

Sermon February 21st, 2021 First Sunday in Lent

Creation's Resilience through Water

Today is the first Sunday in our season of Lent. A season in our church year where we become more intentional in our reflection of the brokenness inside ourselves, and the brokenness we see in our world. A season in our church year where we reflect on the impact this brokenness has had on our relationship with God, on our relationship with our neighbour, and on our relationship with all of creation. A season in our church year where we set goals for ourselves to help us reconnect with God, with one another, and with God's creation.

As we begin our Lenten journey in 2021, we are invited to turn our focus towards our broken relationship with God's creation. Our broken relationship with the animals, the forests, the waters (**Image**), the soil, the ground, the rocks, the air. We are invited to reflect on how our individual and collective brokenness has impacted all of creation. We are invited to set goals for ourselves to work with God in healing and restoring creation. To help us reconcile with God's animals, forests, waters (**Image**), soil, ground, rocks, air. To strive towards the Easter promise, that with Christ, all things are made new.

As we listen to our readings today, we hear about the impact our brokenness has had on water, and also, the impact water has had on us.

In our Genesis reading this morning, we see the consequences of our brokenness on all of creation. Year after year we behaved in ways that hurt our relationship with God, our relationship with one another, and our relationship with creation. God has finally had enough. God's creation has finally had enough. In response to our brokenness, the waters start falling from the sky day after day, until everything that is deemed broken is washed away in the flood.

We see from this famous biblical story how water can act as a destructive force in our world when our behaviours, our actions, impact God's creation in harmful ways. More and more places around the world today are vulnerable to floods due to the impact our brokenness has had on creation. In Calgary, we witnessed one of the largest floods on record about eight years ago (**Image**). We have seen firsthand, the destructive force of water.

We have seen firsthand, the consequences of our negative impacts on creation in this province.

As God looks down on the destruction the flood waters leave behind God grieves for all of creation. But, as God grieves, God also sees the new creation that the waters have left behind. God sees new life sprouting from the ground. God sees the life he preserved giving birth to new life. God sees the resilience of creation, and how even after a massive flood, God's creation still breathes.

God is moved by this grief, but also, by this witness of new life, to make a new covenant with all of creation. With the animals, the forests, the water, the soil, the ground, the rocks, the air. With us. God makes a covenant with all of creation. Giving us a rainbow as a sign of this new covenant **(Image)**.

When Calgary experienced a flood around Fish Creek park years ago, people noticed new life sprouting up in the aftermath. In fact, species of plants that hadn't grown in the valley for decades were now sprouting up again **(Image)**. With the destruction that floods can bring to our lives and to our world, we also see, the new life that comes out of these waters.

As we reflect on how our brokenness impacts water in this first Sunday in Lent, we also reflect on our walk towards Easter. Our walk where we see examples of the resilience of God's creation along the way. Where we see how water continues to give life to us even in the direst circumstances.

In our gospel this morning, the waters from the River Jordan clothe Jesus with the power of the Holy Spirit. The waters from the River Jordan give Jesus what he needs to endure the wilderness journey ahead. The wilderness journey, where Jesus faces challenge after challenge from the powers that resist God. Or in other words, Jesus faces the consequences of our brokenness in full force. Yet, throughout this whole experience, Jesus stays resilient. The waters of baptism **(Image)** have given Jesus what he needs to help sustain him in this time in the wilderness.

When Jesus returns, he finds out his dear friend John is in prison. But, does this stop him from his mission? No. Jesus proclaims the good news all over Galilee. Through the waters of baptism Jesus has become as resilient as God's creation. Jesus has become as resilient as the very water that gives him life.

For the early believers, who are invited to carry on Jesus' ministry through the gift of the Holy Spirit. They too, receive the waters of baptism, to give them resilience to face the persecution that tries to bring them down.

Water is so central to our lives. It isn't surprising that God created the waters to be resilient. To give us resilience. To give all creation resilience. To wash away the old, and to sprout new life in us.

As we remember our own baptism, and those waters that continue to give us resilience to face the brokenness in our lives. We also hear God's invitation to care for God's creation. To respect and live by the covenant God makes with all of creation. To be resilient to the brokenness that has had a negative impact on our water sources. To stand with people who live in areas where their access to clean water have been compromised **(Image)**. To make different choices in our lives to help preserve, and care for the water that nourishes us. The water that empowers us to be resilient to the powers that resist God. To work in partnership with water for the renewal of creation.

For centuries Indigenous communities have lived with this resilience, as they have faced much trauma from the impact our brokenness has had on creation. We see it here in Canada, where so many indigenous communities have little to no access to clean drinking water.

When I went to Peru several years ago, I saw it there, where indigenous farmers in Joppa were losing their cattle due to contaminated rivers.

Indigenous people firsthand, experience the impact that we have on our water sources. Yet, the indigenous people persevere. They continue to stand with their rivers, lakes, and oceans. They continue to invite us into this partnership with them, and with the water that gives us life. They see how vital water is to life on this planet. They see how water gives us what we need to continue to be resilient against the powers that resist goodness. The powers that resist creation.

As, we reflect on the impact our brokenness has had on our water, we also, are encouraged to look towards the Easter promise, that God breathes new life on us through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. God cleanses us with the waters of baptism, and gives us this same resilience to challenge the powers that resist God. To make healthier choices to protect

our rivers, lakes, and oceans. To stand with our indigenous neighbours to help them experience new life through the healing of the rivers, lakes, and oceans in their communities **(Image)**.

God doesn't expect us to do this alone. God breathes on us the Holy Spirit through the water that is poured onto us in our baptism. To help us care for God's creation. To help us love as God loves.

When we wrestle with the powers that resist God. When we fall short. God's gracious love lifts us up again with an invitation to continue to grow into better caretakers of God's beautiful garden.

May we walk on this Lenten journey with listening ears to the groaning pains of our rivers, lakes, and oceans. May we reconnect with the resilience that we find when we experience the healing and renewing power of water. Standing up for our water with our indigenous neighbours in the same way water stands up for us. Forming a lasting partnership with water for the sake of renewing creation. May we grieve when our waters feel anxious and overwhelmed, which often leads to floods, draughts, tsunamis, monsoons, landslides. May we see the new life that sprouts from this destruction **(Image)**. Moving us to change our actions. Moving us to be a part of the healing of creation. Moving us to help relieve this anxiety from our rivers, lakes, and oceans. And may we always remember that God is gracious and loving. Walking with us on this journey as we learn and grow in our gardening skills.

Let us pray, gracious God, we repent for those actions in our lives that have impacted your creation in harmful ways. We pray especially for our rivers, lakes, and oceans. Turn our hearts towards you, so that we may act in ways that care for the water that gives us life. We give thanks that you baptize us with these waters, giving us resilience to face the powers that resist you. When water reacts to our brokenness in destructive ways, we grieve for your comfort and healing. And hope in your promise of new life. In Jesus name we pray, **Amen**.

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