

Reflection on the Word: September 9, 2018
Genesis 1:1-28, 31; Psalm 33; John 1:1-9, 14

Summer provides a wonderful opportunity for connection with the wonder of God's world. Warm temperatures, bright colours, refreshing waters, gentle breezes call us to bask in God's gift of life and beauty in nature. And so, as we leave behind vacation time and look ahead to the fall season, we reflect on the earth, our Home, and the biblical mandate which is ours to care for it.

According to the witness of scripture, everything we have – life, and the means of life, comes to us as gift. This is the ground of our worship. The beauty and harmony of God's creation is, for all cultures, a source of human wellbeing, spiritual nourishment, and joy. Looking around us, we echo the words of the creation story: "And God saw that it was good!"

Have you noticed that in the biblical story of creation, the next day builds on the one before? There is order and connection. And each day is also good in and of itself. It's not good based on the one before or after. It is not good because it's leading up to the creation of human beings. It is good because that day is God's and fully lives into what God created it to be.

Often we think of humans as the ultimate creation ... the most important, the best, the far superior ... but in reality all of that which God has created is declared good and has value and meaning and purpose and ought to be cared for and appreciated.

As people, we find delight in God's world in a rich variety of ways: through sunsets, landscapes, the night sky, looking at birds, insects or flowers; walking the shore line, eating fresh vegetables pulled from earth's garden, and so on.

But at the same time, we acknowledge that there are many threats to the well-being of the planet, and the beauty and harmony of God's creation. There are so many ways in which we are exceeding 'planetary boundaries'... such as climate change; clear cutting and overuse of the land; depletion of fresh water supplies; the spraying and dumping of toxic chemicals, aerosols and other pollutants; plastics in the oceans; a growing hole in the ozone layer. And when we exceed planetary boundaries, it not only effects the land and sea and air, it also effects the living beings that inhabit the earth – plants and trees, animals, fish and birds, and fellow humans.

Modern day scientists are ringing warning bells and calling us to act now in taking better care of our planet home, to reduce waste and emissions and the release of pollutants, to care for the earth and all that has life on it.

It may be helpful to ask ourselves how we can love the Creator without loving the creation and how we can love our neighbors (current neighbors and future generations of neighbors) without seeking to protect our neighbors' food supply, air supply, and water supply.

We cannot give lip service to caring for creation. We have to do it as a response to loving God, and we must do it with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. In the creation story, God gives the humans command over all that He has created – to govern it, to tend it, to be good stewards of God's gift.

And yet, how many indigenous communities in our own country, still are without water fit to drink? How many farmers in Guatemala and other parts of the world have been pushed off their land or had their waterways poisoned because of goldmining or manufacturing by multinationals where the value is profit, not environmental stewardship? How many homes have been lost to landslides from indiscriminate cutting of forests? How many fish have been killed by pollutants or by the injection of particles from the growing mound of plastics in our waters?

Scripture reminds us that God looked at all of creation and called it good. Everything comes alive with God's every word and is infused with God's ongoing presence. All creation bears some part of the *image of God*.

We are reminded, also, over and over again, that God's will is for harmony and justice. This justice applies to communities already suffering the devastating consequences of climate change, to future generations, and to all other creatures.

We are those who follow the teachings of Jesus; One who embodied God's love for us and taught us what it means to live in God's way of love, peace, harmony, and shalom. And we need to remember that loving our neighbor extends to all that God has created, not just the people next door.

Loving our neighbor requires us to reduce our consumption of energy, to ensure the sustainability of the land for food production, to maintain ecosystems and habitats for wildlife, to reduce, re-use and recycle ... all for the sake of Christ who suffers with those who suffer. We are called to live simply and sustainably so that we might contribute to the flourishing of human life and to the care of this beautiful home we call Earth. What we do, as individuals, as corporations, as whole nations, matters – because the well-being of all creation matters to God.

It's been said: "Each aspect of our life is God-breathed...the day, the night, the land, the water, work and rest, life and death are all intermingled and interdependent. We must be careful to care for each aspect." And so, with that in mind, I invite you to reflect on the images which will be projected on the screen, as I offer the words of a prayer which call us to renewed

respect for the gift of all that God has created.

How wonderful, O Lord, are the works of your hands! The heavens declare your glory;

the arch of sky displays your handiwork.

In your love you have given us the power to behold the beauty of your world robed in all its splendor.

The sun and the stars,

the valleys and hills, the rivers and lakes all disclose your presence.

The roaring breakers of the seas tell of your awesome might;

the beasts of the field and the birds of the air speak of your wondrous will.

In your goodness you have made us able to hear the music of the world.

You are in our midst. A divine voice sings through all creation. Amen.