

**Genesis 1 and Colossians 1.15-20**  
**Creation Sunday April 19, 2009**  
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**I. God**

**In the beginning God. Everything begins with God.**

In the beginning, God created, and over the vast array of wonders, God pronounced it all good, **very good**. Our original text - the one from which we take our cues about living rightly on the earth - tells us that in this wondrous community of creation, humanity is given the singular role of caring for all living things. We call this *stewardship of the earth* and it is embedded in our tradition from the very beginning of time. We believe that all of creation has its origin in God's bounteous creative desire to be in communion with humanity. All things belong to God. Our original vocation was to be good caretakers, who managed wisely the resources of the earth so that all living things may flourish.

I know that you know these things, but given how deeply we have failed our original vocation it bears repeating. Just how deeply we have we have failed our vocation to good stewards within this community of creations perhaps depends upon whom you speak to or what you read.

Our Brief Statement of Faith says that the Spirit gives us the courage to listen to the voices of those who have long been silenced. When you listen to people living at the bottom of a mountain, whose top has literally been sheared off to extract coal, one can't *simply* turn away from the wreckage of human lives that occurs as a consequence of practices that promise to bring more coal for more consumption. And not only is human life wrecked by this practice whose sole purpose is to fuel more consumption; streams are polluted beyond any use, trees are uprooted, the land is rendered unusable. It's true that jobs are maintained by a practice that devastates the land. But, in the end there will be nothing sustainable, not even the jobs because the mountains will be gone and the coal along with them. Good stewardship that fosters sustainable living for all creation requires better choices and less consumption.

To whom we listen is a choice we make.

The Genesis story--which is our story--claims that the whole creation is very good, because it is **God's** creation. It's not our creation, never has been, nor will it ever be. It is God's creation--all the wonder, beauty and terrible complexity of it bear the holiness of God. Within this community of creation, all things have their proper place, including human beings whose primary purpose is to tend the community, be stewards of this marvelous community teeming with life.

Unfortunately, we can't have conversation with the creatures of the earth. Yet, we can imagine what they might say to us who have been called to be caretakers of the community to which we all belong together. Sadly, we can no longer hear the assessment of the song birds, who are no longer singing, about our record of stewardship. How would they judge our record of doing what God commanded of us in the beginning?

Or, take the now famous polar bear who inhabits the Arctic Sea. I read the other day that "Global warming is doing a number on Arctic Sea ice." The ice is melting at an alarming rate and has been for several years. "A 2007 report from the U.S. Global Geological Survey revealed that a melting of Arctic ice caused by global warming would wipe out two-thirds of the world's polar bear population, estimated at 20,000 to 25,000, and all of Alaska's estimated 4,7000 polar bears, by 2050." (The Washington Post. April 9, 2009) One could dismiss such data as either nonsense or of no consequences because it doesn't affect anyone outside the Arctic Sea. But those who have a vocation to be stewards of all creation, and listen to the voices of those long silenced, can't easily dismiss such warning. We are called to listen.

Some Orthodox theologians say that Hebrew word in Genesis for *good*, is more accurately translated as *beautiful*. I like that. When all is done, God saw that it was *beautiful*.

John Calvin, whose 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary we are celebrating was fond of saying, "the world is God's theater of glory," and added that we should regularly witness the wonders of God. He taught that everything - **everything** - depended upon God's providential care. Commenting on Psalm 104 Calvin wrote, "In his pure grace and generosity, God does not just give what we need to live but is fundamentally generous and

requires no external request to feed the animals his kindness."

The Apostle Paul makes an even more breath-taking claim. "All things," says Paul in his letter to the Colossians, "have been created through Christ and for Christ who is the image of God and, **in Christ all things find their coherence.**"

The living Christ is the beginning and the goal of all creation. Creation is not only a physical world, but a living sacred creation. As one scholar put it, Creation is going somewhere: toward the goal of a perfected community, toward the reconciliation of all people to God, the transformation of human life and a renewed cosmos.

## **II. Confession**

We have failed to affirm consistently by word and action what our scriptures claim is the sacredness of creation. Our comprehensive failure has led to disastrous results. I certainly include myself in that failure. The scriptures by which we live assign us the role of stewards of creation - God's assigned caretakers, tenders of this sacred beauty - and we have neither cared for the earth, nor tended the beauty.

We have ignored the consequences of our actions and the consequences of our government's long history of neglect thereby assigning the disaster to future generations and especially the poor. But it will not go on forever. It will not do simply say, "Go Green" and then go on living the same.

The Apostle Paul said it this way: the wages of sin is death. Our sin - the failure to be faithful stewards of God's gifts - may be the death of all creation.

To say anything less is to be dishonest. But to stop there is foolish.

## **III. Commitment**

Our role is to live into this gracious gospel and in the power of the resurrection practice good stewardship of creation.

I'll ask the same question that I have asked each year. What if we, as a congregation, agreed that being a faithful

Christian involves caring for God's creation precisely because it is **God's** creation? What if we decided to Go Green, not only because the planet is burning up, but in gratitude to God and for the sake of generations to come?

Would you support efforts to transform our buildings? Solar panels and other green devices? Would you work for policies that match a stewardship of creation?

The damage has been done. If we are to avoid greater ecological disaster, I believe a total reorientation of our ways of thinking and acting is necessary.

#### **IV. Benediction**

*At the end of the day  
when we have done all that we can;  
loved all creation well  
labored faithfully for the things that matter most,  
then we may rest in the gracious mercy of God  
in whom we live and move and have our being.*

**In the name of the Creator, the Sustainer and the Redeemer;  
the Great Trinity of Love. Amen.**