

John 20:19-31

2nd Sunday of Easter

April 2, 1989

Once upon a time ~~there was~~ ~~was~~ a woman and a man lived on the side of a mountain. They had most everything, clear clean air to breathe, a cozy, comfortable home, creatures large and small that lived with them among the pine trees. Best of all, through their property flowed a stream, sparkling, bubbling dancing water that flowed down from the top ~~fast~~ of the mountain to them ~~fast~~ The stream was their life and their joy, its pure waters refreshed them, cleansed them. Coming down from above, the water was all theirs, until it flowed from their land down into the valley, and out into the world.

One day, ~~these~~ this man and this woman, began to notice what was being done with this water after it left them. It was being wasted, being used to flush toilets, left dripping out of faucets needing repair, being used to manufacture products that no one really needed. It was being mixed with chemicals, and in drinks that were good for no one. And the couple became jealous for their precious pure life giving water. This is what they did:

They dammed up the stream. They demanded that those who would use this water that came down from above prove that they were worthy of it, that they would use it wisely. They doled it out bit by bit, but only to those who came ~~in~~ ~~right~~ dressed in a proper attitude showing that they knew how precious this water was.

Their intentions were good, the best. But things did not work out the way they had hoped.

Their dancing bubbling flowing stream became behind that dam a large lake. And at first that too seemed a blessing, instead of others using what came down from above, it was theirs to use for fishing and water skiing, their dam looked like a better decision all the time. But then silt began to collect, and moss to grow, the waters that no longer flowed anywhere began to in time become stagnant. In time, the very waters that had brought life and cleansing and refreshment, became the source of disease, of death. The water they had so jealously protected, now gave life to no one.

Peace to you, Jesus said, with this word washing, cleansing, making whole. Peace to you ~~he~~ he said again to disciples who had ~~run~~ run away, to the one who three times swore, I do not know the man, to ~~sk~~ ten who now knew not peace but only fear as they huddled behind locked doors. Peace to you, a powerful word from God on high that would do that which it said, fill them with peace. With forgiveness, making whole what was broken, restoring, renewing. Peace to you.

And then, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." Peace was now theirs to take up, to send out beyond themselves into all the world.

~~Maxxxaxthex~~

And when he he had said this he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any they are retained." Jesus, raised from the dead was entrusting to his followers his own spirit, and the right that was his alone, for he had won it with his death, the power to forgive sins.

Yes, the peace of God, the Holy Spirit, the forgiveness of sins, these are a pure, lifegiving stream flowing down from our Lord to us. When we drink from these waters, when we are cleansed by these this stream we are made new, yesterday has no power over us, the threats of the future cannot own us, we are the Lord's, we belong to our God, ~~sixdeathxthexpxaxxfxthexdavi;~~

God has placed you beside this clear, bubbling stream of life that flows from Christ. ^{invites you} Daily he ~~hasxixviteaxyou~~ to refresh yourself in this stream. But he also has given you an awesome responsibility. He leaves it up to you whether this stream shall flow beyond you to your neighbors, to your mother or father, your brother or sister, to your friend or husband or wife, to your teacher or pastor or city council person, or school board member. ^{your son or daughter.} If you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven, if you retain the sins of any they are retained.

The almighty God is going to take you so seriously that what you forgive he will forgive. The sin of your neighbor against you, that you let go of, God will let go of. The life giving water will flow, life will be restored,

refreshed, ~~renewed~~ renewed even as you speak the word, I forgive you.

And if you don't? Or if you are stingy? If you want to dam up all of God's good gifts for yourself, letting only a trickle, or even nothing flow to your neighbors? In time yours will be come the story of our couple on the hill, the very waters that once brought life become death producing. ~~at this~~ ~~I believe Jesus was speaking as he said,~~ ^{Jesus said,} "With the judgement you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get."

~~and he said to you that you should be as generous as he was~~
As the Father has sent me, even so I send you. What must we do? Let it flow. Let the forgiveness of God Go to all who need it.

He eats with tax collectors and sinners, they said of Jesus, ~~frimxxx~~ too free with forgiveness they said of him. May God grant they will say the same of us. Let the waters freely flow, let us be as generous in forgiving as ^{is} our Lord. Amen.