SECOND SUNDAY IN EASTER

APRIL 7, 2024

Acts 4:32-34; Psalm 133; 1 John 1:1-2:2; John 20: 19-31

Siblings in Christ, grace to you and peace from God our Creator, from our Risen Savior Jesus the Christ, and from the life-giving, in-dwelling Holy Spirit. AMEN

Happy Easter!!

On this Second Sunday of Easter, we are sharing a sermon written by Rev. Emily Meyer, of the EcoFaith Summit Planning Team and executive director of The Ministry Lab. She offers it with prayers that it be a blessing of the Good News of New Life for congregations while clergy take a break from preparing and/or preaching a sermon so they, too, can find rest and renewal in this Season of Resurrection.

Psalm 133’s joyful gathering song is fitting for a sermon shared across denominations and across the state of Minnesota:

How very good and pleasant it is

when kindred live together in unity!

It is like the precious oil on the head,

running down upon the beard of Aaron,

running down over the [hem] of his robes.

It is like the dew of Hermon,

which falls on the mountains of Zion.

For there - in Beloved Community -

God has commanded the blessing: life forevermore.

What a lush, lavish, abundant blessing this is!

The ‘dew’ of Hermon, it turns out, is not so much ‘dew’, as in ‘morning mist gently draped on blades of grass’; but a tide of gushing water - a rampage of snowmelt from the tallest mountain in the Northern Region of Israel - Mount Hermon - flowing over 100 miles to burst the banks of the Jordan River.

This doesn’t actually happen; it is an image of promise, a promise of God’s luscious, lavish, abundance; a promise - a *commanded* blessing - received and experienced in the unity of loving kindred, that is, in what Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., referred to as ‘Beloved Community’.

How good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in Beloved Community.

It is like the flood of Hermon gushing down upon the hills of Zion.

Saturday, April 6 [yesterday], a group of Minnesota Lutherans and a few ecumenical neighbors gathered in Duluth for our annual EcoFaith Summit, hosted by the Northeastern Minnesota Synod Ecofaith Network, the Northwestern Synod of Wisconsin, and the St Paul Area Synod, ELCA. The Summit’s flier read, ‘The climate crisis is no longer a future we are trying to avert: it is upon us like a flood - because we have become a flood.’

This statement was based on an oft-repeated phrase in the book *The PLanet You Inherit: Letters to My Grandchildren When Uncertainty’s a Sure Thing*[[1]](#footnote-1). In his letters to his grandsons, the book’s author, Christian environmental ethicist Larry Rasmussen, frequently writes, ‘We are not only the ark but the flood’.

Crises - whether climactic, socio-political, economic, health pandemic, racial or ecclesial seem to be piling up around us these days. As the Summit theme statement continues, ‘We feel caught up in … cross-currents that threaten to sweep us away and pull us under. We are overwhelmed by myriad floods: literal floods and other disasters that threaten our existence, floods of information and misinformation, as well as debilitating floods of anxiety and hopelessness.’ Caught in these tempestuous rapids and crises and swirling whirlpools of eventualities, it is tempting to join Jesus’ disciples and grab our lifevest, go home, and lock the door behind ourselves.

Yet, like Rasmussen, who was this year’s Summit keynote speaker, our flier and our Summit could not focus only on the terror of the flood. Based on Rasmussen’s concepts, the flier continued, ‘At the same time, we are being carried forward on Spirit-led cross-currents toward new possibilities and new life.’

For a ‘flood’ is not always a negative event. Floods - like early spring blizzards in the midst of a drought; ‘floods’ like Hermon’s ‘dew’; floods like our baptismal waters; leave us awash with new possibilities and new life. Floods not only deal death, they also reveal the Risen Christ.

Each of today’s readings gives us the key to seeing and experiencing the blessing of Mt Hermon’s flood - indeed, God’s blessing invokes the key: Beloved Community.

It took the entire community of disciples - together at the same time in the same place - for the reality of the Resurrection to fully sink in: Thomas gets such a bum rap - but if the other disciples had been fully convinced, what were they doing back in that room a week later? Thomas’ courage in voicing his doubts helps everyone else’s eyes to be fully opened, everyone else’s fingers and hands to fully grasp reality. Voiced doubt helped everyone bridge their own despair and doubt to the reality of the Risen Christ and New Life.

This was a major facet of the EcoFaith Summit - building arcs: we talked about the connection between climate crisis and teen mental health; we built bridges between climate crises and socio-economic and racial disparities; we arced faith and climate care action… As the flier stated, ‘We are building arcs that become the Ark necessary for survival. We build arcs of relationship connecting generations, crossing boundaries, and healing divisions. As we build these arcs we look to the rainbow - the arc of promise’.

In Christ’s resurrection, we see and feel the power of arc-building, the power of unity and community. We first must hear voices of doubt and despair and overwhelm. Then, together, we can address them.

When we are all together - then what we see, hear, and touch becomes more real.

When we are together, the wounds and scars of our damaged planet, our suffering neighbors, our torturous institutions and systems, our own injured souls, become more real.

When we are together, we can see, hear, and touch the wounded Body of Christ, present in and among all of this suffering and woundedness with more clarity.

When we are together we can face the despair and woundedness with a different perspective; we can see beyond the horror of death to a place of peace.

With open eyes and ears, the real pain of our own souls, the pain of the world, can inspire and propel us to action. Together we ‘con-spire’ to move from death to life.

When we witness the wounded Body of Christ in the fullness of its reality, then, together, we are more able to see the reality and possibility of the New Life promised in the Risen Christ.

As with the disciples in their locked room of fear, when we are together, the Risen Christ enters in, fills us with the Spirit, and sends us out.

Thus the blissful community in Acts embodies the power and grace of Christ's New Life experienced together: it bubbles up and overflows, arcing from one neighbor to the next so that no one has need for anything: God’s lavish, luscious, abundant blessing being realized.

Thus the community in Ephesus is cajoled into consensus: ‘we’ve seen New Life’, ‘we’ve heard the resurrection happening’ the author repeats - over and over - underscoring the joyous, urgent hope that the community as a whole will embrace the reality of New Life in Christ - not only for themselves, but for the whole world: God’s lavish, luscious, abundant blessing, being realized and shared.

For that is the deep truth of the resurrection; the deep truth of New Life in Christ: It is the fulfillment of God’s lavish, luscious, abundant flood of a blessing: life forevermore.

Life for you.

Life for me.

Life for the whole world.

We humans are a flood: we are swept away by myriad floods of our own making.

But we are also carried by the Spirit’s cross-currents, awash in baptismal waters that draw us into a community of Jesus’ followers, a community buoyed by glimpses of the Risen Christ, a community who together are building arcs to expand and strengthen the Risen Body of Christ for the sake of flooding the whole world with New Life.

As such, we are God’s lavish, luscious, abundant blessing, as within and through and among all these rainbows of promise, the resurrection overflows for the whole world: life forevermore.

AMEN

1. Rasmussen, Larry; *The PLanet You Inherit: Letters to My Grandchildren When Uncertainty’s a Sure Thing*; Broadleaf, 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)