

'Poured Out' A sermon based on Joel 2:23-32; Psalm 65, and Luke 18:9-14 delivered at the First Congregational UCC of Onekama, Michigan on Sunday, October 26, 2025 by the Rev. Alison Andrea Young.

There is a Greek word, *kenosis*. This word means "an emptying," but like most words from other languages, once it is translated into English, it loses much of the fullness of its true meaning. The word has taken on a theological significance through the life and death of Jesus, however. It is said that *kenosis* describes the "emptying" that Jesus experienced when he humbled himself to take on human form. Emptying in this case, also implies the "pouring out" of Jesus' Spirit and then, in turn, the "filling up" of something.

When the prophet Joel spoke his words of hope to the people of Judah who had most recently experienced a plague of locusts, which Joel attributed to God's judgment on the people, sometime between 400 and 350 years before Christ, we can almost hear in Joel's words the words of Jesus as he broke bread and shared the cup with his disciples at the Last Supper. In Luke 22:20 we read that Jesus took the cup after supper saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." And when Peter speaks on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit, the very divine spirit that had also been in Jesus, was given to the people in Jerusalem as Jesus had promised, we hear coming from Peter's mouth these same words from Joel: "In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my spirit. . . ." (Acts 2:17-18) The very spirit of Jesus, in the loving act of *kenosis* is emptied out and we are the vessels which are filled by it! Whenever we celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion, we are reenacting this *kenosis* as a way of remembering, nurturing, and sending us forth to show Jesus' compassion in this world. We are called to "empty" ourselves of selfish desires, and to "pour ourselves out" as people of compassion.

Joyce Rupp, Catholic theologian, author, and spiritual retreat leader, has written a book

entitled The Cup of Our Life. This book contains a week-by-week spiritual disciple using the morning coffee (or tea!) cup as a symbol. Week V speaks to "The Cup of Compassion." In the Chapter for Day 5 of this section, Rupp tells an embarrassing story about herself—a time when she was so full of herself and her own needs that she could not see to pour herself out in compassion:

(read story)

Joyce Rupp, in this incident in her life, confesses that she is like the Pharisee standing apart to pray—He is so full of his own self-righteousness, his ritual importance, that he has no room no time for compassion for the tax collector or anyone else—indeed he has no room for the God, or the Holy Spirit—it is ALL about himself! The tax collector, on the other hand, lays himself bare and hopes against hope that the spirit of the living God will pour out to him—like the Psalmist says it will in Psalm 65: "To you all flesh shall come, when deeds of iniquity overwhelm us, you forgive our transgressions . . . You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness. The pastures of the wilderness overflow,. . ." God will pour out God's spirit of compassion on all who come to God—this is the promise!

There is a classic story told about a Zen master names Nan-in:

Read story—

If we are too full of ourselves, of our own needs, of our own ideas, of our own importance, of our own worries, then we cannot manage to "let compassion pour forth generously" as Joyce Rupp would remind us we are called to do through the model of Jesus' life!

As I did a graveside service for a man who died after a long bout with Alzheimer's, I was reminded of how we can learn from those who have, through no fault of their own, had to return to a childlike state—to them the words of the 5th and 6th verses of the 23rd Psalm have become a reality—

⁵ *You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.*

⁶ *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me*

*all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
my whole life long.”*

may it be so for all of us. Amen.