

"Jesus Quenches Our Thirst"

Rev. Erika Martinez-Flores
John 4.5–42, Exodus 17.1-7
March 12, 2023.
Westby UMC & Viroqua UMC

These are clearly not easy times, especially for our planet. Global warming is leading many communities to move from one place to another, fleeing so much climatic adversity to find ways of subsistence. These phenomena in our mother nature create alarm, confusion, division, poverty, violence and other consequences that are difficult to quantify.

The text of the book of Exodus, chosen for this Sunday, takes the theme of drought to narrate what the Hebrew people had on their way to liberation. Thirst led him to protest God and against Moses. The Meriba protest, so well-known in the biblical world of the Hebrews, became an important symbol of the challenges that occur in the liberation processes.

The people, on their way to the exodus, go through a situation of aridity, faint in faith, enter doubt and lose their purpose. This situation becomes an internal threat to their future, freedom, and choice as a people. From their point of view, the way to overcome this crisis is to abandon the road and return, to return to Egypt, which apparently sustained them safety and life. Their thirst made them easily forget the situation of slavery that they were victims of in Pharaoh's land. Moses' response is one of faith and trust in God, he hits the rock, that is, he motivates the people to wake up, to stay on the path, to look ahead, to believe in themselves until they find the land of promise where there would be plenty of fresh water. Water, symbol of life, freedom, and dignity of the people.

The Hebrews do what is typical in the towns of yesterday and today. A people with a slave conscience has the tendency to project their problems and needs onto others; in looking for culprits as a response to their conflict. The other, in this case God, is the one who has to provide for them, otherwise they will no longer follow him; they test God for an answer. This is a very weak image of the God of liberation. On the contrary, a free people is one that trusts in itself, has faith and works in community to alleviate the need for water, food,

shelter, health, life and freedom. Their relationship with God is one of alliance, of working together and knowing that this God also feels the thirst of the people and wants to see them free.

A misconception of faith is to expect God to solve everything. When wars, natural disasters and pandemics come, people immediately talk about how these are signs of the second coming of Christ and that with his arrival all problems will be solved. But is it okay to turn the problem over to God and his second coming instead of boldly assuming what we must do to lessen them? Why not insist on doing our part instead of just waiting?

This trend is still questionable. This can lead a people to immobility, passive waiting, inertia, frustration in faith, and eventually atheism. Indeed, when the evils increase and there is no response, the people become discouraged and lose the desire to believe.

This first reading serves as a prelude to the deep dialogue that Jesus has with the Samaritan woman about the living water that quenches thirst, true worship and the revelation of who Jesus is, the Messiah and Master. The dialogue with the Samaritan woman, symbol of the people of Samaria, is a beautiful passage of discovery. Through this encounter we know Jesus more; he reveals to us what is fundamental in life, his word and mission.

Like the Samaritan woman, many times we have been in those noon dialogues; when the sun burns more, when life is more difficult, when it hurts more. If we are attentive, it is in those moments of crisis that, from the deep voice of the human heart, God tells us who we are, where we have been, makes us new proposals that refresh our lives and give us new encouragement to move forward. Jesus calls us to always trust, to venture, to launch ourselves as the only alternative to find true life in abundance.

Through the Samaritan woman, Jesus offers the people of Samaria a true act of reconciliation by visiting and talking with them. Standing in front of the place of adoration and worship, he tells her that God can be worshiped here and there, in Jerusalem and in

Garizim, the important thing is to worship him in "spirit and in truth." The adoration of God quenches the thirst of life, the anguish of our existence refreshes and gives peace by allowing us a profound and sublime encounter with him. Jesus, the new Moses, strikes the rock, our stubbornness and spiritual fragility, our hardness of heart, our longing to think that everything in the past was better, and prompts us to trust again, to move forward, discovering that his teachings, lived in depth, they give us life in abundance.

Unfortunately, the floods and droughts will continue, the world will have to unite more and work in solidarity on a global plan to face the climate crisis. Instead of blaming God, we should invoke him more frequently and invite him to walk with the people who suffer, so that he can help us discover and work on what we should do. Our planet is crying out for the damage that at this point seems irreversible, however, within what is salvageable, we can still act.

Uniting ourselves with Christ, the redeemer of creation, listening to him, learning from his teachings, will allow us to refocus our lives to make the path shorter and thirst even more bearable.