

Forgiveness Over Water – Creation 2

Moses - whose name means Drawn From Water - stands at the edge of the Reed Sea. His people, God's people, are gathered around him. They have just fled Egypt where they have been enslaved for generations. And Pharaoh changed his mind about letting them go. The royal army is hot on their heels with chariots, swords, anger. Before them a sea of water.

I have heard of being between a rock and a hard place. This is between an inland sea and a sword place?

But God works with Moses to part the sea. By morning, there is dry ground across the sea. Waters build up on their left and right making a wall - but they are safe. The people cross.

Pharaoh's army arrives and sees this miracle. Into the miracle they go too. But their chariot wheels stick in the mud, and the waters close over them - drowning the army.

The people are at last free.

I notice - the way forward wasn't known to the people at first. At first, it looked completely hopeless with death before them and death behind them.

I notice - the way forward took much trust. The people trusted Moses. The army trusted Pharaoh. Both went forward. Those who trusted the leaders who desired death found death – their own. Those who trusted the leaders who desired life found life – their own. I wonder – what do our political leaders desire? Our global leaders? Our company leaders? Our local leaders? Is our trust well placed?

I notice - nature and God and people work together to bring liberation. It takes the waters and wind, God and Moses, the people and their animals - all working together. And it isn't instant, like it appears in movies – but rather, the parting of the sea and the liberation of the people take time. Decades. Liberation began before Moses was even born.

I notice - it isn't the powerful army, the Pharaoh, the latest technology of chariots that win that wins. Victory goes to the teamwork and partnership of those who appear to have less military, political, or technological might. I wonder if God favours underdogs, favours the meek, the weak, the poor.

This makes me wonder who has less military, less political power, and less technology today. This makes me wonder who is working with their neighbours, with creation, with God. This makes me wonder about water and generative artificial intelligence. AI.

Rural, poor, and also Indigenous communities tend to not have militaries. We have to beg to have political big centres hear us. We rarely are on the cutting edge of technology. And yet, rural communities, poor communities, and Indigenous communities tend to carry the burden and pollution of urban, affluent, majority communities.

Consider: Every 100 word prompt into an AI consumes 1 bottle of water.

Every day - ChatGPT alone uses 39.16 million gallons.

Within a month, ChatGPT has used 2 glasses of water for every single human on Earth.

Every year - Lake Tapps Reservoir is used - 14.28 billion gallons.

And this is just for ChatGPT. It doesn't count all the other AI platforms.

AI, like Pharoah, seems too powerful to do anything about. It is insidious - thrust upon us with every search, every update, every new device. We're told this is the future, this is easy, this is simple. And each one of those small conversations, multiplied by millions of people, is billions of gallons of water used to cool the computers considering your prompt.

Creeks and rivers and lakes don't have to be used to cool these - but water is the cheapest way to do so at the moment. The water cools the computers. They build up heat from all the electricity used. The hot water turns to steam and evaporates. These clouds then carry the water from the local watershed system. When you flush your toilet, it goes to the local water plant or local septic. It is treated, and returns to the same watershed. The water for the cooling floats away. So datacentres are causing droughts.

Datacentres tend to be built in economically poorer areas who think this will bring jobs and the future; in areas where local small governments offer incentives hoping for growth; in places where the people haven't as much voice as the companies from away who purchase their wilds and waters.

The pollution is pushed onto the poorest, onto the animals and creation, onto farmers and rural folk. And it is so much pollution. The data centres run 24/7. They are illuminated with industrial ultra-bright lights. These are to deter people and animals from approaching. As they do not turn off, this ends the cycadean rhythms for humans and animals, bugs and plants in the area.

Datacentres produce noise constantly - at 90 decibels! Anything over 85 hurts human ears. 90 is what your chainsaw, pneumatic drill, and motorcycle run at. Within 2 hours, human ears are damaged.

100 words - or an image generation - email summary - all of this runs through these AI data centres and hurt the people and animals stuck by them.

Youth today understand this. You'll hear them refer to something as "That's AI," and it means, "That's nasty. Fake. Yucky." Some buy the hype. But many of those under 30 see anything with AI as something stealing their future to clean water, clean air, employment, enjoyment, life.

