

Come to the Water

By: Meagan McLaughlin

February 13, 2022. Today we remember our own baptisms and name our connectedness, to one another by the water that fills and nourishes every cell of our bodies, and to our God whose love for us and for all creation is beyond our capacity to understand.

Readings: [Jeremiah 17:5-10](#), [Psalm 1](#)

*** Transcript ***

I've always loved water. Maybe it goes back to the hours I spent with my family on a boat on Lake Minnetonka in Minnesota, or the beauty of the Mississippi River that connects my hometown of Minneapolis down to St. Louis where we are right now, the lakes around the Twin Cities and all the ponds that are up there, but water has always seemed to bring me to a place of calm and connectedness. One of my favorite places is Gooseberry Falls, in northern Minnesota on the North Shore. The splashing of the water against the rocks grows louder with every step you take toward the falls, and that's along with the sounds and voices and laughter on sunny days when there are lots of people. One of the best parts of Gooseberry is that it is really three waterfalls in one, with the water pouring down each rocky cliff, one after the other.

The river is surrounded by rock — all colors, shapes, and sizes, some like sets of stairs to climb as you make your way to the Upper Falls, some smooth and flat and perfect for sitting on if you want to just watch the water, some rising out of the river itself like stepping stones allowing the courageous to cross from one side to the other and back in search of new paths. And framing the stone are thousands of trees, with paths running through them like so many veins, carrying light, air, animals, and people into the woods, and back again.

And then, of course, there is the water itself. One year I sat by the edge of the Upper Falls, listening to the water colliding with the rocks and then rushing over and around them, when I noticed something that I hadn't noticed before. As Gooseberry River makes its way down the Upper Falls, it doesn't go down all in one rush, but divides and flows around the rocks in the cliff, forming hundreds of mini water falls as it goes. I became fascinated with how different they all were, in size, shape, direction, even speed, and I could have spent hours just watching them.

I took pictures of course, but that doesn't capture the beauty experienced when you are sitting there, so close you have to raise your voice to be heard over the roar of the water, and can feel the mist off the rocks a few feet away.

Jeremiah says today, and our psalmist echoes, "They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots to the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit." That describes something of the feeling I have when I am near water. Moments like this connect me to the presence of God in profound ways, because with stone, dirt, water, trees, sunlight, and air all around, I feel grounded in the Spirit of the one who created it all.

That feeling of being parched, which Jeremiah and the psalmist also describe, are probably familiar to all of us — especially these days perhaps. We've all experienced feeling like chaff, withered, empty, at different times in our lives. We all need the water of the Spirit, to be connected to the God who is the

source of all love, healing, hope, and life.

Perhaps some of you, like me, experience God when you are close to the world God created, whether it be literal water, or mountains, the thick of a forest, or the unique beauty of the desert. But that is certainly not the only way or place to connect with our Source. Where and how do you experience the life that comes from being connected with God? You may feel the Spirit close when you create music, with voices or instruments. Some of you have shared that arranging flowers for our altar is a meditative experience that feeds your soul. The rhythm of breath and feet as you walk, or run, or ride your bike, may ground you as it connects body, spirit, and creation and the Creator together. The words of scripture, or the sacredness of silence, or the feeling of the holy in this building perhaps, can connect us to the Word, who existed long before anything else.

Our readings today carry a message for those who know they need God. It is a promise for every one of us, whose very breath of life comes from the one who formed and shaped us in the womb. Where do you go to connect with the life and love of the Spirit of God?

For today, we return to that water. As Luther put it, water plus the Word of God, the waters of baptism . . . we know and celebrate the promises of God who is present in all things. We remember how much we need God who gives us life. We sing with the psalmist of the abundance of love and life that flow out from us to the world, a gift of the God who created it all.

Today, we remember our own baptisms, and who we are as beloved children of the God of life. We celebrate Scarlet and Zachary, and proclaim in this community the overflowing love that God has for them, and has had since the beginning of time. We name our connectedness, to one another by the water that fills and nourishes every cell of our bodies, and to our God whose love for us and for all creation is beyond our capacity to understand.

Today, we come again to the water of the Spirit, our source. There, we will find life.

Thanks be to God.

*** Keywords ***

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