

McCabe United Methodist Church
March 6, 2013
David Hagler
“Poured Out: Elements of a Resurrection – Water”
John 13:3-8, 12-16

Jesus set in motion a series of events that would change the world. His notoriety had spread in three years of teaching, miracles, flying in the face of established authority when he felt people were suffering. He was beloved by many, but misunderstood, hated and feared by some who were in power. We are in the midst of a season (Lent) that changed the world. And we are approaching Holy week, which is a week of things poured out for us. Yes, God’s love poured out for us. During this Lenten season, we have encountered some very tangible elements poured out that offer us a glimpse into the drama of Holy Week. The last three weeks we have heard of the blood, the oil and the wine. Still to come are the elements of tears and light.

And this week’s element is water; an element we all too often take for granted; not only the fact that we need water to survive, but it’s accessibility to us due to modern plumbing. It, of course, wasn’t always that way and is still not that way in many areas of the world.

I do some long-distance running and was fascinated by a book called “Dual in the Sun.” It is about the 1982 Boston Marathon. Alberto Salazar, a famous long distance runner, won that race, but it cost him dearly. The temperature the day of the race rose into the 70’s and Salazar ran the entire 26.2 miles without taking any water. He won the race and set a Boston Marathon record, but permanently damaged his immune system. He proved a person could run 26.2 miles without taking in any water, but at what price?

Running a marathon without water is like living life, another sort of marathon, without Christ’s word and spirit. You can do it, but at what price?

Did you know that a hummingbird drinks its dinner - 50 or 60 times a day. So too, should the Christian – drink from the living waters of Christ's word and spirit regularly throughout our entire lives.

So, we know how important water is to our physical survival, but how important is water to our faith? One researcher reported there are 722 references to water in the Scriptures.

The first mention of water in Scripture is found in Genesis and the last mention is found in Revelation 22:17; the first and last books of the Bible. From beginning to end. In between those two books, water flows through the pages, teaching us that there is a great spiritual significance to it.

Water, as a symbol of life as well as a means of cleansing, or purification, is of particular importance in the Old Testament. It was created on the first day (Genesis 1:2, 6-8). In Genesis 1:20, we read of the first mention of life, and this life comes from water: "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life..." God commanded the water to bring out an abundance of living souls (Genesis 1:20). In Hosea, God is compared with the rain. And sprinkled throughout the Scriptures, water brings forth life and joy. (Exodus 15:23-35; 17:2-7; Psalms 1:3; 22:2; 41:2; 45:5, 64:10; Isaiah 35:6-7; 58:11).

Water is also an integral element in miracles throughout the Scriptures. In Matthew 14:25, what element had to be mastered for this miracle: Jesus walked on water. And what did Jesus turn into wine: water.

Water is a powerful purifying element and can destroy evil and enemies as in the stories of the Flood and the flight of Israel from Egypt (Genesis 3:1-15; Exodus 14:1-15:21). According to Old Testament Law, it cleanses defilement (Leviticus 11:32; 13:58; 14:8, 9; 15-17; 22:6; cf. Isaiah 1:16) and is used in sacrifices (Leviticus 1:9, 13; 6:28; 1 Kings 18:30-39).

Water heals, as can be seen from the stories of Naaman the Syrian cured from his leprosy in the waters of Jordan (2 Kings 5:1-14) and the annual miracles at Bethesda in Jerusalem (John 5:1-4). John the Baptist used the waters of the Jordan to cleanse people's sins which remained typical Jewish custom (Matthew 3:1-6; Mark 1:4-5; Luke 3:2-16; John 1:26-33) – and even Christ came to be baptized (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10).

From John 4:14 -But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Almost all Christian churches have an initiation ritual involving the use of water. Probably the most common is baptism, which has its origins in the symbolism of the Israelites being led by Moses out of slavery in Egypt through the Red Sea and from the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. The word "baptism" comes

from the Greek word meaning “to plunge” or “to wash.”

We have all heard of the story in John 13 where Jesus washes the Disciple’s feet. He used water. In verses 9-10, “Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.”

The use of water is important for its own symbolic value in different ways: it cleanses and washes away impurities; fills everything it enters as God fills those who are immersed in Him; and we need water to survive physically as we need God to survive spiritually.

So, just like the hummingbird, we too should drink daily – drink daily from the living waters of Christ's word and spirit.

AMEN.

Please join us the next two Wednesday’s during Lent to learn more about the ‘elements’ that were poured out for us.

On Maundy Thursday, March 28, please join us for a reenactment of the Living Supper and then on Good Friday, March 29, come and experience these ‘elements’ as told by those who were there.