



Message—A Story for All Ages

I want to tell you a story this morning, a very old story, and it comes from the Book of Exodus in the Hebrew Scriptures.

The Israelites had been living in Egypt for four hundred years! They were good years and bad years, good years because the Israelites had grown large enough to be a nation, bad years because they had become slaves to the Egyptians. Life was so hard and hopeless, many couldn't imagine being free. But then, a man named Moses got it in his heart and mind that God had called him to free the Israelites and take them to a land that would be all their own.

Moses began pressuring Pharaoh, the King of the Egyptians. "Let my people go!" he said. Pharaoh laughed at him. But Moses kept going. He warned Pharaoh that water would turn into blood, infestations of insects, frogs, and disease would plague the Egyptians. All of this happened, and still, Pharaoh said no! Moses warned that thunder and lightning and total darkness would cover the land. All of this happened. Still, Pharaoh said no! Finally, Moses told him that the eldest son of every Egyptian would die. And it happened. Weeping at the death of his own son, Pharaoh gave in. He told Moses to take the Israelites and get out.

Every man, woman and child packed up and fled, and as they entered the desert, something miraculous happened. The God they believed in became a pillar of cloud, to guide them. By night became a pillar of fire, giving them light and protection. It was deeply comforting to the Israelites. They did not feel alone.

Unfortunately, after they left, Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army to bring them back. Of course they fled, but before them lay the Red Sea. They were trapped between the army and the water.

And then the Israelites began to complain. "What have you done to us!" they said to Moses. "You have led us to our death! It would have been better for us to stay slaves than face this terrible fate!" It would have been easy for Moses to shrink away, to lose faith himself. But he didn't. They had come so far, surely they would find their way. And then he received a message from his God. "Lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that you may go into the sea on dry ground." And that is exactly what happened. The water parted, and they walked on dry ground across the bottom of the sea. But so did the Egyptians. As fast the Israelites walked, the army got closer and closer. As the Israelites walked out onto the other side, the Egyptians close behind them, God said to Moses, "Lift up your staff and stretch out your hand so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians." And that is exactly what happened. The Israelites had met and overcome their first obstacle. They were on their way home.

Many oppressed people throughout history used this to keep faith when all else seemed to be failing, and to keep their courage when others are saying "Why did you bring us here! It would be better to stop and go back." This hymn is an encouragement to keep walking. Step into that troubled water and trust that there is a better land ahead of you. You can emerge from your slavery into freedom!

How many of us stay enslaved because we won't step into troubled water. We lose faith that there is a path to the other side.



"Water Communion "

Rev. Krista Taves

September 7, 2008

Emerson UU Chapel, Ellisville MO

The story of the Exodus is the promise that we can all get there. We can walk into troubled water and find home. We all struggle. We carry burdens. We experience loss, disappointment, failure, and fear. But yet, we cling to the promise of hope, the promise of deliverance. The promise of the Exodus story is that we all get home.

What troubled waters have you stepped into to get where you are today? What troubled waters lay before you?

Many of you brought water with you today from a place that is special to you. And if you didn't, don't worry. There's water for you, and I hope that you're thinking about the water you would have brought if you could have. I'm guessing that for many of you, your water is a symbol of home, and by home I don't mean just the place you grew up, or where you rest your head at night. By home I mean a place of connectedness and peace, where you are at rest and in harmony within yourself, with your loved ones, and the world.

I want you to visualize in your mind where your water comes from. What makes this place spiritually significant for you? We're going to enter into a minute of silence, and I want you to compose in your mind one sentence that explains why this water is important to you. I'm going to ring the bell to start our minute of silence, and then ring the bell again at the end of that minute. Let us begin.

~Silence~

This water communion is about bringing all that we are into community. Our hopes and fears, our dreams and disappointments. It is about casting our lot with those who want to say yes when the waters part before them. It is about those who long to follow the pillar of cloud and fire that protects and leads, whether we see that as God or our deepest conscience, the unfolding of the universe, or the spirit of life and love. It is about saying we are striving to be people of hope, people of freedom, and people of that transforming love that knows no bounds.

You are all welcome to take part in our Water Communion, even if you are here for the first time. When I call you forward, please come with your water, around the east side of the sanctuary to the front. First you will have the opportunity, if you wish, to share that sentence you have built in your mind about why your water is spiritually significant to you. Then, you may bring your water to this bowl. If you have no water with you, let the water in this carafe symbolize the water you would have brought, and pour some of it in the bowl.

We will come forward by the four directions. If your water comes from the North, come when I call for the water of the north and so on, until we have all participated.

Calling the Water from the North - I call first the water from the North. North symbolizes the earth. It is our grounding, that place of solidness from which all things come. Let the earth today be as that earth exposed by the parting of the waters, a solid path promising deliverance. I call those who carry the Water of the North to come home.



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Calling the Water from the East - I call the Water from the East. East symbolizes air. The East also symbolizes new beginnings. Let the East of today be as that pillar of cloud, pointing us in the direction of our deepest calling. I call those who carry Water from the East to come home.

Calling the Water from the South - I call the water from the South. The South is connected to the element of fire, illuminating all in us that is filled with restless vibrant energy. Let the South of today be as that pillar of fire, spreading its courage and energy through the darkness of the desert night. I call those who carry the Water of the South to come home.

Calling the Water from the West - I call the water from the West. The West is connected with the element of water. In the element of water, there is always hope. Let our West today be as the parting walls of water, offering the promise of peace and freedom. I call those who carry the Water of the West to come home.

I add the water from last year's Communion. We cannot move forward without carrying the legacy of where we have come from.

I add water on behalf of all who cannot be with us in body and yet are with us in spirit.

And I add water on behalf of myself, because I am so honored to be ministering among and through and with you.

Amen and blessed be.