

SERMON – 05/10/09

“GREEN FAITH: *Water*”

Many people want to be able to defend themselves in case of attack... so they learn one of the many forms of martial-arts, practiced the world over...

- From Kung Fu... to Karate...
 - Hapkido to Taekwando...
 - Or Ju Jitsu to Akido...
 - People all over the world learn ancient techniques to defend themselves against unwanted aggression.
- But as a wise man once said, “I’m a lover, not a fighter”... I’ve discovered a secret method for self-defense that everyone here in this room can wield...
 - Here... see for yourself...
 - [Run “Wizard of Oz” clip with Dorothy melting from water]
 - That’s right! WATER is a great source for eliminating those pesky Wicked Witches of the East that tend to bother us from time to time...
- But wait, that’s not all water is a powerful weapon against...
 - M. Night Shyamalan, in his 2002 film “Signs,” proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that water can also work wonders against aliens!
 - [Run “Signs” clip with alien’s skin burning from run-ins with water]
 - (By the way, children, never hit anyone with a bat... unless they’re aliens from another country who are trying to take over the world – and don’t forget your water, too!)

Welcome to the 3rd week in our ongoing sermon series entitled, ‘GREEN FAITH.’

- We’re looking at our role as Christians (and humans!) to care for the environment...
 - Week one, we talked about why this is something we, as people of faith, should even be concerned about in the first place... and spent a little time on the issue of climate...
 - Last week, we tackled the huge issue of land... from deforestation to waste removal to biodiversity... (we even gave away 100 tree saplings!)

- This week, we're focusing on the issue of WATER...
- (And, as always, if you missed a previous message you're interested in... you can find them on our website under sermons!)
- Let's start by talking facts...
 - 75% of the surface of the world is covered with water... but 97% of that water is salt water (or a mix of fresh & salt).
 - Of the 3% of fresh water... 2/3 is unavailable for consumption because it's in glaciers and ice... or locked in the ground... so that leaves only 1% of the world's water to supply fresh water to the 6.6 billion people who live here.
 - Only 20% of those 6.6 billion people have running water...
 - And over 1 billion people don't have access to clean water at all...
 - It is estimated that close to 1.8 billion children die every year due to inadequate sanitation & contaminated water...
- Many places in the world are getting drier... for example:
 - Lake Chad, in Africa, has shrunk to 1/20 of its size in 1960...
 - The Aral sea in Kazakhstan, has also shrunk drastically from its 1957 border (in red)...
 - The Colorado River no longer reaches the sea in the dry season...
 - Worldwide, some 2-3 billion people could face acute freshwater shortages by 2020... which translates into 1 person in 3 (compared to 1 in 10 today!)...
 - Too many people with too many needs using water too wastefully have pummeled natural systems that depend on a steady flow of water.
 - And water is absolutely essential to life on this planet...
 - Here's a short clip from the BBC show "Planet Earth"... showing the power that water plays to the Okavango delta in Africa...
 - Let's watch [Show clip from "Planet Earth – freshwater"]
 - Unfortunately, it's getting harder and harder for the life-giving power of water to become available to all who need it on this planet of ours...
- Some of the contributing factors to a lack of clean water include:
 - Wasteful irrigation practices (especially for people who lack sufficient infrastructure to utilize water properly for irrigation)... in fact, according to J.F.

Rischard, more than half the water entering irrigation systems never makes it to the crops, due to leaks or wasteful practices.

- Domestic & industrial pollution... (remember, most of our freshwater lies underground in aquifers... what we do to the ground greatly affects our water supply!)
- Runoffs from farms & fields that use chemicals for their crops...
- And incompetence & corruption by politicians (especially in developing countries)...

The bottom line is, though we may not have a water shortage right now here in Hawaii, it behooves us to CONSERVE WATER every chance we get!

- We have to start looking at water in a whole new way... as a valuable resource worth conserving...
 - Here are just a few ways that we can conserve water... maybe a few of them will resonate with you as something you can do right now!
- Take a **shorter shower**... every 2 min. you save on your shower can conserve more than 10 gallons of water!
 - And if you're wondering which uses more water... a 5-min. shower uses only 1/3 of the water in a full bath...
 - If you want to go one step further... install a **low-flow showerhead**.
 - These devices force air into the water flow, reducing water usage by about half... yet still producing a strong spray!
 - And if you really want to go the extra mile, **collect the cold water** that runs while your shower is warming up... and use it to water your plants!
- Along the same lines as low-flow showerheads, you can buy **aerators** for all of your household faucets... these mesh faucet ends can cut the gallons-per-minute water usage by 40%!
- Here's a simple one... **turn off the tap while you brush your teeth!**
 - You'll conserve up to 5 gallons of water each day...
 - Throughout the entire US, the daily savings could add up to 1.5 billion gallons – more water than is consumed per day across all of New York City!

