

Student Work

4-22-2019

Watering Hope

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Recommended Citation

Kooiman, K. (2019). Watering Hope. Retrieved from https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/student_work/61

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in things

April 22, 2019

Watering Hope

Katie Kooiman

In the cross of Christ, we find the most profound tension of opposites: life and death.

And yet, although opposites, neither the life nor the death of Christ can be separated from the other. Just as we cannot comprehend the meaning of life—of anything—without its end, we cannot comprehend the impact of Christ's death without the supreme impact of his life.

In Christ's death, the cross evokes grotesque images and feelings of suffering, lament, despair as the perfect man breaks himself for humanity. And yet, when we consider the life of Christ and the example that he sets for us, we are given hope; hope for what our lives may look like when we seek to follow him, but more importantly, hope in the promise of eternal life through Christ's sacrifice. The only whole and perfect human laid aside his crown—broke himself—so that our splintered and broken selves may be made whole and full through his redemption and grace.

This truth is one that I have needed to remind myself of and come back to quite often, and I believe that it is especially appropriate when considering how we approach Easter and the resurrection of Christ with both lament and hope, realizing that hope cannot be separated from lament. Because Easter is the celebration and praise of Christ's resurrection (as well as our own resurrection through Christ), I wonder whether we leave behind our lament, focusing only on the hope and life of the cross. How then do

we hold this tension of life and death, hope and lament at the foot of the cross of Christ on Easter?

Being a student at Dordt, I am reminded of one of Aaron Baart's truths that he shared during a chapel that has stuck with me: "You can't take out of a tomb on Sunday what you didn't put in the grave on Friday." Essentially, our redemption is dependent on surrender. Easier said than done, right? In a posture of surrender to prepare for Easter, we take time (the many weeks of the Lenten season) "to put in the grave" our many sins, short-comings, and the things that we seek apart from Christ. This sacrifice is shown in all the things that people "give-up" for Lent: chocolate, Facebook, watching Netflix, which are all honest examples of habits that people want to change in their walk with Christ.

However, the often misrepresentation of Lent, in my opinion, is not that we would use that season for another opportunity to follow our culture's constant push of self-improvement for ourselves; rather, it is a time of self-reflection and self-denial to honor Christ's self-denial. And we, as those who believe in Christ's saving work on the cross, have him—the greatest Self-denier—working in our hearts to encourage us to seek his will and to consider others as more important than ourselves, which is a constant act of surrender. It is surrender not because we are ignoring what we should be putting in the grave to focus on someone else. Instead, it is surrender because we have already (to some capacity) put into the grave what we must; and for that reason, we are able to help and to serve others.

Within these beliefs of our redemption through Christ and his example of self-denial, there is still a constant and continual realization of the ways that we fall short of Christ. Yet, I want to return to a promise that is found in 2 Corinthians 5:1, which says: "For if we know the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands." This verse has worked in my heart throughout this past semester as I have been student-teaching away from home in Southern California. My hometown is quite close to Dordt, only 20 miles away from campus. This semester has been my first experience of being away from not only my parents but also the Midwestern, northwest Iowan culture that I have known my whole life. Stepping away from an area and being placed somewhere new has given me a new appreciation for both locations. For example, one aspect of California that I have (obviously) appreciated is the weather. I often find myself lounging under the gazebo in my host parent's backyard, admiring the palm trees and jasmine and abundance of life by thinking, "This is a place of never-ending spring!"—well, at least for someone from Iowa.

Connecting to the verse in 2 Corinthians, this feeling of “never-ending spring” relates to our desire to be part of living into the new body and dwelling that Christ has set for us. In this new body, I believe that we will live in ways that resemble this “never-ending spring”—constant newness and life and beauty—not just in the landscaping (like in California) but also in what we find within ourselves. Although I may not be living in California permanently, I have the anticipation of what is to come.

During my time in California, I have also prayed to find and feel a sense of “home” and belonging. And although I often seek the feeling of home in the people who surround me, I have been reminded during this time that I must keep Christ as my ultimate definition of home. As 2 Corinthians 5:1 says, we will be given a new dwelling—a new body and being—fully completed in Christ and not by those who surround me.

As we reflect on this Easter, we may not feel that we are in a time of “never-ending spring” or that we have a sense of home, as mentioned previously; however, may we continue to find within the homes of ourselves the weeds that should be placed in the grave and then water the hope of a life spent in never-ending spring with Christ.