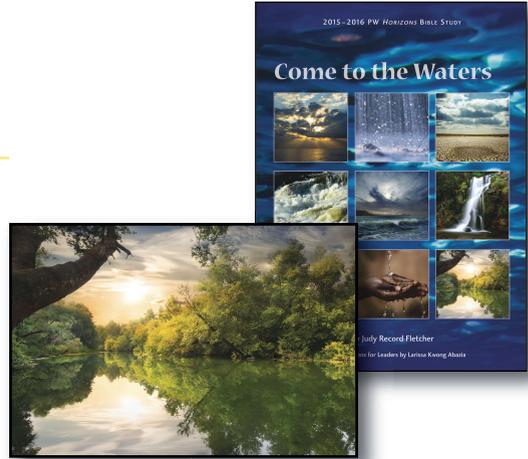


Hope-ly

BY IRENE PAK

For use with Lesson Nine of the
2015–2016 PW/*Horizons* Bible study,
Come to the Waters by Judy Record Fletcher



Scripture: Revelation 21–22

I grew up with two wonderful parents who moved to the United States from South Korea almost 40 years ago. They moved to the U.S. in their mid-20s, and Korean is still their primary language of communication with one another. My siblings and I all speak what I fondly like to call “Konglish”—Korean and English. We move between these two languages very fluidly. It probably sounds very confusing to anyone hearing us speak.

I honestly think my parents’ English is just fine, but I know they sometimes feel self-conscious about it. Comedienne Margaret Cho does many stand-up routines in which she imitates her Korean mother. I always laugh, but I am also always in awe of how carefully she must listen to be able to imitate so well. For me, I never hear my parents with an accent when they speak English. Instead, I think, I mentally auto-correct and translate what they are saying. I do not hear the incorrect grammar and wrong words. I understand what they’re saying; I get it.

It wasn’t until my parents got an email account and started texting me that I couldn’t help but notice their particular use of words and sentence structures. It made me really happy, actually, to see them write exactly how they speak. One of my favorite words to this day—that my parents coined, and I never discovered until they used it in an email—is how they say “hopefully.” They say and write, “hopely.”

I love this word, and I think it fits in well with this final lesson. The author writes that we are now living in an in-between time, “when we know the revelation of the Christ but not the revelation of the end times” (*Come to the Waters*, 73). The final revelation has not yet come, so this partial word—*hope-ly* seems to fit in well. God’s realm has not been revealed in full yet, but we live in an in-between space.

I think this in-between space relates well to many of us living in a multicultural, multiracial, multireligious world, which is why I must confess that I struggle a little bit with these passages from Revelation. As much as beautiful imagery pours out from it, the idea of hope coming from this vision of glory is difficult for me. In my limited human experience and limited vision, I cannot imagine a life or world without pain or struggle, where no tears will be shed. As much as this vision sounds like it is a good thing, as a “hope-ly” person, hope for me has always come from the struggle.

How do I live into hope when there is no more struggle or difficulties to overcome? Being intentional about living in the in-between spaces, in relationship with those who differ from me, requires sacrifice, compromise, truth-telling and struggle. But the beauty that flows out from that intentionality is worth its weight in gold . . . perhaps even streets of gold.

And along those pavements, I envision the river of the water of life that sustains different trees and different fruits. I love this imagery.

So, as we complete this water series, think about your life-giving water of hope. Where do you find it?

What sustains you for the journey in these days and in the days ahead?

How are you living in this in-between time? How do you desire to live in it?

What fruit have you been called to bear in this season of your life?

Hope-ly, we will always remember, through all the ups and downs of this life, that the gift of the water of life is always extended to us through God in Christ and Spirit. "Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift" (Rev. 22:17).

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