

Water: Making The World Go Around
Exodus 17:1-7*
October 1, 2023
St. Clement's, Inkster
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Good Morning!

Three days.
Three days
and at the end
it won't be pretty.
Three days
is how long
most of us
can survive without water.
Whereas, most of us,
can go
three of four weeks
without food before we'd die
—the lack of water
makes itself known
much, much quicker.
72 hours.
It is by all accounts
one of the worst ways to die.
We are,
for better or worse,
completely and utterly
dependent upon water.

About 60% of our bodies
are made up of it.
70% of our brains,
83% of our blood
and 90% of our lungs
all consist of water.

When we go without
this precious substance
for any period of time
symptoms make themselves known.

Crankiness
is one of the first symptoms;

crankiness and irritability
followed by
lethargy and confusion,
cramps, increased respirations,
shortness of breath,
dry eyes, no spit,
a swollen tongue clogging our mouth
the list goes on and on
until our heart collapses
because it can no longer
generate the force
to pump the sludge
that has become our blood
to our lungs for oxygen...
Death by dehydration not good.

In the world of kayaking
surprisingly enough
dehydration is a real issue.
Not because there isn't any water around.
Because of course there is
—and here in the Great Lakes
its all fresh
so treated properly
it can all be consumed.
But the thing is—
when you are paddling
your hands are constantly in the water.
So your body
doesn't actually recognize
that it is getting dehydrated
until it's fairly far along.

One of my fellow paddlers,
someone
I guided with a number of times,
she and I worked out a routine
—if in the course of a trip
we found the other person
to be more cranky or irritable than usual
—we agreed to just presume
The crankiness was early stages of dehydration.
So rather than saying—
“Wow—you're in a pitiful mood.”

We agreed
to just say to the other person,
“So do you need to drink some water?”
Cause that’s the thing—
when we don’t have enough water
we are a cranky, angry people.

Water, I believe ,
we will find out
more and more in the future,
water and not oil
is what makes the world go round.

All of this
is by way of introduction
to the current state of mind
of our friends the Israelites,
who in today’s reading
are wandering in the wilderness
near Sinai.
They are making their way
to the promise land
by stages, steps
and incremental advancements.

Not exactly the weekend getaway
they thought it would be.
It is taking some time.
Today, they find themselves
camping in Rephidim
settled in for the evening
in a place
that is not only lacking in
milk and honey
and other such Promised Land accoutrements
it is completely and utterly without water.
And water is life.

This extended
back country trip is getting old.

And so
to hear this passage
and just think
that these folks

are little more
 than faithless whiners
 and complainers
 is to completely ignore
 the perilous situation
 they find themselves to be in.
 They are in the desert.
 They are cranky and scared
 and their bodies
 are beginning to show
 the physiological symptoms of dehydration.

That said,
 I don't envy Moses.
 Dehydrated or not—
 these people are oozing umbrage.
 Have you noticed—
 just how disagreeable it is
 to be on the opposite end
 of someone else's
 righteous anger or indignation?

Want to ensure
 that people will avoid you for a while
 —take some pains to explain to them
 how you are right
 and they are so very wrong...

When I go to those places
 —Susan always looks at me and says,
 "Really—
 what part of you,
 do you think,
 is appealing right now?"

Dehydrated or not—
 the Israelites are right now a seemingly disagreeable lot.

Here's the interesting thing.
 When Moses funnels
 their ire at him
 on up the chain of command to God.
 God does not respond
 with righteous indignation.
 God does not give them a lecture
 about being God

or chastise them
for not having the big picture.
God simply says to Moses, take action.

Not just any old action—
but very specific—
action that skips
righteous indignation
and goes directly
to right relationship.

God says this,
“Go ahead of the people—
but don’t leave them all—
take some of the elders with you.
Take that staff with you too.
The one you first used
to turn that beautiful River Nile
into a current of blood.

Take the staff
and take the elders too
and go to the rock of Horeb.
I, God,
will be standing in front of you
as you strike that rock
and the water will flow out
so that the people may drink.”

Moses, the elders, God—
all standing on the same plane.
Each seeing
at least one of the vital players in the drama.
No backroom deals
or secret shenanigans.

We are all
going to be with one another,
declaring our needs
and offering our response
free of rancor or recourse.

In a world
that seems to be
a truly cranky place these days;
when backroom deals seem to be the norm,

and posting on social media is seen as a means to an end,
in a world
where many of us
are lacking the bare essentials of life;
in a world
where we are literally and metaphorically
showing signs and symptoms
of dehydration,
may we all endeavor
to leave our indignation behind—
not our pain,
not our sorrows,
not our fears,
just that edge that separates us,
one from another and from God.

May we have the courage
to state our needs,
voice our dreams,
utter our prayers
and then
standing one with another
and with our God
may we seek out answers and solutions.

In today's wilderness
may we be as Moses,
Yhwh and the Israelites
were so very long ago,
may we find comfort together,
one with another
seeking out the promised land,
bit by bit,
morning by morning.

I don't know about you
—but I think I may need
to drink some water.

In Christ's holy name.
Amen.