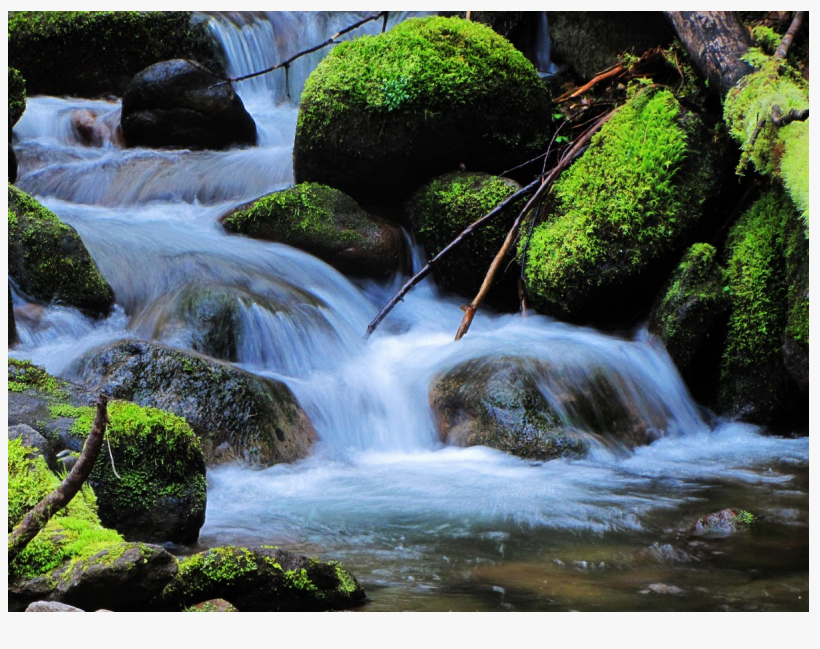


The Rev. Jay Lawlor “Rivers of Living Water” June 4, 2017 St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Terre Haute, IN

The Rev. Jay Lawlor was guest priest at Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church in Terre Haute, IN for Pentecost Sunday 2017.

INDIANAPOLIS, IN, US, February 22, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [The Rev. Jay Lawlor](#) preached a sermon titled “[Rivers of Living Water](#)” for Pentecost at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Terre Haute, Indiana. The readings were: Acts 2:1-21; Psalm 104; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13; and John 7:37-39. Following is a transcript of the Rev. Lawlor's sermon.



Come, Holy Spirit, and fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love.

Good morning. I am delighted to be with you this morning while your rector, Drew, is away. And what a Sunday to be with you! After fifty glorious days of Easter we arrive at Pentecost: the celebration of the first apostles receiving the Holy Spirit following Jesus' Ascension.

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All that we are, all that we have, and all that we do is given through the Spirit of God so we can be witnesses to the loving, life-giving, liberating love of God.”

The Rev. Jay Lawlor

The Spirit given as a gift to create a new community for sharing the Good News. The birth of the Church. A launching of the Jesus Movement to be a loving, life-giving, liberating force in the world. Begun by Jesus, rooted in God's love, and powered by the Holy Spirit.

As John recounts for us in today's gospel lesson, Jesus 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.’” (John 7:37-38)

I'm thirsty for more of that living water. Our world needs more of that living water. How about you? . . . Are you thirsty? . . . Jesus says come and drink. And out of your hearts shall flow rivers of living water. And that living water flows from the Spirit of God. And we know that water equals life.

Water is the wellspring of life on our planet. The majority of the Earth's surface is covered in water. Sixty percent of the human body is water. Nearly three quarters of the very heart which pumps our blood is water. Over eighty percent of the lungs which give us breath are water. All of creation relies on water to survive and thrive.

When water flows, it gives life. Both physically, and spiritually. Jesus knew that after his ascension his followers would need a continuing presence to be with them. To be with us. A presence of God to give life to their ministries, and to our ministries. So he sent the Holy Spirit.

