

“We Need Some Rain Down Here!

B, Pentecost 8; Deuteronomy 11:11-5; Psalm 65:9-14

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Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO

Rev. Rebecca K. Poos

Deuteronomy 11: 11-15 But the land you are crossing over to occupy is a land of hills and valleys, watered by rain from the sky, a land that the Lord your God looks after. The eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

If you will only heed his every commandment that I am commanding you today - loving the Lord your God and serving him with all your heart and with all your soul - then he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil; he will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you will eat your fill.

Psalm 65:9-14 You visit the earth and water it abundantly; you make it very plenteous; the river of God is full of water. You prepare the grain, for so you provide for the earth. You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges; with heavy rain you soften the ground and bless its increase. You crown the year with your goodness, and your paths overflow with plenty. May the fields of the wilderness be rich for grazing, and the hills be clothed with joy. May the meadows cover themselves with flocks, and the valleys cloak themselves with grain; let them shout for joy and sing. (This version is from the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer, 1979.)

I. WHAT'S RAINING DOWN UPON US?

How I wish it would rain down.

As we prepared this worship service today – praying for rain—I looked around. And listened. All around, I

looked at the rain that did come from the sky and quenched the earth. I listened to the birds singing their gratitude and felt the exquisite sensation of the air so fresh and renewed with moisture.

I looked and listened too, to what else is raining down upon us. What, besides, water, is pouring out into our midst? Onto our spirits? What do we wish for more of, besides the wet stuff from the sky?

And a passage from Galatians came immediately to mind: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Aha! That's what we need more of! The fruits of the Spirit – fruit juice pouring down, if you will!

The Message translation describes the raining fruits like this:

²²⁻²³ But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.

As we look around, this week, this month, this place, here's where we might glimpse the fruits of the Spirit raining down. Here's where we might look for more, as we "wish it would rain down!"

Fruits of the Spirit

Love—Our opening Hymn!

Rain down Rain down

Rain down your love on your people

Rain down Rain down

Rain down your love, God of life

James Taylor nailed it in his catchy song that Teresa will play in a few moments—we can sing along!

Shower the people you love with love,
show them the way that you feel.
Things are gonna be much better if you only will.

They say in every life, they say the rain must fall,
just like pouring rain, make it rain.
Make it rain, love, love, love is sunshine.

Joy

We find joy comes when we, like the Psalmist, practice giving gratitude for all that God rains upon us.

Psalm 65: *You prepare the grain, for so you provide for the earth. You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges; with heavy rain you soften the ground and bless its increase. May the fields of the*

wilderness be rich for grazing, and the hills be clothed with joy. May the meadows cover themselves with flocks, and the valleys cloak themselves with grain; let them shout for joy and sing.

Peace

We sang it with the kids.

I've got peace like a river,

joy like a fountain,

love like an ocean.....in my soul!

Patience

My daily devotional reminded me of this midweek.

Waiting is a spiritual practice, and the more "waiting upon the Lord" we can do, the more this fruit of the spirit will infuse and fill our lives and change everything.

"Given enough time, most of our enemies cease to be enemies, because waiting allows us to see ourselves in them. Patience devastates us with the truth that, in essence, when we fear another, we fear ourselves; we we distrust another we distrust ourselves; when we hurt another, we hurt ourselves." (Mark Nepo, *The Book of Awakening*, p. 224)

Truly, "they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

Whenever we see enemies becoming friends, forgiveness happening, fear being overcome by trust, the fruit of Patience is raining down upon us.

Kindness

A reminder flashed across the airways yesterday:

We live in a time when science is validating what humans have known throughout the ages: that compassion is not a luxury; it is a necessity for our well-being, resilience, and survival. (Roshi Joan Halifax)

Goodness

Our scouts, who are all about doing good deeds and serving in the community, did a great deed this weekend!

We know as a society, we are drowning in plastic, and the scouts are helping us and others in BV do something about that.

This just in!

We launched the reusable bag give-away at City Market today! Local Boy Scout Troop 67 is helping give-away free “gently used” reusable bags. Other youth organizations will be helping distribute in the future. It’s encouraging to see that about a fourth to a third of the shoppers are already carrying their own. And, the majority who see what we’re doing are very supportive.

Goodness in action, right here in our midst.

Faithfulness

Look around you. At the faces in this room. At the beautiful building and grounds we enjoy in this place and share with our community. Look at the faithfulness of each soul in this church family.

All week long, all summer long, faithful ones have been meeting, dialoguing, planning, maintaining, watering, mowing, repairing, up-building, supporting, paying the bills, administering the life of our church.

Gentleness

Gentleness rains when we “give it some grace.” To ourselves and others. When our neighbors or fellow-workers don’t do things quite like we’d like or as soon as we’d like, and we gently nudge each other forward for the good of all. When we offer a helping hand or support an idea or person. When we consider each other’s suggestions thoughtfully with a “can do” attitude, or ask “why not” when new ideas are proposed. I saw a lot of that this week in deliberations of the boards and committees.

Self-Control

This one happens best when we “practice the pause.” Take a breath and ponder the moment, the response, the reaction. When we consider carefully our words and actions in every situation and how they will be received by others.

