

## **Sermon: Wells of Salvation and a Motorola Tuning Adapter**

Year C, Proper 28

[Psalm 65](#), [Isaiah 12](#)

Offered November 17, 2019 to Brookline Community Church, Brookline, NH

Rev. Catherine A. Merrill

Draw water from the wells of salvation (Isaiah 12:3). Wagon tracks overflow with richness (Psalm 65:11). Pastures of the wilderness overflow (Psalm 65:12). Not just the pastures that we've worked so hard to cultivate and to surround with rock walls, but the pastures of the wilderness. The hills gird themselves with joy, the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain (Psalm 65:12-13). There is so much abundance in God's world. The whole world is shouting and singing together for joy (Psalm 65:13).

Isn't that what they say when somehow it comes up that you go to church? Oh, I hike in the woods, I walk on the beach. I connect with God through nature. I don't need church to connect with God. There's a snotty, un-Christian part of me that wants to respond, "neither do I." I want to say, "any fool can connect with God on a beach."

Except, except, except ... I do need church. Yes, I am touched by the power and abundance of nature. I am reassured that there is a power greater than humanity at work in the universe when the Hubble Space Telescope sends back new images that make it into the news. And when the frost forms a gorgeous garden on my windscreen in the morning. Yes when I walk on a beach or hike in the woods, or sit under those tall, tall pines at the Lake in the summer I connect with God.

But in my life, much of it is spent in the roaring of the seas, in the roaring of the waves, in the tumult of the people (Psalm 65:7). I spend a lot of time in the heart of chaos. And there it is harder to connect with God. When I was in Maine last time, I had a three-day battle with the cable company to let my parents watch the news on their favorite channel. However many bazillion channels they have, we couldn't get the signal to come through on the one channel they like to watch. I was on the coast of Maine. I was gazing on the glory of ocean waves rolling in. And I was cursing a blue streak and ready to commit murder and then go on to break the rest of the Ten Commandments.

At least in my life, I don't need to connect with God nearly as much when I am serenely walking along a beach. I need God when I am ready to reach through the phone and strangle someone. I will be far more grateful for the abundance God has placed in the world when my frustration dial is pegged out in the red zone.

And this is stretch of the argument I haven't figure out how to navigate. When I ask my "I connect with God through nature" friends what they do when they're frustrated or angry or raging, what they do when they're in the heart of chaos, they don't understand what I'm asking. What does that have to do with beaches and hiking trails and beautiful patterns in the frost? To them, God doesn't show up all the time, God shows up only when they are reflective, only when they want to reach for God in the way they want to receive God.

After the service technician had checked all the everythings, he said that we needed a new Motorola tuning adapter. He didn't have one in his truck (he wasn't allowed to have them he said), and the one we had wasn't working anymore. I had to drive for an hour to pick up a replacement, then drive for an hour back. So before I set out, I tried to call that particular depot

and see if they indeed had a tuning adapter to give me. But of course, you're not allowed to do that. You call the number and your phone call goes to someplace in the Midwest and they can't do anything more than reassure you that all of their stores all have all the components. So when I got there and they told me they didn't have one I got really choked up. I was angry but it came out as teary. "Do you have any idea how difficult you make it to be your customer?" The other staff member went into the back and came out with the box I needed. They got it assigned to my account and I left. And as the door was closing behind me, they burst into laughter.

OK. Now I get it. They have an incredibly crappy job working for a company with horrendous customer service, so all they get are people like me who are beyond frustrated and people who don't have credit cards and come in to pay their cable bills in cash. But I will always remember being laughed at by this company and the minute, the minute I can get my parents high speed internet without this company, I will do it.

I drove home, through the rain, in the dark, angry and humiliated. That same feeling from junior high school that sears its way into your soul and you never, ever forget. Maybe you don't do this, but when I'm that upset and I'm in the car alone, I start talking to myself. I said how much I hated feeling that way. I told myself to let it go. That never works. So then I started to think about boils and plagues of locusts. I thought about hail storms. I went through as many Biblical curses as I could think of. That worked. I felt much better. I even thought of a few more, if we ever need to add on a few chapters to one of the books of the Bible. That's a resource my walk-on-the-beach friends don't have.

But look again at what Psalm 65 did. Yes, we get to the wagon so full of bounty that its *tracks* overflow with richness (Psalm 65:11). But we start with *When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us, you forgive our transgressions* (Psalm 65:3). Connection with God and God's abundance starts with naming our own transgressions, figuring out what has gone haywire in our circuitry that is keeping us from God. And not only do we name them, but we ask the power that brings incredible abundance into the world to forgive us.

I am still struggling with what to ask forgiveness for. I think it has something to do with letting my expectations and rage build up to such a degree over something so ridiculous. Rage is important. It moves us to combat injustice, to defend people whom God calls on us to defend. But rage is not really the best conduit for getting electrons to move three feet from one side of the living room to the other.

So we name our own transgressions, figure out what is keeping us from God, and ask forgiveness. And then we wait. We wait for God to act.<sup>1</sup> I don't mean that God is going to show up with the gizmo to solve my cable problem. But if I do the work, behind the steering wheel on that pitch-black road in the pouring November rain, God will take away that junior high school feeling that I can never come as you are. If we do the work and we wait for God to act, God will remind us that God is the source of every good thing every good thing and God is just waiting to give every good thing to us. If we do the work and we watch and we wait and we hope and we pray, God will come and make all things new.

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<sup>1</sup> Walter C. Bouzard, "Commentary on the Psalm: Psalm 65:(1-8), 9-13" from "Lectionary Commentaries for July 13, 2014: Fifth Sunday after Pentecost", Working Preacher, [https://www.workingpreacher.org/wp\\_print\\_all.aspx?lectionary\\_calendar\\_id=484&print\\_type=comm&is\\_spanish=0](https://www.workingpreacher.org/wp_print_all.aspx?lectionary_calendar_id=484&print_type=comm&is_spanish=0) (accessed July 2, 2019).

That's why we need church. We need someplace to go, directly from the heart of chaos, and know, know without hesitation or doubt, that God is with us. All the time. Not just when we're feeling peaceful walking along a beach. That's why we need church. Because there's a skill to getting your heart turned around and opened up and honest with yourself and with the world. And church teaches you that skill. We need someplace to go, directly from the heart of chaos, where people will sing that truth to us, so we can carry it back out into the heart of chaos. We need someplace to go where people admit how hard it is to figure out what got in the way of remaining connected to God.

And if that is why we need church, then that is why we need stewardship. Next week we will celebrate the end of our stewardship campaign. We have a way to go to match last year's pledges. But I know that we do not yet have all the pledges in. If you can turn in your pledge forms by next week, that will make it much easier for us to come up with a healthy budget for the church that will allow the church to continue to do our work.

Because that work leads us to the place where we can draw water from the wells of salvation. That work lets us see the hills girded with joy, the meadows clothed with flocks, the valleys decked with grain. That work lets us hear the whole world shouting and singing together for joy. That work turns our hearts around and opens them up in honesty. That work is so much harder than walking on a beach. Or getting a tuning adapter to work.