

## **“Let it Flow”**

**Sermon by Pastor Dan Harrison, Church of the Covenant, 10/27/19**

*Ezekiel 47:1-12*

Yesterday, several of us spent time in silence, in prayer and contemplation during the morning, pondering the importance of our Covenant to One with Another and what it means for each of us. I fell head first into a powerful recollection of a teaching that my wife and I had received many years before while in our Biblical Prophets Class as students at Howard Payne University. Our professor Dr. Saul was meticulous in teaching us the finer points of prophetic themes, but always anchored it back to a patterned cry to the people to whom the prophets endeavored to warn: “Do not forsake the foreigners, the orphans, and the widows.” And when our class got around to studying the prophet Ezekiel, I wasn’t particularly attuned to the deeper message at the time, but yesterday morning it then fell on me like a ton of bricks, and I could not help be drawn into God’s deeper truth: “You are meant for something more.” Then, later in the day I would experience a further awakening as Brad Adams had graciously organized for me and our other musicians to be able to go with him and his family to enjoy Yogaville in the afternoon and evening, to include dinner and a concert by Jai Uttal in large part thanks to Gary Sullivan who by destinal happenstance last Sunday informed us of Jai’s visit; Jai Uttal, as you may or may not remember, is a grammy nominated sacred music composer whose song “Hari Guna Gao” we had just presented to you all two weeks ago, and there we were now visting with him and enjoying his sacred music together as a worship team. So, Genevieve, Chris, Jim and I were able to meditate and pray as both individuals and as a group and spend time genuinely experiencing new, worshipful things together. It was a spiritually rich time for us, so much so that Jim Cox and Chris Russell as you can see are not here this morning, deciding to stay in Yogaville to pursue their dreams of now becoming yogis... just kidding. They are in North Carolina visting some of Robin’s family, and how we truly miss their presence and authentic worship this morning. But Genevieve and I can hold down the fort for them until their return.

Ezekiel’s account of the river flowing out from God’s Temple into a dying land in order to bring new life is not an isolated account. As Professor Saul would say: “It is a theme.” And like any good student, we pay attention to themes. The prophet Joel (3:18) said, “A fountain shall flow from the House of the Lord.” The prophet Zechariah (14:8) said, “And in that day it shall be – living waters shall flow from Jerusalem.” But the amazing aspect of Ezekiel’s account is how the river flows from a typically dry place: There are now rivers in Jerusalem. And to see a river flowing from the Temple Mount down into the Kidron Valley and then making its way to the Dead Sea is a remarkable thing. The Jordan River is the source of water for the Dead Sea already, and always has been. However, the salt content of the Dead Sea is unrelenting. No matter how much fresh water pours itself into the large lake, nothing can survive it’s uninhabitable waters. It has always been and if history is any indication, it will always be that way; from the time of the ancients of old till now the Dead Sea is just that, DEAD. But Ezekiel has a strange vision where that all changes. It isn’t the water from the Jordan River anymore, it is water from God. It began in drips and drabs, and then it begins to gush. I starts at ankle depth and then leads out to deep, deep waters, and then it flows into the “Dead” Sea, and brings with it something the Jordan River just doesn’t have. Healing. The Hebrew word used is Rapa; it means to cure the diseased. It doesn’t just bring fresh water, it brings literal regenerating life into the picture.

I’ve been to the Dead Sea. I’ve sat in a balcony veranda and drank a fruit cocktail while watching person after person dipping themselves into it. And while it’s minerals and such can indeed have healing

properties, it CANNOT sustain life itself. The smell is putrid. Even at the its banks, life dare not touch it. No green, not even a blade of grass. No life. But in this vision, Ezekiel sees a new possibility—a metaphor of God’s life emanating out of Jerusalem and bringing the deadest of places, The “dead” sea, to life. Resurrecting the dead is what God is about, right? Not only with the sea come to life thanks to this life-giving river, but it will in turn give life to others. It says that the fishermen will now have fish to catch, and the people will eat. It says that, “Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.” Healing – Rapa. People will be restored with the properties emanating from this river, this Source. Lives will be saved from pain and death. And it flows from a “sanctuary.” The word used is the Hebrew word, “miqdash,” and literally means sacred place.

The first day I walked into this place, again by “destinal happenstance,” in early summer 2017, I knew I was walking into a miqdash. The grounds are lovely, and no doubt sacred. But the people who we lovingly call “our community,” they are a sanctuary for many. A hallowed sacred space emanating a love so rich, a grace so tender, and a hope so strong that the light is seen and felt by the many who have come into its presence. We are the river. You are the river. We are the healers for those who as Jai Uttal so rightfully called it last night in his rendition of Psalm 23, are “...crossing a sea of tears.” Out of pain comes life. Out of brokenness comes wholeness and healing. Jesus said, “Go and bear fruit, fruit that will last” after telling his disciples to abide in him as he abides in God. It is a funny thing to consider “abiding” in anything. Abide is connected to “abode” which we know to be a home. Jesus in essence is saying make your home in me and I will make mine in God. We will abide with one another. Well that’s probably the best roommate situation any of us could ever hope for. Truly, though, we are a “miqdash” for many. Our community is an “abode,” a shelter, a refuge for the pained, the infirmed, the helpless, the hurting, the lost, the wandering, and in the words of Professor Saul, “the foreigner, orphan, and widow.” Be the river. Be life-giving to all those around you. Don’t hesitate to let your waters of grace, peace, love, joy, and hope overflow and envelope all those around. Be the “rapa” (God’s healing) and the “miqdash” (God’s sanctuary). This world needs us. Let the light flow, do not, I repeat, DO NOT build a dam on this river... let it flow freely and wildly. Come and dream with me. There is much work to do.

Shalom