In so doing, God made known that this new community following the ways of Jesus would be marked first, and foremost, by love. Not a sentimental, Hallmark card, kind of love, but agapē love. A love that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. described as the understanding and creative, redemptive goodwill for all.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu speaks of agapē in relation to the African understanding of Ubuntu. He has spoken of it often, and it is central to the Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation. In his book, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, Archbishop Tutu writes:

Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, 'Yu, u nobunto'; 'Hey so-and-so has ubuntu.' Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, 'My humanity is inextricably bound up in yours.' We belong in a bundle of life."

Ubuntu, then, speaks of the inter-connectedness of community – of the human family. It helps us understand the concept of agapē. A love which recognizes there are no outcasts with God. ALL are part of God's love. This is the love of Jesus, the love given through the Spirit.

It is the love which forms community. A community where its members are not the same, but united in, by, and through the Spirit of God . . . marked with agapē love, witnesses to agapē love, and bearers to the world of agapē love.

Saint Paul speaks to this quality of community in his First Letter to the Corinthians. "For in the one Spirit we are all baptized into one body [...] and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:13) And let us remember Jesus says "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink." (John 7:37)

And when we drink in the Spirit we are brought into a community of believers who are to bear witness to the diversity of the human condition and our need for one another. In all our differences, in our wonderful diversity, we are one in Christ and infused with the same Spirit. And that must be a witness to the world of God's love for us, for all of humanity, for all of creation. For the Spirit of God lives in us and through the Spirit we live and move and have our being as followers of Jesus.

And there is not one of us, not a single, solitary, one of us, who God does not reach out to and says 'come and drink' from the loving, life-giving, liberating waters which flow from the Spirit of God. And there is not one of us who is not recognized and loved by God.

And God calls us to become the Beloved Community as disciples of Jesus. Marked by God's love, compassion, justice, and reconciliation for all. As followers of Jesus, who have been given the Spirit of God, we are to love without limits.

We are to carry each other through all of life's joys and sorrows, celebrations and heartaches, triumphs and tragedies. We are to be a community of believers who carry each other and the world in the loving embrace of God's agapē love.

To many Gen-Xers, such as myself, the Irish rock band U2 are cool. They were especially cool when I was in my teens and early twenties – a moment in time where U2 were the biggest rock band on the planet. Now in my forties, and with a teenage son of my own, I realize U2 may not be as cool to his generation. But they will forever be one of the most influential and inspirational rock bands for me and many of my generation.

For those attune to the Christian message woven throughout many of their songs, listening to U2 can be a deeply spiritual experience. And one which echoes Jesus' call to transformation and social justice. Attending a U2 concert, for many, is like attending a truly uplifting worship service.

So it is no stretch at all to include a U2 reference now and again in a sermon. Even for the U2 uninitiated, there is value in the lyrics. U2's song, One, convey a message which echo that of Saint Paul in his letter to the Corinthians. The lyrics don't sound as good spoken as sung, but I'm not going to sing them for you. Yet listen deeply to the words:

"One love, one blood, one life; you gotta do what you should. One life with each other: sisters, brothers. One life, but we're not the same. We get to carry each other, carry each other."

In another verse: "One love, we get to share it. Leaves you, baby, if you don't care for it. You say love is a temple, love a higher law. Love is a temple, love the higher law."

All that we are, all that we have, and all that we do is given through the Spirit of God so we can be witnesses to the loving, life-giving, liberating love of God. Our nation, and our world, needs our witness. We need to witness to the fact that:

The Spirit is given to offer life, not death. The Spirit is given to create, not destroy. The Spirit is given to build up, not tear down. The Spirit is given to bring us together, not push us apart. The Spirit is given so ALL are included in God's loving embrace.

This is our calling as disciples of Jesus and receivers of the Holy Spirit. Jesus cries out,

"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. And 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37-38)

Rivers of living water given by Jesus in God's love and powered by the Holy Spirit.

So let the following prayer be on our lips, in our hearts, and expressed in our work of ministry in the world: Come, Holy Spirit, fill our hearts and kindle in us the fire of your love, and let our hearts flow rivers of loving, life-giving, and liberating water. Amen.

This is a reprint of The Rev. Jay Lawlor's sermon "Rivers of Living Water" available at <https://www.therevjaylawlor.com/rev-jay-lawlor-sermon-rivers-living-water-pentecost-year-june-4-2017/>

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