

After the Sermon Hymn: *Stepping down to the congregation:*

Rev 22: 1-5 “**Living Water**” (09/25/2011)

- by Rev. Peter Dennebaum -

God’s peace with you!

It is a dramatic text. It is a prophetic text. It is a comforting text. It is a text full of hope, promise and confidence: ***The River of Life!***

Let us read together from the Book of Revelation, chapter 22, the verses 1-5:

*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the **leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations**. ³Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; ⁴they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.*

AMEN!

So – what do you think about this text? Any thoughts? Which part would you pick to start from??? ...

In front of us we see a river, symbolizing the river of life. The river of life curls through each single pew – also yours. You are part of the river. You sit in the river and you feel how the water swirls around your body. It is like sitting a Jacuzzi: Instead of jets, direct directed to your tense parts of the back, you sit with the back to the river current. You feel relieve. You feel comfortable and with relish you groan.

Living water flows. It does not need chlorine. A is really LIKE life and is life itself; it starts small, at a well. Water ruptures out of the deep earth. In a small rill it seeks its own way; laborious [la-**bo**-ries], but steady. The rill becomes a creek, the creek a river. And at the end the river ends in the ocean, where its water joins the waters of so many other rivers. It is like our own lives: We start small as a child, we grow until we are rivers in our best, our strongest years. In the end we all go back in the circulation of life.

What does this mean?

Our live is limited. It is hard to accept this. When we are young we don't think about it. But latest when our cholesterol data increase and we buy pants with wider waste hip seizes we realize: Now it gets in the second half of our life. This is the moment, when married start having affairs with 20year younger women. It is the moment, when we realize: Time is running! We feel: If we still want to accomplish

something, then we need to do it now! The vernacular [voernacuelar] calls this midlife crisis. A Psychoanalyst explained it to me once this way: Whenever you are in the beginning of your forties we change from re-active to active. We don't respond any more to our own family system, the way how we used to act within the relationships to our parents our siblings, our aunts and uncles, the grandparents. Now we start to go our own ways – we don't look back anymore. We look forward. The second part of our life, the last one here on earth starts.

What becomes then important? Peace with ourselves. We reassure our identity. We try to clarify our relationships. We speak with our parents - but now on the same level. We seek to make peace with them so that we can find our own one. Having become aware about the limitations of our life – according to time, energy and physical resources, we start to plan for the rest of our live.

What ever happens, one thing is for clear: On our deathbeds we don't feel sorry for what we ever did in our lifetime, but we feel sorry for where we NOT followed our dreams, wishes, needs. It is what we NOT answered, which we will regret. I remember that Last Sunday at Homecoming Sunday, during our Pot Luck time, Jim and I talked about the travelings we did in our twenties. In the second lifetime we again reach out. But this time we do it more concentrated, more consciously. It is not anymore so “identity exploring” and “ identity focused” like in the twenties – it searches more for fulfillment, inner satisfaction and peace. Who worked his whole life long hours for the

career, wants to see now the fruits of all the work. We change from being primarily student to primarily teacher. (I say “primarily” as people, who don’t go on learning until their last breath loose simply knowledge in this so fast moving time and are in danger to get stuck in their own world.)

Life is like a river: From the rill to a creek, from a creek to a river. Until we all unite again in the ocean - this catch basin [bai-sin] for our all souls.

Everything on earth happens in a cycle. The water of the river evaporates, forms clouds, condenses, rains down onto earth, drains away into the deepest stone or argil [ár-dschil] beds, where it reunites with the groundwater. And from there? From there again it explores its way to the surface [soer-fic], until it can burst through the earth crust. It becomes a rill, a creek, a river.

Life is a river.

