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“Saturated in Love”

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Luke 3: 15-22

One of the things I try to do on my days off is swim.
I started this practice years ago when my doctor told me that my asthma
would benefit greatly from swimming.
He said I should do it three times a week, and since I don't have my own pool,
I am lucky to do it once a week.
But I have come to love my time in the water, and I miss it when I don't do it.
Getting in is always the hardest part.
But once I am in, and adjusted to the cold, it becomes a form of therapy for me.
I turn off my mind and just let the water move me along.
I can swim for 45 minutes and it feels like 5 minutes.
Yet this was not always the case.
When I first started swimming it was hard work, and I didn't enjoy it very much.
That is because I was a terrible swimmer, and I would fight the water,
instead of cooperating with it. It felt like something foreign to me.
One day I realized that most drownings occur because people fight the water.
If you can relax and let the water do what water does, you will be fine.
The water is there not to consume you, but to uphold and sustain you.
Our bodies are 80% water, and when we are born they are 90% water.
Throughout our lives we exist mostly as water, so it is an essential part of us.

But water must keep moving to remain pure.
It must constantly circulate. When water becomes trapped, with no outlet, it dies.
The Dead Sea in Israel is a perfect example of this.
There is nowhere for the water to go, and so it becomes stagnant and dies.
Water must move and flow to stay alive.
Writes Masaru Emoto: “To understand water is to understand the cosmos, the
marvels of nature, and human life itself.”
(Emoto, *The Hidden Messages in Water*)

In every spiritual tradition, water has profound significance.
It is considered sacred by traditions such as Native Americans and Buddhists.
Even human tears are considered sacred in some traditions.

Our Judeo-Christian tradition is soaked, with images of water.
There were waters at creation, covering the world.
Water was a gift given in the wilderness.

Moses was placed in a basket and put in the waters of the Nile,
and he would eventually part the Red Sea and lead God's people to the safety
of the promised land.

Jesus described himself as the "Living Water come down from Heaven,"
and said, "The water that I give will be a spring of water, gushing up
into eternal life."

Water is of sacred significance.

When Jesus presented himself for baptism by John in the Jordan river,
he wanted the healing powers of water to bless him as he began his ministry.

The Greek word for baptism means: "To Saturate."

Baptism is a symbol of being saturated in Gods love.

Literally soaked, waterlogged with Gods love.

What does that mean? It is easy to say, but much harder to comprehend.
The great writer and poet Maya Angelou described what it meant for her.
Abused as a small child in Stamps, Arkansas, Maya had a very hard life.
In a recent book she describes a time when she was far, far away from God.
She writes, "In my 20s in San Francisco, I became a sophisticate and agnostic

It was not that I stopped believing in God, it is just that God did not
seem to be around the places I frequented.

One day my voice teacher asked me to read a passage from a book.

I was 24, skeptical, worldly, sophisticated.

He asked me to read from *Lessons In Truth*, a section which ended with
these words: "God loves me."

He said, "Read it again."

I opened the book and sarcastically read, "God loves me."

He said, "Read it again." I said, "God loves me."

After the 7th repetition, I began to sense that there might be a lesson here.

I began to believe that there was some possibility that God did love me.

Me, Maya Angelou.

I began to cry at the thought of it.

I knew that if God really loved me, then I could do wonderful things.

I could try great things, learn anything, achieve anything.

For what could stand against me and God?"

What do you think could stand against you and God?

Sorrow and setback? Illness and disease?

Nothing, not despair, not even death. Nothing.

One of my favorite Scriptures is Isaiah 43, it has sustained me during some dark times in my own life.

In it, the prophet Isaiah, speaking for God, says:

“I have called you by name and you are mine.

When you pass through the deepest waters I will be with you,
and the rivers will not overwhelm you.

When you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
the flame will not consume you.

For I am the Lord your God, I created you.

You are precious in my sight and I love you.”

Martin Luther, during dark moments of temptation, doubt and despair in his own life, found great comfort in repeating over and over to himself:

“I have been baptized. I have been baptized.”

It helped Luther to recall that even when he didn't feel like it at all, nothing in life or death could change the fact that he was literally soaked with the love of God.

I wanted all of us to begin this New Year with a reminder that we too are soaked in God's love.

None of us know what this New Year holds for us.

It might be filled with blessings and happiness.

Or it might be filled with setbacks and challenges, difficulty and even death.

None of us know what this New Year holds for our church, either.

We might stay here and renovate this building and become a neighborhood church, or we might begin the process of relocation.

None of us know. But what we do know is that God is with us.

We are literally saturated with the love of God.

Thanks Be To God.

(Remembrance of Baptism Liturgy)