related disease. (www.water.org)

Four every minute, two-hundred-forty every hour children die from contaminated water. Our world is not becoming over populated as once predicted and this might be part of the reason. Children are dying more rapidly than being born. Infertility is becoming an epidemic! Life is dependent on clean water.

We are empowered by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Water of our baptisms to care, to act, and to use our breath, our faith, and our resources to heal the community around us. We are also witnesses to the poor condition of the earth. We must repent in word and in action and sin no more.

The Spirit is calling all of us to save the vital life-giving water for the survival of future generations of God's children.

Will you answer that call?

Benediction:

The universal need for water makes us all one as water molecules are shared with each other wherever we are, through our breathing. The Holy Spirit flows with each breath. You are a walking temple of the Holy Spirit. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen



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