

## Holy Hydration! John 12:20-33

Spirit soaked. That's the state we are in when we are immersed in the Holy Spirit, marinated in God's grace. It's the only thing that got Jesus through his ordeal. And it's the only thing that will get us through when difficulties come our way. The Holy Spirit is Healing. The Holy Spirit is Life.

The Holy Spirit is Soul Sustenance, that spring of life that hydrates us, revives us, refreshes us, and renews us, even when we are in the worst of times and hardest of places.

At the time of our scripture today, Jesus is in a difficult place. He knows what is coming and what he will need to endure, and he knows that his ministry and God's plan will only come to fruition if he goes through with what he needs to do. He needs to die for the world to live.

In the context of this passage, some Greeks who had gone to the Jewish festival had come to Philip asking to see Jesus. But when Andrew and Philip told Jesus, he turned to them and made a proclamation, one that not only his disciples but also his Greek followers would see and hear.

He said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Then he reiterated that for God's plan to be complete, he will need to first die. But then he will be lifted up, resurrected. Then Jesus says loudly, "Father, glorify your name." And a voice answers from the heavens: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." Jesus notes that this voice is not an answer to him but speaks so that all around him can hear that this plan for his death and resurrection is sanctioned by God.

Jesus uses a metaphor of a seed to help his followers understand what it means for him to die and be resurrected. An agricultural community, they would have understood this to be not just a simple explanation of planting in the ground and growing into life but a miraculous event that happens within the seed, an event in which God's presence is inherent.

So, what does happen to make a dry, dead seed come to life?

Most of you know that if you store seeds (some of you buy them, some of you may store them) in a cool, dry place, they will last a long time. Years in fact. Nothing will make that seed grow on its own by sitting in a box on a shelf. A seed in this sense is in fact merely a dead, dry shell filled with potential. But when inactivated, it becomes nothing more than what it already is. A seed. Like an unfertilized egg that will never become a chicken, the seed will not become a plant. And yet it contains everything within it necessary to do so. It needs no further fertilization. But it does need something very important that can immediately cause change from within, water.

The process of germination occurs when a seed comes in contact with water. Water activates enzymes within the seed and immediately the shell begins to swell and soften, the seed's interior begins to hydrate and repair, metabolism begins, and a plant embryo begins to grow, breaking through the shell and putting roots into the ground. As the plant's cells begin to activate, a shoot begins to grow upward, and a plant is born. All it needed was water. It needed to immerse in life-giving water.

At that point, environmental factors also help. It helps to place the sprouting seed into soil where it can nestle in and find a home, putting down roots and drawing nourishment and more water from the soil. It helps to have sun as the plant begins to break the ground, so that photosynthesis can occur. It helps to have oxygen and a warm temperature. When nurtured in this environment, the plant will grow sure and strong.

But the miracle is in that first contact, when water meets those waiting enzymes in the interior of that seed, that dormant, dry seed.

Why does Jesus tell us this? Why use the example of the seed? More than ever, Jesus is affirming his identity as God's Son: fully human, but fully divine. Jesus as a human being must carry out God's own plan of salvation by dying in this world to resurrect within the next. In death, Jesus Spirit will be immersed again in the heavenly realm and will rise again full in the Holy Spirit. He knows that unless he follows this trajectory, he cannot emerge from the human world into the heavenly kingdom, fulfilling God's plan and saving creation, for Jesus IS the Tree of Life.

But Jesus does not just tell his followers this for them to understand his own walk, but also for them to understand what is to come for them as well. For in his own resurrection, he will "draw all people to himself," and in his Holy Spirit, he will immerse them too, so they will grow, change, and proclaim God's resurrection miracle to all people, that all who believe in him will experience change of heart, and eternal life.

For every one of you also contains God's miraculous potential. Each of you has been created in the image of God. Even though Jesus is the only human who IS God, each of you have been created in the image of God. And when your heart is implanted with the "seed" of Jesus, when his Spirit dwells within you, you too will grow and change, live and thrive both here and beyond.

May God's Spirit dwell within us so that we might grow and change. So that we might be more like Christ for the glory of God's kingdom. Amen

God bless,  
Pastor Barbara