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Water Episodes

In the one Biblical episode from the first testament of God's story there is no water....and the absence of water is an issue which makes it a water episode. In the other Biblical episode from the second testament of God's story there is too much water.

Not enough on one side of the story....too much on the other side. Either way complications occur..... weather happens.

I've been a nuisance these past few weeks and I know it.....I admit it. To all the complaints about the weather..... in particular....how hot it has been.... I've consistently responded, "Oh it's not that bad. Or....Ahhhhh, it's just normal for me."

I see the looks.....the eyes rolling.....the silent messages telling me to mind my own business and let us wallow in our overheated misery.

I'm not meaning to be a pest, really I'm not. It has been awfully hot, and despite my response I've felt the heat and all its affect. I've been fanning when you haven't been looking. I wait for cooler days.

It is hotter other places.....and in some of those places there is a shortage of water....and the daily reality of not enough water can whittle down a person's soul....

and the hot temperature and the lack of water can change moods....and moody people in hot weather with little water....well, they aren't much fun to be around.

One **thing** that happens, when there is not enough water and too much heat..... is the green grass turns brown.....and eventually the brown turns to nothing.....and the "nothingness" not only looks ugly it affects all the nature relying on the greenness of life.

I remember last summer walking across the front lawn of the house where I was living and leaving footprints. The grass which had turned to the texture and color of straw literally disintegrated into a fine powder with each step.

Dirt footprints left in a sea of grass turned to straw. In that place in that moment we were praying for a storm....short or long, gentle or violent....anything that would give relief to the virtual dust bowl we were living in.

It's happening all over in that place again....and again they are praying.

It's hot. It is. My California friend says we're having weather.

That's what he says **they say** whenever the temperature moves above perfect or when it rains in that land out west. "We are having weather today," he said with excitement one afternoon. "It's raining. I like days when we have weather."

It's hot. It is. And indeed.....we are having weather. And we humans tend to do a lot of talking about the weather, especially when it is not cooperating the way we desire.....and when the weather gets out of control.....it affects our lives.

(Pause)

Will you pray with me please: "O God in the very beginning of time there was weather....chaos, You called it.....and over and above the chaos your Spirit hovered.....and in the hovering you breathed.....and your breath created order and life and possibility. Lord God, your creation is full of possibilities.....some of which cause us unrest and discomfort.....and sometimes out and out fear.

So today, whether we find ourselves at the bottom of a pit with no water or in the midst of a storm with too much water speak to us that we might know your peace. Lord, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable to you....our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

(Pause)

Joseph could never have predicted what was coming his way the day he went to find his brothers. They had been brewing and steaming, huffing and plotting. They were caught up in a whirlwind of resentment and jealousy. Their father's soft spot for young Joseph had caused their hearts to harden.

Joseph was totally unaware of the emotional storm he was about to walk into. It's the kind of storms weathercasters and radar can't pick up....the kind of storms we're used to talking about after it's over and done with....

"Did you hear what happened to little Jo? They say it was an accident....his disappearance....but something smells fishy if you ask me."

Those of us reading this story.....know what kind of storm the brothers left in Joseph's path. They abandoned their brother in a pit.....empty and without water.....left him there to die.

Ironically the brothers were the ones to inherit the emptiness of that pit. In the eventual wake of their father's death and the coming of a famine to the land..... they were not able to shake from their memory what they had done to their own brother. The storm they created ricocheted....took an unexpected u-turn....and what they had hoped for Joseph became their reality.

But Joseph escaped death in the pit. In fact that pit became the very passage way to new life.....and in the end the family storm did not have power to thwart what God was doing in Joseph. *(pause)*

Another kind of storm violently tossed the disciples' boat; the kind of storm that sneaks up on a summer afternoon.....one moment the sky is blue and the sun is glistening....the next a virtual flood pours out of the sky making the streets into rivers.

The disciples were caught by surprise. Though I *can't help but believe* they had seen this kind of weather before.....especially those disciples who had made a living by fishing. Surely they knew these kinds of storms had the potential of coming out of nowhere. Surely they had been in the middle of such a storm.

But it seems in this episode the storm was of another variety....for they were literally frightened to death.....the winds and the water cause chaos....and they panic. They feel abandoned and left on their own to fend and they don't know what to do.

But they are not alone....Jesus comes for them....he had been praying and resting not far from the shore and now sensing their terror Jesus comes towards the disciples above the water like the Spirit hovering in the creation story.

Though the disciples continue to panic.... Jesus speaks....he breathes out and his breath creates peace.....and the storm and the fear are calmed.

Little, big, violent, unexpected out of nowhere.....relational or physical....storms have the power and the wit....and sometimes the tenacity to reroute and even threaten life as we know it.

And there in, I believe, lies the key to these two episodes.....life as we know it. We come to know life and along the way forget the possibilities that are inherent in all that God created. We come to know life and begin to believe there is nothing more to know.

We come to know life and like Joseph's brothers and like the disciples we fail to imagine possibilities beyond our knowing, and our own doing.

"I know life....I see the reality....I know where I've been and logic tells me where I am going to be....and that's all there is to it. I either do it or I don't." That's what I told her.

I've been so sure about life. This is just the way it is. I've learned through the years I'm not the only one who is so sure of what is and isn't.

I've also learned that it is our knowing....our sureness....

that often becomes the very storm that threatens life as we know it.

"I know what's going to happen. It's as plain as day.....it's just logical."

And then she said,

"Yes. You see where you've been and you see the options ahead of you....but what about the middle? What about the living that happens in between all the things you know?"

In other words, how is Christ hovering in your life right now?

How is Christ breathing peace into the chaos that you sense and sometimes create?

How is Christ creating new life right now?

One of the vows Teaching and Ruling Elders take is to have imagination. Will you serve the people with imagination?

Will you have the courage to look through the chaos that threatens and trust God to hover and breathe and create right where you are?

Say what you will about the realities of life.

Be as sure and certain as you want....

But also hear the good news we inherit in Jesus Christ....

God's healing and life is a present reality no matter what storms are brewing.