

"Come to the Waters"

Revelation 22:12-21 & John 17:20-26

May 16, 2010

The invitation has been extended. "Come Come to the waters". Perhaps we might imagine that it sounds a lot like an invitation to come to Lake Metigoshe for the summer. Sounds like good stuff But I don't think that is it. It is far more significant. The waters are much more pure Deeper More still and peaceful. Come to the waters The waters flow peacefully from the very throne of God out into the streets of the city and down into the rural farm yards and fields scattered all around North Dakota, into Manitoba and around the world. Come to the waters! There you will be refreshed and nourished. There you will be washed and given life eternal. Come to the waters! What a tremendous invitation.

There are a lot of people who avoid the book of Revelation. On an initial reading some find it easy to simply shake their heads and say that it is all too weird and has no place in our faith life. Others read the book and get all excited as they read all kinds of fantastic and frightening interpretations into the images that makes them see a horrible ending to all of civilization just around the corner. It fills them and those around them with even greater fear than the general fears that they live with day to day. But here Jesus speaks softly - pleading with us ... "Come to the waters."

I have told many that the book of Revelation is my favorite book in the whole Bible. It is a message of great hope and peace and triumph. It is my believe that this brief scripture at the end of the whole book of Revelation is really the heart of the message contained in the whole book of Revelation. The whole book is intended to reveal Jesus Christ to us. And although the images can appear very strange, they are dramatic portrayals of a God who is so strong - powerful beyond our imagination - and yet sees and knows us And still loves us and forgives us. This savior that is revealed throughout the book is one who comes to stand against the deepest darkness and the greatest evils that torment us ... And He prevails over all of them. And having cleared the way, our Lord Jesus holds out his hand and invites us to come. Come to the waters - waters of peace and life.

Those were horribly difficult times for Gods people. They literally faced the possibility of death by being thrown into the arena with lions or gladiators for no greater crime that believing in the one true God. If they went to the city market place and wanted to purchase some meat for the family meal but refused to acknowledge that the head of the government was god, they too were refused and they went without. So they went hungry and they did not dare to admit publicly that they were followers of Jesus They were persecuted and hunted as though they were a wild animals in season. They came to believe that there was no hope. They wondered if there really was a God. They wondered if God had forgotten

them or if God had not power against the forces of the world. They were afraid and wanted to give in to the world. But into what seemed to be a hopeless situation the word of God came to say that finally God will be victorious. Hang in there! No matter what the people suffered, they would be victorious because God would be the victor. The Lamb who was slain sits on the throne and the waters of life flow from the throne. That is the message of the book of Revelation. And the invitation, "Come to the waters." Come Come to the waters. What good and gracious news it is when we receive the invitation to become a part of the family that we know has already won the battle.

We do not face the same challenges that were faced in those days. We can go to the local grocery store and they will not ask us about our religious beliefs before they allow us to buy anything that we want. There are no arena's or lions or gladiators. We do not face the same kinds of persecution that they faced. It is not that there is no persecution. The persecution and challenges are all quite different but are still very real. We are called to forget about God's way and conform to the world. We are faced with great darkness and difficult times surround us over and over in our lives. Sometimes things seem hopeless. But then we hear the invitation and promises of God. Come to the waters All who are thirsty Come!

What a gracious and powerful word we have from our God. How sad it is when we do not hear the word and know the possibilities that it holds. This word of God is incredible. If we have faith to believe what God's word reveals to us it changes the way we see the world and our place in the world. If we believe that God's way is true and trust God to be victorious we are called to hang in there - continue to trust God and come to the waters of life.

Jesus gathered with His disciples in a time that was supposed to be a great celebration of the victory of God over the Egyptian Pharaoh and the freedom that resulted for the people of God. But it was darkened by the fact that Jesus knew that there was suffering ahead for both Himself and for His followers. And Jesus prayed he prayed for them and for all who would come to believe - that's us. As He prayed He did not talk about sorrow or hopelessness but about glory. Even knowing that suffering lay ahead, Jesus prayed with thankfulness for the glory that God would give Him and that would be passed on to us.

It is an incredible image the glory that Jesus receives from the Father is a glory that He wants to give to us. I struggle to understand what it is that Jesus prays that we might receive. As I think about Jesus facing death on the cross and remember the Easter story I can not help but think that the glory that He is speaking about is His resurrection and the eternal life that lies beyond this life. Certainly, that gift is glories indeed. And I pray that all of us will trust the love of God in such a way that we will live constantly with that assurance. Still, as I think of the situation in which Jesus finds Himself in the Gospel text, I find myself imaging that Jesus is praying for something beyond or in addition to the glory of eternal life.

I found myself thinking about a movie that is entitled "Glory". It is set in the days of the civil war and centers on a black regiment that has come together to do their part in the war effort. They are ill equipped and looked down upon. The regiment is given few supplies that are needed and are not trusted to do anything of significance. But against all odds,

they hang in there and finally have the opportunity to volunteer to lead the charge on a fortress that needs to be taken. They take on the challenge and suffer unspeakable losses. But they remain faithful and in that faithfulness they are covered with glory.

Jesus prays that the glory that God has given to them will be something that He can pass on to the disciples, the church and to you and me. There as He faces the greatest challenges and the most difficult moments of His life He remains faithful to the call that God the Father has entrusted to Him. And I believe that it is faithfulness to God in the midst of all of the challenges that we face that is the glory that Christ wants us to receive. Like the days of the early church that John addressed in the book of Revelation - like the struggles that Jesus faced Himself sometimes the road ahead is difficult. But Jesus prays for us that we may have the strength to hang in there - trust the power and love of God. And as you remain faithful along the difficult road to finally hear the soft and gentle voice of God extending the invitation come come to the water.*AMEN*