

Jesus, Water and The Abyss...

11/3/18

I speak in the name of Jesus the Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

I have mentioned a film once or twice over the years, as a point of departure for a sermon... I seem to recall The Mission and Airport '75 as being two of the films I unpacked for a specific metaphor or point I wanted to make. The film I want to unpack for a brief moment this morning is not one of my Top Five. I was a little disappointed with the ending, which I felt was a little unrealistic... but there was a specific scene in this film that I have never ever forgotten. It is a scene of that encompasses so many emotions and feelings that it has never quite slipped my mind and I always knew that one day I would refer to it.

The film in question is entitled The Abyss and was released back in 1989. It was directed by James Cameron (think Titanic) and starred Ed Harris, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio and Michael Biehn. The film grossed \$90 million dollars and won an Academy Award for Best Visual Effects.

Briefly, the film concentrated around the attempted retrieval of a sunken submarine at very large depths. The US government makes use of a private nearby experimental underwater drilling platform as a base for the operation.

The scene in question involves a mini-submarine which is damaged underwater and has come to a standstill on the ocean floor... and is now leaking sea water at a rapid rate...

Inside the mini-submarine are two people. They are husband and wife but they are estranged and due to be divorced. (Think for a moment about all the conflicting emotions that this must involve) Both occupants are highly experienced and qualified in the industry. The wife, Dr Lindsay Brigman, designed the undersea platform and her husband, Virgil or "Bud" Brigman, is the foreman. Picture the scene for a moment... here is a married couple, who are now estranged, both highly qualified, stuck in a leaking mini-submarine... and here is the real catch... the couple quickly do a search of the mini-sub to

look for any available Scuba equipment (equipment that will allow the couple to swim out of the mini-sub and to the undersea platform and safety, which is a few hundred meters away) To their utter dismay, they find only ONE deep sea Scuba suit and breathing equipment. They are under pressure. The mini-sub is rapidly filling up with water, which is freezing and they have only one set of equipment to abandon the mini-sub with.

Being a gentleman and a husband, even though estranged, Ed immediately offers the breathing equipment to Lindsay, his wife. This seems the right thing to do. Lay down your life for your wife and the lady on board the mini-sub. Ed offers his life without hesitation or fear. He insists that she don the suit and breathing mask immediately...

What a situation to find yourself in... immediate decisions that affect life and death... what would you have done in this scenario?

Lindsay stays calm. She thinks fast. The sea water is now up to their waists. Lindsay says no. You are a man. You are physically stronger than me. You don the breathing equipment and then you will have a better chance of dragging me to the platform.

Ed thinks about this for a split second. He then realises that the distance is too long for Lindsay to hold her breath. He tells her that she will never make it.

Lindsay replies that he is correct. She will drown but due to the freezing temperature of the seawater, there is a very good chance that her body and brain will go into hyperthermia and if he can get her lifeless body back to the drilling platform fast enough, then he will have a chance of reviving her through resuscitation...

But and a very BIG but...Ed has to watch the woman he loves...drown in front of him...

The topic for today's sermon is part of an ongoing theme in the diocese, as we deal with the water crisis in the Western Cape. The topic for this Sunday is "Water as habitat". This is why I was immediately reminded of that particular scene in *The Abyss*. Both Lindsay and Ed found water as their habitat, in more ways than one.

Water is a resource here on Earth that many of us have, sadly taken for granted. Water, made up of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen, is an essential part of life as we know it.

Listen to these interesting facts:

- There is the same amount of water on Earth as there was when the Earth was formed. Therefore, it is highly likely that the water you drink today was once drunk by a dinosaur millions of years ago
- Nearly 97% of the Earth's water is salty or undrinkable. Another 2% is locked up in ice caps and poles. That only leaves 1% for all of humanity's needs
- Water regulates the Earth's temperature and is crucial for our bodies, as well. Water regulates temperature in our bodies, carries nutrients and oxygen to cells, cushions joints, protects organs and tissues and also carries waste
- 75% of the human brain is water. 75% of a living tree is also water
- A person can live for a month without food but only a week without water
- Water is part of a deeply connected system here on Earth. What we pour on the ground, ends up in our water
- Water expands by 9% when it freezes. Ice is also lighter than water, which is why it floats

Jesus knew that water played a very special part in our lives.

Think for a moment of the importance of baptism down the ages, some Christians even opting for baptism via full emersion in order to experience the idea of full cleansing.

Think for a moment how a priest always washes his or her hands before consecrating the host and the wine with the words, "Lord, wash away my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." Here the priest beseeches the Lord for cleansing, both physically and spiritually, before taking on the responsibility of presiding over the Eucharist.

Think for a moment how the Gospels describe the final death of Jesus on the cross with the soldier piercing the side of Jesus with his sword and 'water'

gushing forth from His body... the loss of water being symbolic of the loss of life in our Lord.

Think for a moment of the interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, when Jesus asked for some water to drink. The woman was shocked that she was even being spoken to, yet Jesus saw the sharing of this life giving drink as an opportunity to build bridges and restore a relationship between people. This is the healing power of water.

Think for a moment of the gift of asperges... when a priest blesses a body or coffin before burial, or when a priest blesses the followers of Christ during the beginning of a Lenten service in a traditional Mass. The blessed water bringing life, hope, forgiveness and love.

Think for a moment of Ephesians and the Psalms, where water is seen as symbols of God's word. Ephesians 5:26 reminds us, "... to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word."

Water is life. So too is Jesus Christ. They are both integral to our lives. They are both a crucial part of our habitat. They both bring life, offer to cleanse, purify, sustain life, cleanse our souls and bodies and quench our thirsts, both physically and spiritually.

I am reminded of the beautiful chorus based on a Psalm:

As the deer pants for the water

So my soul longs after you

You alone are my heart's desire

And I long to worship you...

Ultimately, we are reminded during this water crisis, that we are fallible human beings who need to look after the rich resources that God has given us on this planet. Our love for Jesus cannot and should not be separated from how we love and care for our planet.

Water is life...

Before I close off this morning, just a few threads I would like to pull out of The Abyss scene that I shared with you this morning...

Imagine for a moment that you are Lindsay about to drown... she has faith in her husband, Ed, to swim her lifeless body back to the undersea platform and return her to life via resuscitation.

Sound familiar?

What about when we die one day?

Will we have enough faith in Jesus, who is with us through our living and dying, to believe that He will honour His promise and return us to everlasting life?

Lindsay trusted Ed with her life.

Do we really trust Jesus with our life, as our mini-submarine fills up with sea water?

You may well be wondering what happened to Lindsay and Ed in the mini-submarine?

Well, Lindsay did drown in front of her husband's eyes. It is a scene I will never forget. Did he make it back to the underwater drilling platform with her body in time to resuscitate her? You will have to watch the film to find that out!

May God bless you this week as you reflect upon the life that both Jesus and water gives us on a daily basis.

Amen.