

Rivers of Faith

(Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church September 27th, 2020 for Season Of Creation – Rivers)

Rivers in my family life

In my father's family rivers figure significantly. In the floods in Gippsland in the 1930's they had to flee their lower lying land as the river in Trafalgar flooded. My uncle was a toddler and was saved from being swept away, when my grandfather threw him to my aunt, who had made it to the other side of the river.

As a child I have vivid images of catching my first fish at the old farm in Devondale after snagging a few logs. I also remember on the farm at Gellibrand the river that flowed through the farm and how it was swarming with eels, which my father would catch, and my grandmother would cook for breakfast, I can still see her with the frying pan on the old wood stove, I can still smell and taste those eels.

I used to get eczema and once when sitting in the hot pools at Mataranka known for their healing, near Katherine I remember being nipped all the time, turns out the small fish were actually healing my eczema.

I also recall standing or rather sinking in the Murray River near Robinvale, as I scattered my Uncle Shirtybert's ashes, where he had requested – ashes in one hand, service book in the other. I thought I heard him laugh as I scattered him into God, or at least the place where he found God.

Great Rivers in our world

There are many great rivers in the world – Nile, Amazon, Ganges or Murray. I am sure you can think of others you have known or visited.

Rivers in Bible

Rivers also feature in our story of faith.

A woman enslaved with her family in Egypt sees the Nile River as a place of safety for a young baby, and places him in a basket amongst the reeds. He is found by the daughter of the Pharaoh and called Moses.

Later that same Moses parts the sea and leads the people to freedom.

The river Euphrates was a pleasant place for the unhappy exiles to gather. Although they brought their harps, their grief was too strong and they could not sing as they remembered their homeland, they could only weep.

For the prophet Isaiah, the river was a symbol of the giftedness of God. For the prophet Amos, it was a symbol of hope, of justice.

The River Jordan for John and Jesus was a place of repentance, of turning toward God. As Jesus entered the waters there it became a place of solidarity as he shared in the same ritual as the ordinary people.

For John on the island of Patmos, he sees the river as a place of hope. The place of life, of fruitfulness, the place of God.

A River Meditation

This morning I want to invite you for the next 5 minutes or so to join me in a quiet meditation, an exercise in imagination. During this time, you might like to close your eyes or to look at the pictures on your screen. Make sure you are sitting comfortably and that you are muted.

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So, sitting comfortably join me on this journey. (5 mins)



- Slowly make your way down to the riverbank.



- Find a warm rock on which to sit.
- Take off your shoes or sandals.



- Gently dangle your feet and toes in the refreshing water.



- Feel the current swirling around your feet.



- See the sun shimmering on the water.
- Where is God?
- Can you feel the presence of God?



- Look at the reflection of the trees in the water, look at your own reflection.
- Is God reflected on the water?



- Can you hear the birds?

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- Can you hear the leaves rustling?



- Can you hear the silence?
- How do you feel?
- Give thanks
- Make your lament
- Name your hopes



- Slowly lift your feet from the water
- Bend down and cup your hands – let them fill with water
- Splash the water over your face
- Leave your rock



- Make your way back



Let's celebrate and give thanks for rivers. Places of danger, of safety, of freedom, of gift, of justice, of lament, of peace, of life and of hope. Amen.