II. WE NEED SOME RAIN DOWN HERE!

Besides the wet stuff out of the sky, we surely need all this spiritual rain too! These fruits of the spirit are raining down all around, and, like the brief showers we enjoyed this week, they need to come again and again and stay longer!

For, as I looked around and listened to what’s raining down, I also heard places of drought in our public and

communal life – where the fruits of the Spirit are not raining as thoroughly as they need to; as we need to.

We need more.

We need the rain of human kindness.

The rain of civility: open ears, eyes and hearts to what one another has to offer, share and suggest.

We need dialogue to rain down on our divisiveness; open circles of care and constructive ideas and problem-solving to rain onto our tendencies toward triangulation and wash them away.

We need rain – the watery, wet kind, *as well as* the pouring out of the Spirit kind: to water the earth, and the living creatures – ALL living creatures that God has made and declared *tov meod! VERY good!*

To rain down *love* and acceptance and equal rights on the earth and all the people that dwell therein.

We need rain to extinguish the fires—the kind that consume our beautiful trees, grasslands, homes and vistas –and the fires of hatred, mean-spirited actions and policies.

We need to ask ourselves—as hard as it is sometimes, to ask what is raining down upon us right now? From our communities? From our leaders?

Is it soothing, quenching, life-giving rain and a spirit that is loving? Or is it fuel for the fire? Liquid of another kind that keeps things burning, spreading pain

and damage? What kind of spirit is raining down upon us?

III. WHAT IS OUR PART?

And what is *our* part *in* that?

What kind of rain are we praying for?

What kind of rain are we dancing for?

What rain will *we* bring upon this place we find ourselves? Rain of the spirit? The fruits of the spirit?

Our words and actions rain down. They make an impact. Our support of actions and inactions rain down a message upon our fellow human beings.

We *are* part of the rain that we pray for.

We can't ask God to bring us rain if we aren't willing to be part of it.

We need rain. Thoughtful, kind-spirited rain.

Policies that protect our earth rather than imperil.

Words that encourage rather than criticize.

Responses that quench the dry and hurting places rather than rumors.

A spirit of coming around one another's hearts and ideas rather than reacting.

What kind of rain dance will you do?

What will you dance for?

How will you respond when the healing rains *do* come?

IV. CONCERN FOR OTHERS

I found it hard to rejoice when our cabin was first declared “out of danger” last week. Why? Because not very far away was a beautiful campground where some had come for many years and some even live year-round. Cora. It was their home – at least till last week when it was evacuated, as the Weston Pass fire was less than a mile away.

I had a hard time rejoicing when I knew Marge Dorfmeister’s brother might be in danger. Then, when I heard they (and their six dogs) were safely in Canon City, I knew the house and all their family treasures were right in the line of the fire and they might never see them again.

I couldn’t fully rejoice when I knew my dear friends from Guffey were made to leave their lovely home as well, and camp out at Lake George.

We are all in this together. And, more fires were popping up every day. So, once our cabin and family’s horses were known to be safe, we turned our focus in a wider spectrum.

I can see clearly now, the rain is gone!
Let’s give that a twist.
I can see clearly now, the rain is Come!
Let us see clearly now, that the rain has come.
And is coming! Here is the rainbow we’ve been praying for!

Let us rejoice in the gift, but know that it is a sacred trust, as is all of our beautiful creation.

We have learned much from these fires in our backyard. We have gained a new appreciation for our beautiful spot here in the mountains, for our neighbors, for our communities, for the very life our Creator has given us.

Let us hold that sacred trust near and dear to our hearts as we move into the next chapter together as God’s people on this earth.

Let us rain down waters and words of life to our fellow human beings – in *all* our deeds, plans, community considerations, collaborations and care.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control.

How I wish it would rain down. On me. On us. On our land, our hearts.

Creating God, Sustaining God, Redeeming God, Indwelling God.

Hear our prayer. You give us life in abundance. Let us sing our gratitude and praise.

1 Creating God, your fingers trace the bold designs of farthest space.
Let sun and moon and stars and light and what lies hidden praise your might.

2 Sustaining God, your hands uphold earth's mysteries known or yet untold.
Let water's fragile blend with air, enabling life, proclaim your care.

Amen.

"Shower The People"

"Shower the people you love with love,
show them the way that you feel.
Things are gonna work out fine if you only will do as I say,
just shower the people you love with love,
show them the way you feel.
Things are gonna be much better if you only will.

Send Your Living Waters

God who called us forth from the dust
And watered our lands with countless streams and great
rivers
We thank you for the garden you have set us to dwell in.

... And so, as of old, we turn again to the sky:
Send your living waters upon us
Sprinkle us again with your purifying rains
Make your mountains fill with dancing streams
Your valleys swell with splashing ponds
As fertile as the River Jordan

As renewing as the waters of baptism
As overflowing as the cup of salvation.

Feed all living things with your life-sustaining water
As you fill them with your grace.

And as we gaze upon this land that so thirsts for your
water

Let it remind us of all the thirsts in this world:

The thirst for justice

The thirst for peace

The thirst for opportunity

The thirst for reconciliation

The thirst for hope.

And when your blessings rain from the sky

As assuredly they will

And we kneel again at the pools and fountains

Teach us to cup our hands

And gently,

gracefully,

in solidarity

Turn first, and share with one another.

Credit: Edward Hoyt, CRS