- Try to **flush** just one less time per day... just one less time will save about 4.5 gallons – about as much water as the average person in Africa uses for a whole day of drinking, cooking, bathing & cleaning!
 - Growing up on the Big Island with water catchment... it's not that hard to start adjusting one's 'flushing practices'...
- For flower beds & gardens... use **drip irrigation** or soaker hoses instead of regular sprinklers...
 - You can save up to 70% of the water you would typically use because evaporation will be minimal and only the base of the plants will be receiving water, as opposed to the leaves & foliage.
- When it comes to **washing your car**... consider going to a commercial car wash!
 - It's better for the environment, as commercial car washes use significantly less water (up to 100 gallons less!)... and often recycle/reuse rinse water.
 - If every American who currently washes their vehicles at home chose instead to go to a professional car wash just once... up to 8.7 billion gallons of water could be saved...
 - And 12 billion gallons of soapy pollutant water could be diverted from the country's rivers, lakes, streams & oceans...
- Here's an interesting one... mind the amount of water you use **when making coffee**...
 - Did you know that making coffee uses about 1/3 of the tap water consumed in most of North America & Europe!
 - If every office worker cut back on one cup of water put into a coffee pot each day, we'd save almost 10 million gallons...
 - One less cup of water per day doesn't seem like much... but over the course of a year, it would be enough to provide 2 gallons of water to each of the 1.2 billion people on this planet who don't have access to safe water at all!
- Many of us here in Hawaii make rice for our meals... and when you make rice you have to wash the rice, correct?
 - Instead of pouring the **rice water** down the drain as you wash it... consider using that to water your plants... as it's rich with nutrients!

- Or, if you're a **fish owner**, when you clean your tank... remove only ½ of the water & use that on your plants (talk about nutrient-rich!)...
- By the way... despite what you've heard, please **don't flush unused medicines** down the toilet... pharmaceuticals in wastewater have been found to damage plants, fish & animals... and yes, that's where our wastewater goes!

Now, let's talk a moment about BOTTLED WATER...

- This may come as a surprise to many of you (it did to me)... but by and large, bottled water is not any better for you than regular tap water.
 - Bottled water is almost entirely unregulated (unlike tap water)...
 - And studies have shown that some bottled water has more bacteria & chemicals than tap water... in fact, 20-30% of bottled water is actually contaminated!
- (Wait... there's more!) Here's the real kicker... it's estimated that 40% of all bottled water on the market today is actually made from TAP water!
 - Pepsi's *Aquafina* and Coke's *Dasani* both come from a 'municipal water supply,' and have had to make that known on their packaging recently.
 - (Actually, if the label says "purified" or "drinking water" on it... chances are good that it, too, is just glorified tap water!)
- If you like the taste of bottled water better than your tap water... consider adding a faucet filter to your kitchen sink...
 - We've had one for ages... and for about \$15/month, our water taste's great (and I drink a LOT of water!).
 - Besides... tap water only costs 1/10,000 the price of bottled water!
- Which is why bottled water has become the 2nd largest drink industry in the US...
 - And yet 'water mining' (as it's called) – the bottling of the water – can have a devastating effect on the natural ecosystems...
 - And the fact that 60 million water bottles are thrown away each day in the US!
 - It's no wonder why San Francisco's mayor has banned city employees from using city funds to buy bottled water when tap water is available...
 - Ann Arbor, Michigan even passed a resolution banning commercially bottled water at city events...

But I'd like to bring us back to the Bible as we close today...

- Our scripture reading for today was from the Old Testament book of Exodus (ch.17)...
 - Moses had led the people out of slavery in Egypt... but wandered around in the desert for quite some time...
 - While in the desert, the people got to be very good at grumbling... including when they needed water.
 - They didn't trust God to provide them with the life-giving gift of water... so they complained mightily...
 - As the story goes, Moses used his staff to strike a rock... and water started gushing forth in abundance.
 - (Nevertheless, God was greatly disappointed in their lack of faith at his provision!)
- Fast forward to the time of Jesus... one of the annual festivals that people flocked to Jerusalem for was the Festival of Booths...
 - It occurred in the fall (Sept/Oct)... and commemorated the historic wilderness wanderings of the people of Israel...
 - The festival lasted 7 days... and one of the rituals that they practiced centered around water...
 - Every day during the festival, the priests would carry water in a golden pitcher from the Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem up to the temple... as a reminder of the water from the rock in the desert.
 - Life-giving water was also a symbol of hope for the coming Messiah...
 - So at the same time every day during this festival, the entire focus of the people would be on this golden pitcher of water that the priests carried...
- In the Gospel of John, chapter 7, Jesus comes to this festival... and on the very last day... the 7th day... with all eyes on the golden water pitcher... the author tells us this:
 - *“On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers*

of living water.’ Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive...” (John 7:37-39a)

- I love how Jesus seizes the moment here...
- Not only were the people physically thirsty... but they were spiritually thirsty as well...
- They longed for a Messiah... a Savior... who would come and make things right!
- Caught up in the rituals of their tradition, however, many failed to see that Jesus was THE ONE that all of Scripture pointed to!
 - When Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well, in John 4... he told her point blank:
 - *“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” (John 4:13-14)*
- And in the very last chapter of the very last book of the Bible... Revelation 22... we are told that in the center of heaven... flowing from the very throne of God... is the River of the Water of Life...
 - And as the author draws that amazing book to a close, these words can be found:
 - *“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let everyone who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.” (Rev. 22:17)*
- Friends... every living creature on this planet needs water. It’s a simple fact.
 - As human beings bound together in this circle of life we call Earth, it’s our responsibility to take care of our precious water supply... for sure.
 - But as people of faith, we are also given the chance to drink deeply from the waters of Life... and have an even greater thirst quenched...
 - May we, once again today, give our hearts & lives completely to the One who is The Living Water... Jesus, our Savior!
 - AMEN.