

Introduction

**Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart,
be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.**

For those of you who may not know me, my name is Luis Anthony Ottley, I am currently the seminarian assigned to St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Sunfish Lake. I have been in the Diocese of Minnesota for 7 months and my experience has been tremendous.

I am one of the four children of Lillian Garcia de Ottley and James Hamilton Ottley Pugh. My background is complicated. I was born in Central America in the Republic of Panama. My mother was born on the island of Puerto Rico and my father was born in Panama, in the City of Colon.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church (Panama) is where I got my spiritual formation as I watched my father move from being the rector of that parish during the late 80s to the Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Panama.

And now onto Gospel...

The text is rich and you can draw on so much that I spent a significant amount of time listening for what stood out to me; this story is not the most popular biblical story but it has been commented on and preached about a lot. And my hope is to offer a new perspective. To explore something new. My father, who is now in his 80s after over 50 years of ministry, believes that every time one reads scripture, if you are open, "you hear something new." That said, I want you to know that try as I might, I failed! Nothing new spoke to me!

Last week we heard the story of Nicodemus who similarly to (the Samaritan Woman) has an encounter with Jesus and seeks to understand Jesus' teachings and mission. In his case, Jesus tells Nicodemus that, "no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born again." – He gets more specific and says - no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit (John 3). Nicodemus embodies those of us who seek change - and are sometimes hesitant. Sometimes anxious. Those of us who need Jesus to remind us that we are always being called to transformation. Later in John's Gospel we see Nicodemus as someone who has been born again, born of water, embodied transformation.

What do you know about water?

There are a few things I now know about water.

1. It's a universal solvent, which means it can dissolve a wide range of substances, including salts, sugars and gasses.

2. Humans are composed primarily of water, making up about 60% of the human body weight. It is essential for various biological processes including digestion, circulation, and waste removal.
3. Humans require a constant intake of water and an absence of it can lead to impaired cognitive function.
4. Water can be versatile, it can be big and powerful, it can quench your thirst, and it can be healing.
5. Water creates the way for itself moving with gravity, moving around obstacles, wearing down obstacles, reshaping the world.

In today's gospel water once again plays a pivotal role and I believe the authors of the text use this element to deliver an important transformational message that I hear louder than ever.

First, we know Christ is making his way from Judea to Galilee. The direct route passes through Samaria, but Jews (who despise Samaritans) often bypass Samaria by traveling east of the Jordan. Jesus chooses to go through Samaria which sets the stage for more teaching. I choose to believe that it wasn't simply because he wanted to get there sooner and it was the shortest route, Jesus was on a mission.

Exhausted from his journey from Judea he sees a WELL and decides to rest and he is Thirsty.

In time he sees a Samaritan woman approaching the well to fetch water for her clan (one of the jobs women were tasked with at the time). The first interaction between Jesus and the Woman has been translated in different ways but in essence he demands that she get him water. "Give me a drink."

If we take a few steps back we have to call out that this should not be happening. First, a Jew should not be in conversation with a Samaritan, period, it was unclean. Secondly, the fact that she is a woman and is being spoken to by a man is also counter to all the norms of the society at the time, and Lastly, she doesn't even have a name. Jesus doesn't even refer to her by name. But That first interaction reveals one of water's qualities worth considering.

Universal & Inclusive - Water can take on any surface or substance. It embraces what's in front of it even though it's overwhelming.

They enter into a conversation that results in a revelation. He reveals to her that he is the Messiah, **I am he, the one who speaks to you.** (ego eimi). God has picked the least among them to reveal his identity, an identity he had gone to great lengths to conceal. Water can cleanse, and it transforms.

Transforming/Cleansing - The Samaritan woman goes from an unmarried woman with no social capital in her community to the agent of change. She is transformed. In addition, Jesus in this story also models transformation. He too goes against the grain. What a powerful story. That gives me hope. Hope that no matter where we are and who we are we are loved and can be transformed by God. It seems to me that there is so much around us, so many interactions with people that can represent or inspire transformation and I want to believe GOD is signaling his presence to us if we are paying attention.

Finally at the end of the story, the Samaritan woman, like water, doesn't give up on the mission.

Persistent/Resilient - Finds its way. In fact, as a result of their dialogue, she goes back to her community fully knowing that she has met the messiah, and urges those with whom she comes in contact to believe, so not only does she show her faith (believe) but she commits to action. We can't give up. During this season of reflection we are reminded that we must persist if we are to bring into existence God's kingdom here on earth now.

Be like water because water is life. In the story it is clear to me, WE have everything in this world to be disciples of Christ and live into the kingdom of God.

(STORY)

A few weeks ago my father shared a story about a nurse who took care of him the last time he went for a check up. After you check in one of the first things you do before you are seen by the doctor is check your vital signs. He was escorted to a room and before the nurse proceeded to take his blood pressure she said, "can I pray for you, can I pray for us." My dad was shocked in his over 80 years going to a doctor no one had seen him in such a way. NO ONE had wanted to pray for him, NO ONE had cared and showed their love for him in such a way.

You never know when God is reaching out to make his presence known. Just when we think God's not watching us, or that God doesn't care about us, he reminds us that he is there. We can all be instruments of his LOVE, we can all be transformed by his LOVE, BUT we can't give up on doing what is right. The TRIUNE GOD has shown us the way.

Like water there is a way out of no way. It's persistent. (Ice dams)

God is calling us. No God is pleading us to be inclusive, to be willing to be transformed and to have faith, a faith that's not only about beliefs but a faith that persists that is committed to finding a way.

We are living in a world that needs more water. We live in difficult times and I believe God is calling us at this particular time on this particular day to recommit ourselves to being that of God in everyone.

We see hunger, war, starvation, the depletion of natural resources and parts of God's creation near extinction. We have been given the example and the path to follow. We simply need to be open to the call and have the courage to act. WE must do the work!

May GOD give you the strength and the courage so that you and yours may continue to be an example of WATER in the world GOD HAS called us to serve. And to see God's presence all around us. That's our food, That's our healing, That's our courage —that's our water.