One thing you can do to love creation is to refuse generative artificial intelligence. To say no to the ease, availability, and propaganda of AI because it hides the true costs to the environment, and to future generations behind its glossy appeal. When you search online, add “ -ai “ to your search to remove ai summaries. Choose to hire an artist or learn to draw for your art. Say no to ai transcriptions, summaries, “ask me anything!” chat boxes, and ai website agents. Until and unless these companies address their pollution – do not use them.

When we invest in water and nature, creation forgives us. Heals itself. God works alongside us and all life to bring us back to the ecosystem Ezekiel saw where living waters bring abundance to humans, to plants, to creatures as we all labour together.

Jesus was asked "how many times do I forgive? A generous 7 times?" And Jesus said no - more. God forgives us over and over and over again. Waters forgive us over and over and over again. We are to do the same.

Whenever someone comes to understand the debt, the sin, they have - and wants to change their ways and make amends... let them. Welcome the change. None of Pharoah's army would have died if they stopped doing evil and chasing Moses and the people. They could have turned back, repented, not gone into the sea. All of us can change our ways and make amends. We can demand AI companies account for the true cost to creatures, people, and the environment. We can refuse to use it as often as we can. We can offer education, and forgiveness, to those who have been tricked by the propaganda that AI is victimless, free, and necessary.

Just as God forgives us, waters forgive us. If we are more gentle on our watersheds and they will recover. If we are more careful to live in harmony with our surroundings, they will heal. If we are willing to leave Egypt and its slavery, and its might, and way of life behind - we can live in nature as equals with each other, and with microbes and mammals and rivers and rocks as our siblings. If we trust God to lead us through scary times, we will come out on the other side freed.

Consider the Cuyahoga River along Cleveland and Akron in my origin state of Ohio. It drains from the Cuyahoga basin to Lake Erie. It caught fire at least 13 times in a hundred years. It was used as a liquid landfill for industries – and chemicals and oil were dumped into it. Although the USA President Nixon veto'd the Clean Water Act, the USA politicians veto'd his veto in 1972. Now, 52 years later, the river that was considered "life-less" has Ohio's only national park and over 40 different species of fish. Companies are no longer allowed to dump their raw sewage into the river... so long as the USA has the Clean Water Act, which is back to being imperiled. But! Over those 50 years – the river forgave us. Fish returned. Plants returned. Bugs returned. Humans live alongside and with nature and everyone thrives –the park brings in millions to the human economy; the water is safe to touch; life thrives. Water forgives.

Consider Kelly Lake in Sudbury. It was once considered the most polluted lake in all of Canada. Junction Creek had been carrying mine tailings and raw human sewage to Kelly Lake since Sudbury was founded. A creosote plant joined. Sawmills joined. There was so many pollutants entering Kelly Lake that it had islands of them – islands of heavy metals, toxic chemicals, human feces, rotting carcasses. All that water and pollution eventually traveled here – to the North Channel – and into Lake Huron. In the 1970s, Sudbury began to install sewage lagoons to let the dangerous things settle out, and the water to be treated, before it was released back into Kelly Lake. Kelly Lake is not yet recovered, but its acid and heavy metal levels are improving. The Spanish River is cleaner; and much less is entering Lake Huron. Water heals. Water forgives. Not instant. But over time, does heal.

We are offered forgiveness, and a way forward - will you accept the call to living waters that challenge, change, baptize and forgive us?

May we all do so. **Amen.**

Scripture Reading: Sept. 13, 2026 – for LCUCPC

Exodus 14:19-31 NRSV Ue

¹⁹The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. ²⁰It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so, the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

²¹Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. ²²The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. ²³The Egyptians pursued and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. ²⁴At the morning watch the LORD, in the pillar of fire and cloud, looked down on the Egyptian army and threw the Egyptian army into a panic. ²⁵He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."

The Pursuers Drowned

²⁶Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." ²⁷So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the LORD tossed the Egyptians into the sea. ²⁸The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. ²⁹But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. ³⁰Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the Egyptians. So, the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

Matthew 18: 21-35 Forgiveness

²¹Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" ²²Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but I tell you, seventy-seven times.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

²³"For this reason, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him, ²⁵and, as he could not pay, the lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions and payment to be made. ²⁶So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

May God's spirit shape our understanding of these words.

And may they awaken in our hearts

