

Sermons at Saint Mark's

The Reverend Patricia Taylor

The Sixth Sunday in Easter–Rogation Sunday, May 30, 2011

Acts 17:22-31, 1 Peter 3:13-22, John 14:15-21

Bread, money, wine & clean, safe water

Jesus said “If you love me you will keep my commandments.” He didn’t give us many commandments.

He said we are to love God with all our being and to love our neighbors as ourselves and, as we promised at our Baptisms, to continue in the breaking of bread and in the prayers. That last one means we are to make Eucharist often.

I expect you know that Eucharist means thanksgiving; thanksgiving for our creation, redemption and our continual and eternal life in Christ. Christ’s love has made the whole creation new and has given the whole world into our care. Through Christ’s gift of life and love for us we become a community of gift for all creation.

When we make Eucharist we bring to the table bread made by some of you from grain grown in the earth, grain watered by rain, and ripened by the sun, bread sweetened with honey from bees who visited a thousand flowers.

We bring money which we have been able to earn or have inherited and want to share.

We bring wine made of many grapes from many vines grown in earth, watered by heaven, gathered and fermented by men and women.

We bring water, clean, pure water to mix with the wine.

We offer the bread, money, wine and water that have come from God’s bounty and ask God to give them back to us as the essential being of Christ that, we pray, will become part of us. The essential being of Christ in us if honestly

received not only empowers us to love one another it commands us to love as Christ loves. Such love will cost us much in time, work and money but when we receive Christ’s being seriously we are bound to a community of loving service to all humanity and to all creation.

The love which Christ gives us and commands us to give to others has the power to change economies, social customs and political systems. This is massive!! Earth, Air, Fire, Water and all the rest. This is cosmic!!

Our boundless compulsion to love is too big for me to deal with all at once so I’ll start with water. We have been blessed with a lot of it falling on us this year and, so far, not inundated by run off as many have been.

However much water we think we have we must never take water for granted. It is a limited resource. We use so much in agriculture and gardening, in lawn and golf course culture, in industry and meat production to name only a few demands that we need to conserve water in a big way.

Anyone under 20 will quickly tell you that we need to be more responsible in our personal use of water. My grandchildren long ago chided me for letting the faucet run while I clean my teeth and for filling the bathtub too full.

Ask the children how we can save water in our households and public buildings.

So far, for us at least, the water we are to save is abundant and clean. We can add it to the wine of the Eucharist without fear of poisoning the cup.

What if we had to make Eucharist with water like this-----?

Dirty water containing contaminants, bacteria and viruses we don't want to hear about.

What if to obtain this dirty, polluted water the women and children of this congregation (because this is work of women and girls mainly and sometimes little boys) had to walk a mile or two from home, fill buckets and carry them home that same distance?

They told me in grade school that a pint of water weighs a pound and a quarter. 2 pints = 1 quart that is 2 ½ pounds. 4 quarts = 1 gallon and that is 10 pounds.

This bucket has a 5 gallon capacity.

Assume 4 gallons as a load to avoid spilling. That is 40 pounds per bucket. How far will 4 gallons of water go considering drinking, washing, cooking, watering the garden and the chickens? Not far. Better take two buckets. That is 80 pounds and still only 8 gallons of water for the woman and her family, their animals and their garden.

How many hours, how much energy is consumed by the effort of bringing water home. How much school and work time is lost?

AND the water is DIRTY. Drinking it risks illness or death. Maybe you know, I think David told us a while back, that an eighth of the people in the world do not have access to safe water. Make that safe access to safe water because there are hazards to trekking to and from the river or water hole not the least of which is marauding men.

Did you know that about 5000 children who die every day of diseases contracted from dirty water and poor sanitation?

As people empowered by Christ and commanded to love it is our responsibility to help correct that situation. That will cost money which you and I have. It will cost us about \$5000 for each well that we commission to be sunk and we are going to purchase many wells.

It will be easy to buy wells once each of us gets our minds around the concept and once we begin to know the joy of sharing what we have with our world neighbors who lack clean water and basic sanitation.

We will be working with Episcopal Relief and Development or ERD through whom we supplied mosquito nets a while back. They have practice in working with local populations to find convenient water, making properly engineered wells and training local people to maintain their own wells. ERD adds instruction in building and maintaining sanitary latrines.

All they need from us is money, money that will represent us and our children and bring us into the lives of those Jesus recommends to our care. Once the wells and latrines are finished the local people will look after them. They can't afford the initial investment but they can, and will do the upkeep.

At \$5000 a project, how many wells can Saint Marks buy?

Our *Wine into Water* committee has already collected almost enough for our first well so you will need to pledge quickly to get in on that one but you can buy as many more as you want. If you think you cannot afford to be part of a well think rain barrels. In some places clean efficient rain collection is the answer to a safe water supply. Rain barrels and downspouts might cost little. A deep bore well could cost much more than \$5000. The figure \$5000 is an average.

For Swarnalatha in Bengal, Stephanie in Burundi, Lao in south China, Malita in Kenya, Mari in Nicaragua and their sisters and brothers and children you have the power to make the difference between death and life. Have you the will? Are they to have this water or this water in their Eucharistic cups.