

“The Water of Life”

Revelation 22:1-5

“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” These familiar words from St. Augustine’s “Confessions” may not connect with us unless the waters we’re sailing on are real choppy right now. I think when we’re navigating “still waters” and life is going well we have a more difficult time hearing the voice of God beckoning us home to rest in him.

Could it be that somehow we hear the voice of God or experience God’s presence in water itself? It seems like so many people are attracted to water. When I served in Fargo, N.D., the town would empty out on summer weekends as people escaped to family lake cabins. Instead of a Saturday night service, we had a Monday night chapel service to accommodate the water lovers.

When we drive to the Florida Atlantic coast the week after Christmas, the beach is full of northerners drawn to the waves and the sun. The locals shake their heads as they walk by all bundled up while the northerners are in the water, riding the waves at 65°.

Here we grab our fishing gear, lured to the waters of lake Erie for a day of perch or walleye fishing with an occasional jump in the lake to cool off. Water renews us. We come alive. When on the water or in the water, we sense a peace that feels spiritual.

Psalm 42 describes the drawing power of water for wild creatures and compares it to a spiritual longing. “As a deer longs for flowing springs, so my

soul longs for you, O God.” The deer seeks water to satisfy thirst, but humans long for more. Water alone will not satisfy us. We may delight in a morning shower, or swimming in a lake, and soothing aches and pains in a jacuzzi, but our restless hearts long for more. We long for God on this journey to Holy Week.

It is in the waters of baptism that we glimpse the eternal and hear a response to our deepest longings. The waters of oceans and peaceful lakes are pointers, but they are not our home. These waters hint at the healing of our hearts and the healing of our world, but we find wholeness and healing in God who uses the waters of baptism, the water of life to restore us to him.

Yet we can never forget the water that has given us Christ in baptism always connects us to God’s creation all around us. We ignore God’s creation, we take from God’s creation at our own peril. The waters all about us in nature give us connection with all of God’s creatures and with the wonder and fragility of creation itself.

My family still talks about the 3-D movie, “Avatar,” which portrays a native people on another planet living simply and in deep connection with the beautiful creation around them. We come with our bulldozers and mining equipment to knock over trees and to take away a valuable mineral. We are portrayed as the “takers” who don’t care what we leave behind. We have lost our connection with the wonder and spirit and fragility of creation itself.

But the waters of baptism connect us with Jesus Christ, God’s gift for the mending of our broken world. The waters of baptism connect us with Jesus

Christ, God's gift to reconnect us to all of his creation and to reconnect us to himself.

In the Book of Revelation, John has a vision of a new creation with the "river of the water of life." From Revelation 22:1-5 . . . Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; ⁴they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

"The river of the water of life." The waters of baptism bring Jesus into our lives. The waters of baptism are the water of life that flow into us and through us that we may know Jesus and the God who sent him.

As we make our way through Holy Week we become one with Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. During these past six weeks of our Lenten journey, we've experienced the waters of baptism birthing us anew, leading us to praying and sleeping, declaring us real people, and last week the waters of baptism empowering us in our letting go.

The waters of the baptismal font remind us that we are loved by God. If we

hear his Word at the font, we will hear it echoed in the meandering stream and the majestic sea. Our longings find their center and their home in the waters of the font.

Still, as long as we live this life, our longings will not disappear. We'll still hang our hopes in the wrong places. We will continue to delude ourselves. We will face disappointment, choppy seas, and muddy waters. When traveling those waters we join with the psalmist in crying out, "My soul longs for you, O God."

Then we listen . This is deep listening, the most important listening we do. It brings us next Friday face to face with the cross of Christ. There, in the presence of the greatest love, we die to our stubborn ways and rise to a new life in Christ.

We will be "like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season." We are reconnected to God and his creation. Our restless hearts have found their home in the water of new life.

May the peace of God . . .

#331 - As the Deer Runs to the River