

## An Eco-Theological Reflection

By Paul LaCroix

Genesis 1: 1-2 *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.*

Revelation 22: 1 *Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.*

Water is very prominent in our theology from Genesis (Alpha) to Revelation (Omega) and vitally important in the ecology of the world. We depend on water for our very lives. Our bodies are about 60% water; we start life in the waters of our mother's womb. We are washed in water at Baptism when we become a member of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. We depend on water every day to drink, to clean with and to generally make our lives enjoyable. Yet living in the bio-region known as the Greater Pacific Northwest (GPNW), we often take it for granted that we will have all the water we need for our daily lives. After all, it rains here for a significant part of the year. We even get tired of the rain and a little depressed when it rains for days, weeks and months on end. But it is the weather patterns that bring abundant rainfall to the GPNW that surround us with a lush green environment and our rivers flowing with fish and life. Global warming could significantly change the weather patterns that determine when and how much rain falls on the GPNW.

As the atmosphere warms, heat is stored in the waters of the world's oceans. The surface temperature of the oceans drives the weather patterns and the jet stream which determines when and how much rain falls here. We are already starting to see shifts in global weather patterns. Our winters have been drier and springs have been wetter and snowpacks are down across the west. The southern United States has been in an extended drought. Water is our most precious resource — more precious than oil or gold, because we can live without oil or gold but not without water.

In the Bible, there are many stories of how God's grace and wrath towards humanity have been expressed through water and global weather patterns. We have the story of the great flood in Genesis when water washed the wickedness of humanity from the face of the Earth except for Noah and company. (Genesis 7: 1 – 24) And the story of the great famine in Egypt in the time of Joseph — when Joseph rose to power in Egypt because God had blessed him with the ability to interpret Pharaoh's dream and make plans during the time of abundance to store up food for the time of famine. (Genesis 41: 1 – 57)

So we see in the Bible narrative that changing weather patterns are not a new thing on Earth, but what is new is humanity's ability to impact global weather patterns through our actions. How we live our lives today can change how the whole planet lives tomorrow. We need to be like Joseph, open to listen to the voice of God in our lives and make plans for how to survive the changes that are taking place around us — not like the frog in the experiment that sits in the pot of gradually warming water until it starts to boil and we are killed by our own inaction because we didn't jump in time.

So how shall we jump into action? I believe many of us have already taken steps to reduce our “carbon footprint,” like changing to compact fluorescent bulbs, buying more energy-efficient appliances and cars, and reusing and recycling as much as we can. These are all good steps to take, and I am sure that each one of us can think of many more we haven’t taken yet and should. It is equally important to give thought to how we use and rely upon water in our daily lives. While we are taking steps to reduce our impact on global warming and the resulting changes in weather patterns, we also need to think about how we can use water wisely and with respect for its importance to all life on Earth. Reducing wasteful consumption is important, and keeping it clean and accessible is vital to the health of our bio-region and the environment of the world.

Clean water, breathable air and access to wilderness ecosystems are all key elements of “The Commons” that which is held in trust for the benefit of all. Some may be familiar with the book *The Ripple Effect* by Alex Prud’Homme, which inspired the documentary movie *Last Call at the Oasis* by writer and director Jessica Yu and which was shown at the Clinton Street Theater a while back .Another book to read is *The last Hours of Ancient Sunlight* by Thom Hartmann. There is much thought-provoking information about the looming global water and energy crisis that can be found with a Google search of these titles. As with global warming, the decisions we make about how we live, spend our money and vote can make significant change possible. I am sure you have seen the slogan *Think Globally, Act Locally* on bumper stickers, and this is something we should embrace as Christian stewards of God’s creation.

What humanity ultimately needs is a change of consciousness, and that is where our Christian faith is of great value. As with all things relating to faith, we should start with prayer. “Be still and know that I am God”- Psalm 46:10. Seek God in stillness and humility; ask how you can be of service to humanity and the restoration of creation. Then listen with an open heart and mind for the direction of the Spirit. Jesus met the Samaritan women at Jacob’s well and asked her for a drink of water. He told her that if she knew the gift of God and who was asking her for a drink, she would have asked him and he would have given her living water and she never would have thirsted again. (John 4: 7 – 13) The living water that Jesus offers us is Christ consciousness welling up within our souls. And when we have attained to Christ consciousness, we will truly be co-creators with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. And we will speak the words of life, and all of creation will be restored, and we will see the river of the water of life flowing from the throne of God and the lamb and the new Jerusalem will be heaven on Earth. Amen.

I say all this to myself as well as to you reading my words — not as one that has attained perfection but as a fellow pilgrim seeking forgiveness and new life in Christ. So continue to live life as best you can, seeking to do what is right for those around you and the world and praying daily for the Spirit's guidance.