

Creation Sunday April 20, 2008
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Scripture Texts: Genesis 1 and Colossians 1.15-19

I. Gratitude

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs--
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

The world is charged with the grandeur of God, so said the poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins. He's right, of course. Don't we all delight in the sight of dolphins leaping from the ocean covered with diamonds of shimmering sunlight? Just imagine for a moment the world without the call of loons, the songs of whales, the barking of seals, the yellow bellied sapsucker drumming on a tree, the cardinal persistently singing you awake before the dawn's first light or the steady croaking bass of the bullfrog down by the pond.

The world *is* charged with the grandeur of God.

The red winged blackbird sitting on fence. The indigo bunting – so blue – singing atop the tree. The red throated humming bird with its tiny beak delicately sipping nectar from the flower. Let us not forget the honey bees and the amazing work they do! These are things that makes the heart sing with gratitude.

The world is *charged* with the grandeur of God. It is as Genesis said so long ago.

Yet, we who live east of Eden's garden have not tended the earth well. We are ever so slowly coming to understand is that the wonders we enjoy may not be around for future generations, not to mention creation itself. For some of us, maybe all of us, this is very **old** news. We have heard it our whole lives. **What more is there to say that we have not already heard?**

Comprising over 70% of the Earth's surface, water is undoubtedly the most precious natural resource that exists on our planet. Without the seemingly invaluable compound comprised of hydrogen and oxygen, life on Earth would be non-existent: it is essential for everything on our

planet to grow and prosper.

In the United States today, over 40% of the rivers are too polluted for swimming, fishing or aquatic life. The same is true for 46% percent of our lakes. 1.2 trillion gallons of untreated sewage, storm water, and industrial waste are discharged into US waters annually.

From water to dirt. The earth is literally loosing its skin. Scientists believe topsoil loss due to harmful agricultural practices is just as great a danger as the water concerns. There's more. The rainforests are vanishing and with them animals and plants, some of which are crucial for medicine.

And so on.

I will not continue with a litany of what is going on because you know it even if you don't know all the details. You know enough, and I haven't even mentioned the current hot topic of climate change. Soren Kierkegaard once said of the Christian faith, we do not lack information, something else is needed. The same could be said about Christian stewardship of God's creation.

The Genesis story claims that the whole creation is good, 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.

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."

What on earth does this mean? Surely it means at least this, that the living Christ is the beginning and the goal of all creation. Creation is not only a physical world, but a living sacred creation. Creation is going somewhere: toward the goal of a perfected community, toward the transformation of relationships of human beings to each other and to God, toward a renewed cosmos. (Francis Meyer-Thompson)

II Confession

The world is charged with the grandeur of God. We know this. We do not lack information, something else is needed. What is it that will stir us up to care more carefully for the gifts of God's good creation? What will it take to forsake the ways that lead to death to the planet? Knowing that chemicals are endangering our water supply, what will it take to forswear the use of them on our lawns? Knowing that the use of Compact Fluorescent Lightbulbs reduce pollution and save energy, what will it take for each of us to replace all our light bulbs, not just for our sake, but for the sake of God's good creation? Just what will it take for us to be humble, wise stewards of God's creation?

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.
But, to stop there leads only to despair.

III Commitment

The hope of the Christian faith is that God is at work within us to accomplish all that is good. Our role is to live into this gracious gospel and in the power of the resurrection practice good stewardship of creation. I believe we can only take the actions necessary if we open our lives to the Holy Spirit and seek to fulfill our sacred obligations as the stewards of God's goodness.

The congregation where I was ordained as an elder and later sent to seminary, just refitted there sanctuary and education building with solar panels in their ongoing effort to be better stewards.

What if our congregation did the same with our buildings?

What if:

- 1. We replaced *all* light bulbs with CFLs?**
- 2. Recycled *all* paper products including the bulletins,**
- 3. Dropped the use of *all* styrofoam products?**

After all, the stewardship ministry has been encouraging us to be more green, more responsible stewards of our resources.

Could we agree that being a faithful Christian involves caring for creation precisely because it is belongs to God? What if Saint Mark really 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?

4. Why not make, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle real spiritual practices, not just slogans, in our lives and in this community of faith

What do you say? Today each of you has a commitment card to complete. What will you do? Put on this card precisely what you plan to do this year as an act of stewardship of creation. We will compile these actions into a brochure for the whole congregation to keep one another accountable.

These are very small steps. The damage has been done. It may well be too late. But whether it is or not, the task remains to be faithful stewards and do the small things we can every day. **It is never too late to do what is right.**

When you have done what you can, remember:
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.

Amen.