

⁴⁰“Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. ⁴¹The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. ⁴²And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

When we read this scripture, folks on the Worship committee were reminded of Sheldon from “The Big Bang,” who deals with every crisis in life by always offering folks a drink. And, as important as the notion of HOSPITALITY is in our Judeo-Christian scriptures, from beginning to end, there is probably something more going on here with this short teaching from Jesus.

We go back to the concept that Jennifer Rhule introduced in her sermon on June 11th – Trinity Sunday – when she preached about the FLOW of the relationship between the three persons of the Godhead – how the Father flows to the Son who flows to the Holy Spirit, and flows back to the Father. And do you remember how she talked about that early fifteenth century Andrei Rublev icon of the Trinity, which is believed to have originally had a mirror attached at a point between the Spirit and the Father, so that the person looking into the picture was also included in the FLOW, as the fourth part of the Trinity.

And, in a sermon that I preached on June 4, I reminded us how the Dead Sea got that name: Nothing could live in the stagnant, dead water, because it had no outlet. Nothing moved. There was no FLOW of water going through it, and so it died.

So, too, it is for us today as it was for the disciples whom Jesus was talking to in today's Gospel lesson.

It's the very same thing Jesus described in his presentation of the 5th Beatitude: ***"Blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy"*** – mercy flows in; mercy flows out. It's all circular.

Today's Gospel teaching is more of the same. ***Blessed are those who give a drink of cool water; they shall receive. Blessed are those who receive me (Jesus) for they will receive the one who sends me (God). Blessed are those who give a reward to the righteous; they will receive the reward of the righteous.***

God, **in the very first covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12)** blessed him in order that he may be a blessing to the whole world.

It just keeps flowing, flowing.

It's the Way of God. It's the way of salvation.

A constant FLOW of receiving and giving and receiving.

Back ***in the beginning of the story of God and the desire to redeem the whole world***: How does the **Garden of Eden**, in all its lush splendor, exist: A RIVER FLOWS THROUGH IT. (Genesis 2:10)

When the **Psalmist** begins the whole prayer book of the people of God (in First Testament and New Testament and Today's times) how does it **begin**? ***There is a tree planted by the RIVER FLOWING THROUGH, the leaves of which do not wither and which yield its fruit in its season.*** (Psalm 1:3)

How are we told that the **whole God-venture is going to end**? ***A RIVER (bright as crystal) FLOWS (from the Throne of God and of the lamb) THROUGH the middle of the street of the City of God – and on***

either side of the FLOW is the tree of life, with its fruit for each season and with leaves for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 21)

The Psalmist caught a glimmer of that Revelation City of God with its River flowing through it, in **Psalm 46**: *“There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. [All wars will cease; all weapons of warfare will be destroyed; those in the FLOW will be still and know that God is God.]”* Psalm 46 4-10)

And ... perhaps even more powerfully (at least for your preacher) is the pure and uncontroverted knowledge that comes in the midst of prayer, when I am centered in this FLOW, I am given **POWER** and **PEACE** and **DIRECTION** and **ASSURANCE**.

When I allow the Spirit to Rest upon me as it did upon *Simeon* (who awaited for the consolation of Israel until the baby Jesus was brought into his presence in the Temple) and in that resting position can experience the power of that FLOW through me, I know that I am where God wants me, and can do whatever God calls me to do and be.

And THAT, my sisters and brothers, is when the cool drink of the Spirit which Jesus describes in today’s Gospel simply and awesomely cannot stop coming and going through me.

But, sometimes, that FLOW gets dammed up, *causing the Spirit to head toward the state of the Dead Sea.*

Sometimes there will be something that will come floating through my life and jam up against and between the shore line and the bridge abutment that will form a dam and stop the flow of water from going on.

Do you know what I’m talking about. I bet you do.

What's you DAM STUFF? And, note that the sermon titled is spelled without an "N" on the word dam – to refer to the stuff that threatens to be like the Hoover Dam or the Grand Coulee Dam or the Glen Canyon Dam in our own lives.

I asked some of my friends about what were the DAM things that they are aware of that are so devastating in blocking the FLOW in their lives. They said these:

- **Worry**
- **Competition**
- **Keeping Score**
- **Business or Buy-ness**
- **Greed instead of Sharing**
- **Time management (from "Wonder Woman" movie, about a watch: "You mean you let that little thing tell you what to do?"**
- **Regret**
- **Accusations (from the voice of Satan): you're not good enough ... if you are so good then you need to prove it ...**
- **Taking responsibility for what you are not responsible for**
- **Control Issues**

And here, let me stop for just a brief minute and talk about what some preachers love to talk about – **SIN**. SIN – that which separates us from God. It's traditionally talked about in terms of morality and there, particularly we are titillated to focus on sexuality immorality. But, when we realize that SIN is what separates us from God, then that list of things that I just read – is so often NOT seen as a list of sins. Often, it is seen as a description of how the contemporary man or woman gets further up the corporate ladder, gets farther along the pathway called success: Listen again:

- **Worry**
- **Competition**
- **Keeping Score**
- **Business or Buy-ness**
- **Greed instead of Sharing**
- **Time management (from “Wonder Woman” movie, about a watch: “You mean you let that little thing tell you what to do?”)**
- **Regret**
- **Accusations (from the voice of Satan): you’re not good enough ... if you are so good then you need to prove it ...**
- **Taking responsibility for what you are not responsible for**
- **Control Issues**

If these things are damming up the FLOW of the Spirit in your life, then they are S I N.

So what are **YOUR Dam Issues**? It’s not too hard to identify them.

- Whenever you feel something sucking the very joy out of your life.
- Whenever you feel that you have lost control over what is good by having to do that which is not good.
- Whenever you feel like you are spending your time doing things that do not honor God.
- Whenever you feel like your life is no longer within the FLOW OF GOD’S BLESSINGS.

Then you’ve got some ***DAM ISSUES*** that need to be

- (1) Identified
- (2) Handled.

It starts with prayer. If you haven't allowed yourself enough time to rest into the FLOW of God's blessings in and through you, then you don't even know what Jesus and I are talking about.

Then once you've experienced it, you need to pay attention. So much of what slips away goes without notice, because we are so busy doing other people's agendas.

Let me make a suggestion, if you feel like you've gotten out of the flow. Try it for one day. And then a second. And then a third, until you begin to get a sense of the flow.

Take time each day to listen for the SINGING. And here is how I am defining "**singing**": **Any pleasant sound whose purpose is not merely to convey information.**

It may be the sound of **real live birds** that have been singing all around you every single day that you have not even heard.

It may be the sound of the voice of the parking lot attendant who says: **"Thanks, Honey. Have a good day."** Words, yes. But not for the conveyance of information.

It may be the **simple sound of running water**. Cool water, maybe. Maybe cool water shared on a hot day. Simple sounds. Simple gestures. Simple things that get you back into the FLOW and begin to wash away as the power of water alone can do, to cleanse you of your DAM STUFF that threatens to block you from the FLOW, threaten to make your spiritual life as morbid as the Dead Sea.

If you are too busy for taking time to do this, then you really are TOO BUSY.

If you are too distracted in life from taking time to pay attention to simple “singing” -- ***Any pleasant sound whose purpose is not merely to convey information*** – then your FLOW meter is seriously in disrepair.

I’m not saying you will be damned (with an “N”) but I am saying that you are missing the boat.

The FLOW is a real thing. And Jesus wants you to know it. It is as refreshing as a drink of cool water on a hot, summer day.

Maybe Sheldon has it right, after all.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.