

“Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of those rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs. I am haunted by waters.”

— Norman Maclean, *A River Runs Through It*

“A River Runs Through It” is one of my favorite movies. It is a heart-touching saga - a coming of age of 2 sons of a Presbyterian minister in rural Montana, interwoven with fly-fishing on the tumbling waters of the Big Blackfoot River which flows through the story like another character, sturdy and stirring, its eddying currents both blessing and challenging.

One of the things that Deb and I found when we move to Kingston was always to take a double take on people's views of just what water meant. For the longest time we were struck by descriptions in the real estate listings – “by water”, which of course meant everything from lake front property, to our current place, which has flowing water in March and April and maybe May, as a creek meanders its way through our place and back into the bush behind and across the field. Never really becoming a creek, but rather a dream of what a real creek might be

We are all haunted by waters.

As a child I remember sitting in the living room of my Aunt and Uncles, watching the boats plying the St Clair River, trying to read the flags of the various foreign ships, and trying to guess what cargo they might be carrying.

20 years later I remember listening to the haunting calls of the laker's horns as they plied the waters off of St Joseph's Island in the St Mary's River, and the little lift of spirit that happens every time I drive along King Street and see a sail of some kind filled by the breeze, and the operators skimming across the waves with joyful abandon.

In the Book of Job, there comes a point in the 38th chapter when Job has called God to account for all of Job's suffering, saying that he has been a righteous man, and what has happened is unjust and unfair and that he – Job - deserves better (Job 38:1-11)

I love what God does. He does not answer Jobs complaint, but rather puts Job on the spot:

Job where were you? Where were you when...? And in particular he goes on to describe the sea: Where were you when (vs 8) 'I shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?— (9) when I made the clouds its garment, & thick darkness its swaddling band, (10) and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors, (11) and

said, “Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stopped”?

This is what God asked of Job after listening to the latter’s laments. This is God taking Job on a whirlwind tour of Creation, beginning with its very foundations. It is fascinating that the sea is imaged here as a baby being birthed from the womb of Earth.

So it is out of formless depths that God speaks. And the waves of energy begin to coalesce and form “the foundations” of the universe. Eventually the planet Earth became discernible among the self-organizing solar system that is the Milky Way. And, as poetically described in these verse from Job, from the Earth’s womb the “baby sea” emerged in swaddling clothes of clouds and the night sky. But like a parent setting limits for a toddler, God commands the sea—this far and no farther.

We people often feel caught in the drama between God and the seas. When “well-behaved,” the sea is a bountiful source of food, a means of transportation, the site of restorative recreation, and a symbol of openness and exploration. But when the sea becomes wild and untamed, whipped into a frenzy by storms, or overstepping its bounds by flooding beaches and human habitations, the loss of life and property can be overwhelming.

Ancient peoples prayed to their gods or God to keep the sea within its prescribed boundaries. But our world is changing. The preponderance of the “super storms” that have wreaked havoc in the last few decades, can no longer be attributed to the forces of nature alone. Nor can they be blamed on God’s inability—or choice not to—control the seas.

Dr. James Hansen was one of the first climatologists to discover the greenhouse effect that was leading to climate change. Dr. Hansen worked for the Goddard Institute for Space Studies in 1988. His research indicated that our planet was experiencing the same kind of greenhouse effect as Venus. The carbon dioxide being released into the air from the burning of fossil fuels was like putting a blanket around the planet, holding in the heat and destabilizing the atmosphere. The warming climate draws in more moisture from the seas which intensifies the hurricanes and typhoons that form over the seas and oceans. At the same time, the seas are not staying within their prescribed boundaries because the polar ice caps are melting at a rate fast enough to inundate coastlands and swallow entire islands and cities

When Hansen and his colleagues released this information to warn the public and government officials of the impending climate crisis 30 years ago, they were immediately attacked for their research. They received threatening and hate-filled emails, been mocked and lampooned in the press and on the Internet, and had their integrity as scientists questioned – an effort led not by other respected scientists but by lobbyists, conservative politicians, PR firms, and industry fronts financed by the fossil fuel industry.

While not completely parallel with what Paul and the apostles endured in their efforts to spread the Gospel, the climate scientists and those who have worked tirelessly to bring attention to ecojustice issues share some similarities in their experiences with the early Christians. Specifically, they have endured “in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, ... [and they have done so by] ...; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, [and] truthful speech” (2 Cor 6:4-7).

The Good News is that the voice of Jesus, who spoke up in the midst of the storm, inspires us to raise our own prophetic voice. Jesus’ voice is not calling for us to run and hide, or lie about the truth, or to be cynical and jaded about this world.

The voice of The One who spoke to the woman at the well of Living water reminds us that we are relationship and accountability with each other, with God’s Creation, and with our community.

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Water facts:

70 % of the world is covered by water

0.3 % of that water is drinkable

70% of fresh water is found in ice sheets and glaciers

10% of fresh water is found in lakes

20% of the worlds fresh water is stored in aquifers – otherwise known as ground water

The human brain and a tree both are made up us the same amount of water - about 70%

Water dissolves more things than any other liquid