

Sermon: The Sacredness of Creation
Earth Sunday

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Job 38:1-11, 16-18; 1 Timothy 6:7-10, 17-19, Ps. 104:25-35, Luke 12:13-21

Today is Earth Sunday here at Emmanuel. We have taken a diversion from our regular lectionary and with the bishop's enthusiastic permission, we are using the readings from what the church calls "Rogation Days". In England Rogation days were associated with the blessing of the fields at planting. The vicar 'beat the bounds' of the parish, processing around the fields reciting psalms and the litany. In the United States these days have been associated with rural life and with agriculture and fishing. (Don Armentrout's *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*, Church Publishing, p.448)

Today you may notice that all of our readings, our hymns, and our prayers of the people are focused on the natural world that God has created, and our relationship with it. In today's reading from Job, the Lord answers Job out of the whirlwind, "Who is it that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" And the Lord proceeds to question him in a way that would humble just about anyone. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me if you have understanding." "...who laid its cornerstone when the stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out of the womb? – when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed bounds for it...Declare if you know all this."

The listener is left with a profound sense of awe and humility. The Psalm, too, points to the vast and intricate creative power of the Creator, from the smallest to the greatest living things. Our Timothy and Luke readings warn us of harmful desires and the danger of greed, our temptation to exploit and to acquire material riches, to store up treasures for ourselves, rather than to be rich toward God.

All of these readings point to the sacredness of God's created order and our need to be in right relationship with it. We are called to be humble stewards, called to pay attention to our environment, and called to perceive the gift of creation through the correct lens, which is the divine lens.

Thirteenth century theologian and mystic Meister Eckhart wrote:

Apprehend God in all things,

For God is in all things.

For every creature is full of God

And is a book about God.

Every creature is a word of God.

If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature -even a caterpillar—

I would never have to prepare another sermon

So full of God is every creature.

(Source: Earth Prayers from around the World)

Eckhart seems to understand the connected nature of God's creation, and to be humbly filled with wonder and awe, and to perceive it rightly. So, how do *we* acquire the ability to perceive

our creation rightly, and to live into right relationship with it? How do *we* arrive at the place of awe and humility that God seems to be inviting us into through the Scripture?

In a recent article in the Washington Post, crop scientist Sarah Taber (WP, 3/10/19, p.B1) writes about food waste in this country. She says that the vast majority of food waste, more than 80%, is generated by homes and consumer-facing businesses. She talks about how if we are to reduce our food waste, we can begin by simply not buying so much food! So I wonder if we as followers of Jesus can take a good look at our own habits over the next 50 days and see what we are willing to adjust, what we are willing to change, not because someone is telling us to but because it might be a way of caring for God's creation. And if we see all that has been given us through a lens of awe and humility, with an understanding that all of creation is sacred, perhaps little by little we can change our little corner of the world and send out a ripple of love.

You have as an insert in your bulletin, "50 Ways to reduce Waste in 50 days" (Not 50 ways to reduce your W-A-I-S-T. This is not a diet plan! ☺) The full title is "Great 50 Days Challenge 2019" While we are not beginning on Easter Day exactly, this is a good Easter season exercise; you know that there are 50 days to the Easter season which ends on Pentecost, which is mid-June this year. Our member Kristin Holbrook came up with this list and the church is offering it to you as a way to consider how to be less wasteful and more appreciative of our God-given resources. Many of us are already taking steps to care for our environment and to be more mindful of being good stewards, and this document can help us go deeper in our commitment to caring for God's creation.

Sometimes it takes a while for us to be aware of the ways we can improve our efforts. My father was the first person I ever remember really paying attention to the natural environment. He loved watching birds and other wildlife. Once my husband said to my dad, "Martin, I think I see a red-necked hummingbird." And my father gently said, "Uh, I think that would be a ruby throated hummingbird!" My somewhat enlightened dad often took our family camping, canoeing and hiking, and encouraged us to look, really look, at the world around us. Well, this same father was also a chain smoker and often threw his cigarette butts right on the ground. Dad, really! We all have things to learn, even the somewhat enlightened. We all have work to do in order that our actions can become congruent with God's values.

May God give us a new lens to see through, that we might grow in awareness in the sacredness of all creation. May we find ourselves bowled over by the intricate and vast creativity of God. And may our awe and wonder, humility and love spur us on to greater action for the healing of our planet and beyond.
Amen.