Wherever we pollute within this cycle our environment we pollute ourselves. The carbon dioxide [dei-oxide] of the 40,000 aircrafts here in the US, responsible for more than half of the pollution caused by transportation, does not stay in the clouds. Together with the rain it gets into our groundwater and from here in our households, where we drink it. It gets on our fields, where still our corn grows and cattle eat the grass from. What ever we do to our world it comes back to us; A plastic bag needs 400 years to de-compose. If we follow the modern

seducers and propagandists [propa-**gán**-dists] of the modern Gods we might make help a boss looking better in the hierarchical company system or a billionaire a little wealthier – but are WE happy? ... I mean REALLY happy? What do we need to be happy? Have we found peace with ourselves? Are our relationships healthy? Do we have the right boundaries and therewith a healthier life? Do we have enough rest times for ourselves - and for our families?

Ecology is not for nature alone. There is also an ecology for us humans and our souls. The waste you found this morning in the pews is also symbol for the waste we carry with us in our souls – the pain, the hurt, the loneliness or excessive demands. We need to make sure that we clean up on regular basis. Like on the beach. Better would be even to make sure that waste does not get in our lives in the first place.

Do you ask yourself sometimes why you belong to this church, why you pledge and why you are so engaged here? Is it really only because you like each other? Or do you have a bigger vision? Do you have a vision for the world? Do you have a vision for the rills of the earth, the creeks, the rivers? Are you willing to fight? Are you willing to question? Are you willing to doubt? Are you willing to accept, that you need help, that you can't change the world for you and your children by yourself, but that this only can happen within the first global organization we had on earth: The church with all its global branches?

Churches are no ends in themselves. Churches serve God alone, no president, no party or social system. We are we. We are together. But only TOGETHER we can change something, can we fulfill God's call for us; It was Jesus' accomplishment to extend the calling to the WHOLE world. For a church in our times it is not enough anymore to be only one local charity organization among many others. This was never enough.

But like pretty much all other organizations we all run after the dynamics of the markets and our social developments. We barely can catch up. No wonder that we feel left behind: Without self-confidence no change; No self-confidence without love and faith. If we want to grow we need to grow as church towards and into the modern and globalized world with all its global issues. Pollution does not stop at our borders. A few multinational corporations control most of the food and consumer products. The idea of the market has become so in reality already sometime ago an illusion, surviving only in the mythology of free and open markets – which are in reality NOT free and NOT open, but whenever opportune, restricted, protected and divided among a few global players. The capitalism eats its own children. A man, whose name already makes many Americans shaking, predicted this development long time ago: Karl Marx.

When so many products meanwhile get produced in China it certainly influences our job market and our families: Factories here do close and salaries here get dumped with the argument of the international

competition. Labor Rights, Environmental Protection, Human Rights in general – we cannot escape anymore the globalization. And our children already grow up in one world, which becomes in these days a village.

We Christians need to catch up. A family church is nice, but to fill a church we need to seek for answers for us all in this world. The first step is to connect with our neighbor UCC churches. This is the reason, why it is so important for you as people of faith and as church to participate at the last October weekend at the Casting Your Nets Retreat in Syracuse. When I will be gone for a long time – the relationships you will build there will remain. Today I don't sell you a heating blanket. Today I sell you your own future ... for only \$150 per person.

It is interesting, that Jesus' disciples founded the first global movement. --- But that we got outdistanced in the last 150 years by the technological [tekno-ló-dschikal], economical and social developments. The spirits we called need to be domesticated. This is our job as people of faith.

As people of faith we live IN the world. In and out of faith we seek for answers. We know that there will not ONE single answer, but many – even among us. But the dialogue between us, the wider church and other groups in our world society is already part of the answer. We need to get out of the anonymity [ano-nue-miti] into relationships with

the wider church and through those also with national and international partners.

You know already that here is your call. Church Council last Thursday, looking at your activities, asserted already that Mission and Social Responsibility is your heart.

Life is like a river. The river runs through us. Living water. Maybe the day will come that you will allow a fountain or a small waterfall running in this church, reminding you with its soft splashing that we are all part of the living water.

Design your life. Allow yourself to be part of the Living Water. Design your church; It is yours. It is GOD, who calls. It is YOU, who is free to answer. Go – and take it on!

AMEN.