

The Gulf Coast

Seeking Rebirth and Resurrection

REMEMBERING THE ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY



Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.

So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” John 3:5-8

WHEN THE BODY OF CHRIST SUFFERS: THE GULF BEYOND RECOVERY

The impacts of the Oil Spill on the Gulf Coast were and will continue to be devastating. Not only is God’s Creation suffering from the oil and chemicals from the spill, but communities along the Gulf Coast are struggling as well. Jobs have been lost, and families are struggling to put food on the table as a direct result of the oil spill.

When the well in the Gulf of Mexico exploded it left an impact few could predict. Those most connected to and dependent on the Gulf—the shrimpers, fishermen, and those living a subsistence lifestyle—were left to contend with oil saturated water, impacting their ability to draw upon the bounty of the Gulf’s waters. The families, livelihoods, and cultures that have defined this region for centuries have been negatively impacted. The oil spill has challenged the spirit and the soul of the communities in

Grand Bayou, Biloxi, and elsewhere in the Gulf. They continue to struggle to reclaim the lost abundance. As Christians, we feel a particular concern for those in the Gulf. For when a part of the body of Christ suffers, each of us feels and knows the pain and challenge.

PRAYER FOR REBIRTH AND RECONCILIATION

Creating and Redeeming God,

You spoke and there was light and shaped the world out of nothingness.

From the ground of the Earth you formed people, trees, and animals to be part of Earth's community. The Gulf Oil Spill revealed our interconnectedness with all of your Creation. When the Gulf suffered so did we.

Let us reflect on impacts to your Creation and communities: The lost jobs, lost food, and lost lives.

Teach us to respond to the Gulf Oil Spill in a way that honors the glory of Creation—your Creation. Direct us toward actions that restore the Gulf, protect our communities, and prevent future crisis. Sustain those who are still suffering and comfort us as we continue to mourn. Through you we will learn how to better care for the world and each other.

In your name we pray. Amen.

PRAYER PETITIONS

(For use with Prayers for the People)

We pray for those who have suffered from the largest oil spill and we commit to never forget that this event harmed your Creation, the world you entrusted to our care.

We pray for the ability to put the care of your Creation above our own needs, recognizing we have struggled to be good stewards. Continue to teach us how to care for your world and to be stewards of your creation.

SERMON CONNECTIONS: FROM BURDENS TO A NEW CREATION

“Carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. —Galatians 6:2

Jesus taught us, through his own actions, to work together and support one another even when it means carrying another's or a community's burden. This is what Jesus himself practiced, dying on the cross to carry the burden of all of God's children for eternity. We are called to do the same. To bear each other's burdens.

The Gulf Coast, a year after the oil spill, continues to suffer from loss of income, decreased seafood production, and oil and chemical contamination. Communities around the Gulf are working hard to recover, but in the same way that Christ was reborn after carrying the burden of our sins, so too does the Gulf Coast seek rebirth and restoration. As part of the body of Christ, we are all called to share in this burden. We must all help the Gulf Coast and its communities rise from this tragedy through continued prayer and financial assistance, always remembering the challenges of our brothers and sisters.

We are called to join together as one community, one body of Christ, to acknowledge that community goes beyond our congregations and our neighborhoods. For when one part of the body of Christ suffers, so do all. Each of us is called to be part of the community that makes healing possible.

A STORY OF REBIRTH AND RESURRECTION—A GLIMMER OF HOPE

BISCO, a small faith-based organization base in Thibodaux, LA, has been at the center of Gulf Coast recovery from the day the oil spill started. They recently shared this story.

In February, we were on our way to deliver funds to a family in Louisiana that had been devastated by the oil spill. The support was from Ross University, a medical school in the West Indies. The day we were preparing to take the check to one of the three families that would be receiving assistance, we learned that one of the family members had found work and was now employed after looking for more than a year. Instead of accepting the check, even though he and his family certainly continue to need financial help, they elected to give it to a family who was not as fortunate—of which there are many in Southern Louisiana. Although they were still in need, they elected to share their blessings with others—helping families put food on the table and hopefully a roof over their head.

This story is a reflection of the attitude here in Louisiana. Although we are struggling to get to our feet, we have not forgotten about our brothers and sisters, our neighbors, our friends. The Gulf of Mexico and communities in the coast will be reborn as the community and family that God intended.



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