

Lenten Midweek 2, 2013

Text: Genesis 7, 8, 9

Title: Death and Life through Water

+ INI +

Water is one of the most creative and also one of the most destructive elements on earth.

On the one hand, water is necessary for life. Water was there at the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the Spirit of God hovering over the waters.

God made water to water the plants and to give drink to the animals.

If you've ever been camping or hiking, you'd know how precious water is. We're used to just turning on a faucet and having running water, but in many places of the world, clean, fresh water is scarce and precious.

Without water, you'd be lucky to last one week.

Water is not only necessary, but it's enjoyable, too. There's nothing more refreshing than a cold glass of water on a hot summer's day.

But water is not always a good thing. Whether it's a hurricane or a flash flood, or just an inch or two of water in your basement, water can be very destructive. Water can damage wood, cause mold to grow, and even drown you, causing your death.

Both death and life can come through water. Water can save you and water can kill you.

With the Lord, sometimes it's a bit of both. Both death and life through water.

At the flood, water brought about tremendous death and destruction. Every living person on the face of the earth drowned, save 8- Noah, his three sons, and their wives. Every living animal died, too, except those who were safe on the ark.

And yet the flood was a good thing for Noah and his family. The Lord used the flood to cleanse the world, wash it clean from all the sinful people around them. God wiped out the evil in the world with one mighty flood. That flood brought death to many, but life to Noah and his family.

Water brings both death and life.

Like Noah, you are surrounded by evil. And it's not just the evil world around you. It's not just those other people out there you need to worry about. It's inside of you. It's part of you. You are born with it- evil, deep down in your heart.

The only way to get rid of this evil is to drown it, to put it to death. And that's what happens right here, at the font. Here your old sinful nature is drowned. Here it is put to death. Here your Old Adam is nailed to the cross to die with Jesus.

And the water does not just bring death, but also life. Here a new person is born and arises to live in Christ. This is your empty tomb. This is Mt. Ararat, the place where Noah's Ark came to rest, and Noah stepped out into a clean, new world. The font has eight sides to point to the 8 who were saved in the flood. Eight is also the number of resurrection, new life, new creation. Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the new week, the eighth day overall. There are seven days in the first creation, and Jesus' resurrection is the eighth day, the day of new creation.

How can water do such great things? How can water not just clean the dirt off your skin, but clean the filth out of your heart? How can water give you new life, the kind of life that lasts forever?

It's not the water itself. There's nothing special about the water. It's the same water we use here to wash hands and dishes, and to make the coffee. It doesn't matter if the water comes from Lake Michigan or the Jordan River.

It's the word of God spoken at the Baptism, and faith, which trusts this word of God, that makes this special water. That makes this water different from any other water in the world. With the Word of God, this water kills, even with just a few drops. With the Word of God, this water gives life, life that lasts forever.

Unfortunately, even after you've been baptized, even after your sin has been put to death and a new person has been born, no matter how hard you try, you keep sinning, you keep going back to the same evil habits.

Even after the flood, things weren't perfect for Noah and his family. The first thing Noah did after he got settled in to life was to plant a vineyard and get drunk on wine. Within a few generations, the descendants of Noah would build the tower of Babel and try to become like God.

The Christian life is one of constant death and rebirth, and that happens in confession and absolution.

When you sin, you don't need to get baptized again. You can never sin away your baptism. Baptism makes you a child of God, and nothing can change that. If you run away from your parents, you don't need to get re-adopted back into the family. You just need to come home.

In confession and absolution, you come home to the font, to the place where you were born. You confess your sin and then your Father washes you back up again. Absolution means cleansing, washing, making fresh and clean once more, creating in you a clean heart.

Once your sins are forgiven, you leave this place as clean and holy and new as you were the day you were baptized. Absolution takes you back to your baptism and makes you new again.

Come to confession. Put your sins to death once more. The confession that begins each service is good. Private confession is better, because here you hear the words of forgiveness spoken directly to you. You know for sure that the death and resurrection of Jesus counts for you, that your sin has died and you have new life.

The sins you confess to me die in my ear. They will never be spoken again. All you leave with is God's Words of love and forgiveness.

There will be times to come to confession during Holy Week, but if you can't wait that long, give me a call and we'll do it sooner.

And come to the Easter Vigil, too, as we take a moment to remember and reaffirm our Baptism and our Faith.

Baptism is your flood, and church is your ark. St. Peter writes, "in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

You have a good conscience, you have forgiveness of all your sins because your sins have been drowned in the flood of your baptism, and you have been raised to new life in Jesus Christ.