

A River Runs Through It—Beginning to End
 Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5 * & Genesis 1, 2:4b-6, 9-10
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May the God who creates us....

Every once in a while, the Bible makes sense.

And a river runs through it all...

Scripture begins with the book of Genesis. And it ends with the Book of Revelation. In the creation myth we hear...

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep...On the day that the Lord made the heavens and the earth, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up... a stream would rise up from the earth... out of the ground the Lord God made to grow...the tree of life in the midst of the garden...**and a river flows out of Eden to water the garden...**(Genesis 1, 2:4b-6, 9-10.)

Scripture ends with these words in Revelation...

Then the angel showed me **the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God**...through the middle of the street of the city. One either side of the river, is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there anymore...And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light...reigning forever (Revelation 22:1-3a)

We are now somewhere in between the dark void and the eternal light.

And a river runs through it all...

*And it is by the river
 that we wander and meander through life.
 Our call—as people of God—as Christians
 is to take the journey on the river.*

That's our theological context—somewhere between formless void—and eternal life—with a river linking the two.

Do you ever find yourself just bobbing along? Not sure exactly where you're headed, or for that matter if you will manage to stay afloat? Do you ever feel as if there are

any number of people depending upon you so there is no real option to just stop and rest. No real time to take a moment and re-assess whatever it is you have found yourself immersed in...Have you ever had a sense that it is as if you are on a conveyor belt that just keeps going, relentless regardless of whether or not you can keep up. Some of us of a certain age may remember the quintessential *I Love Lucy* episode, where for reasons I cannot now remember Lucy and Ethel wind up working in a chocolate factory—with the never-ending parade of candies coming past? Do you find yourself, no matter how accomplished or experienced the world says you are—do you find yourself feeling as if you may be one or two breaths from going under? Work, family, relationships, parents, kids, health—coming at you.... relentlessly.

And we, our call, is to live our lives on this river. But perhaps rather than each of us swimming inefficiently, hitting the rocks and getting recirculated in the holes, we may contemplate a different mode of transport from the dark void to the eternal light, in this river that runs through it all.

Some of you may think I have a preferred manner of water transport...

Knowing that I am a boater, a paddler, a kayaker you might believe that you know what my preferred manner of travel,

Going from the dark beginning to the eternal light with a river running through it all.

Yet this trip, this life-long journey of ours, is not about precision or perfection. It is not about cleanly threading our way through the rocks, holes, and wave-trains of a rapid waterway. A needle-nosed slalom boat, or a bulbous bowed creek boat neither of those are what we need. For these are both kayaks: nimble, squirrely, unforgiving craft, that immediately award mistakes with capsizes and sometimes swims.

In this thing called life, and that's a mighty long time...

In this thing called life, on this trip from beginning in the dark formless void to eternal light I'm much more inclined to use a self-bailing river raft: those bulky, somewhat ungainly craft: whose occupants are continuously wet, and dependent upon one another. But a self-bailing river raft, with manufactured holes that let water out and water in, squishes, bends, and flexes when it hits something hard. It rebounds, redirects, and most importantly usually carries on even after a close encounter with granite, schist or sandstone.

The self-bailing raft is not my preferred watercraft for play. For play I prefer a kayak, solitary vehicle, with only one pilot. A craft where it is only the water, waves, rocks, and me: testing my gifts, my talents, my skills, but water will out. Here is the

thing, eventually all of us get dumped. All of us fail to roll up. All of us take a swim. It is that time when we need others.

Independence is fine for play, but on this river of life, on this journey we are all on—this is a communal journey. A trip of this length and duration can only be sustained if we have different talents and gifts. On this life-long journey roles need to shift and change depending upon the circumstance. This is a journey where more than one of us will need to offer leadership along the way. A journey if it is to be successful includes all of us here and frankly many, many more. A journey where if we are to thrive, then we cannot be solitary figures, but instead must be in this, all of us together.

The upside and the downside are that some of the people on the raft, may be our favorites and some are not but still here we all are, for we need each other.

In our wet, purposefully leaky raft, in addition to our water sodden companions so also is the Holy one. The same one who moved over the formless void. The same one who sits upon the throne, the same one who died upon the cross and rose again and calls to us now. When we make our way from the formless void to eternal light on those ungainly rafts, we never need be alone, in the midst of it all God is with us.

Amen.