

Pastor T.C. Arnold
5th Sunday of Easter
Isaiah 12:3
May 3rd, 2015

I don't have to tell you that water is essential to our survival. We can't live without it. Dare I say that water is the most important substance on the face of the planet? And while water is important and essential to survival, it still has its "negative" connotations. When we talk about our Christian faith or even a well prepared drink the way we like it... we don't want those important things, "watered down." If it is "watered down" then we see those things as lacking the important substance and maybe we are getting less than we bargained for. Too much water is a bad thing when the river rises and the floods come – ruining homes, businesses and crops. We know what too much water can do.

But then there can be too little water as well. Droughts ruin crops. Too little water is a bad thing when our soil depends on it, when our neighborhoods and towns are needful of a goodly supply and it's not available. A Benedictine monk once told me, "Mark my words, the next war on the world's scale will be fought over water." I'm not sure if he claimed to be a prophet or not, but he is probably right. Water can have a negativity associated with it in many different ways.

However, we know that water is a good gift from God. He makes what is essential for the physical survival of man and uses it for the even more essential spiritual survival of His precious children. In the Old Testament text for this 5th Sunday of the Season of Easter it says, "*With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.*" Isaiah knew of the physical need for water like everyone else. He also knew of the spiritual qualities. In other words, how God Himself uses water for the sake of His blessed people.

Go back to Genesis chapter six and see how the Lord saved Noah and his family in the ark which rested on the water. The water was used to destroy – but also God has a way to save those who trust in Him. Then in Exodus chapter fourteen, how did the children of Israel survive the rush of Egyptian soldiers chasing them into the desert? By water they were saved. The Lord parted the Red Sea and the people passed through – they were saved – and yet those who desired the destruction of God's people were destroyed in the same water by which the people of God were saved. After this God's people grumbled against Moses because they didn't have any good water to drink. Moses cried out to God and God had Moses throw a log in the bitter water and it became sweet to drink. Useless water became the sustenance to sustain life.

And don't forget in the New Testament Jesus offers "living water" that was more for just drinking but for redeeming in John chapter four. Water came from the Savior's pierced side in John nineteen – so did blood – water and blood separated – as some will see that as signifying baptism and communion.

And let's talk about baptism for a minute... Even with baptism there is a negative and a positive. We heard in the fourth part of Baptism from the catechism that, "*It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to life before God in righteousness and purity forever.*" And then we hear from St. Paul in Romans six, "*We were buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of Father, we too may live a new life.*" Drowning to new life is the way God does it. Buried with Christ to resurrection with Christ is the way God works – even for little

ones like Vanessa, older ones like Jett, or no matter what the age – Like Harold Shipman who was baptized at age 80 and then last week transferred to heaven at age 95 as we spoke together about the redeeming quality of his baptism. God takes what can be the sustenance for our life today, what could make a disaster on a global scale, and use it to bring about life.

This is our God – a God of paradox. He makes life out of death. He makes drowning sound good – when we drown our sins. He makes being buried sound like the way to go, when we talk us being buried with Jesus and then resurrected with Him. But we often don't think of that second part. We like to dwell on the first. We are natural pessimists when it comes to the things God does for us. Often we dwell on the drowning, burial, flood and drought. We like to worry about such things and forget that God is our God even when such things happen to us. We like to blame God for such things and forget that God has a hidden will that goes beyond our understanding. We like to think God has forgotten about us when bad things happen – or even think – because bad things happen, He must not care. That leads us to believe that since God doesn't care, I must play God in His place. I'm the master. It's all up to me. And when good happens, you think you are the reason why. And when the bad happens, you aren't to blame at all. That must be God ignoring you again. That's not the way it works.

Beloved, life does have bitter water. Life does have floods and droughts. Life, as you know has its times where we are drowning and we are buried. But life does not have its time of abandonment – at least not by God. Now the world may abandon you. Even the people you love may abandon you. That has happened more times than we care to count. But not your Lord. You can count on that. *“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation”* it says in the text for today. With joy, that is, a confident promise of hope. Here joy and hope can be understood to go together. Because we are talking about a final joy with living water of salvation. We are talking about a promise for you that never ends.

With these words, *“You will draw water from the wells of salvation...”* I want you to know, beloved, that this is a blessed promise to hold on to our baptisms. No one can take that water away from you. For those who fear for their lives in Baltimore or are grieving the loss of the businesses built by their grandparents, burned to the ground by rioters, and seeing the debris of a beloved town now turn to rubble... for those who lost their lives in a devastating natural disaster a half a world over in Nepal. For those of us today who are drowning are in the midst of drought... the words *“YOU WILL draw water for salvation”* are the most important. *“YOU WILL”* is a promise by grace through faith. *“YOU WILL”* is a word never broken. *“YOU WILL”* means *“FOR YOU”*!! There is no “watered down” word in this text. The only “watered down” word is water combined with His Word to give you a life-giving promise – Salvation.

Beloved, in a world we live where there is too much that may hurt – or – not enough that may harm, that is never the case with God's grace. We have the right amount. And the amount of grace we have from God's unfailing love – His death on the cross – His blood poured out for you, is more than you will ever need. Drowning to live. Buried to rise. Our Lord speaks in this paradox not to confuse you, but to show you that through it all, He still loves you and has accomplished all the drowning and dying in your place already. Thanks be to God. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.