

CREATION CARE MINISTRY

Thoughts from Saint Mark's Parishioner Doug Thorpe
August 17, 2021

Lake Powell –in Utah and Arizona -- is the topic for the *New Yorker* science writer Elizabeth Kolbert this week. Some people, she begins, consider it the most beautiful place on earth while others view it as an abomination. Why? Because it's not really a lake – depending on your definition of 'lake.' It's the creation of the United States Bureau of Reclamation which back in the early 1960's "erected a seven-hundred-and-ten-foot-tall concrete arch dam on the Colorado River." She's writing about this because the water levels in Lake Powell, like those in the adjacent Lake Mead, have fallen precipitously: in the last twenty years the levels at Lake Powell have dropped a hundred and forty feet. In the past year alone it's dropped fifty feet. This in turn is leading to cuts in water supply to the seven states that use the Colorado's water: California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado and Wyoming.

The story is also covered in today's *New York Times* but is relegated to page 13; most of the front section is taken up with news from the fall of the government in Afghanistan. But also buried in these Taliban articles is a paragraph from Tom Friedman's op ed: "According to a report published last year by the National Geographic, 'Afghanistan is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change, and one of the least equipped to handle what's to come'—including drought, flooding, avalanches, landslides, extreme weather and mass displacement."

Does not our faith teach us this truth? We are all connected. *It* is all connected: the economy. Politics. Racial and Gender Justice. The environment. And so on. Which means that as we work in one area, no matter how small, we work in them all.

We're one blessed body.

And so we carry on. Summer is with us for a few more days; it will be followed – mercifully– by another autumn. We will, God willing, live to see the leaves turn, the days grow shorter, the rains return. We will live to see a grandchild born.

God is good. Whatever comes down we have known what it means to love and to be loved. We know what it means to cherish, to be grateful.

No doubt about it, it's hard these days. So it's worth listening to the young Julien Baker, who recorded her song "Rejoice" when she was all of 20 years old, written out of what is clearly already a lifetime of pain:

But I think there's a God
And he hears either way
When I rejoice and complain . . .
And somebody's listening at night
With the ghosts of my friends
When I pray,
Asking "why did you let them leave
And then make me stay?"
Know my name and all of my hideous mistakes
But I rejoice, I rejoice.

And Julien Baker leads me farther back to W.H. Auden's concluding lines in his elegy to W.B. Yeats, written in 1939 as Europe was returning to the nightmare of war:

In the nightmare of the dark
All the dogs of Europe bark,
And the living nations wait,
Each sequestered in its hate;

Intellectual disgrace
Stares from every human face,
And the seas of pity lie
Locked and frozen in each eye.

Follow, poet, follow right
To the bottom of the night,
With your unconstraining voice
Still persuade us to rejoice.