

Today is celebration of creation Sunday, the follow up to Earth Day. It's a day we have set aside to not only celebrate creation but to thank God for the gift of a place to live. Not only did God give us a place to live but he charged us to care for creation, to be good stewards of creation. I know when we think about climate change, we may scoff but ask the farmers in Zimbabwe and they will tell you it is real. We may think about emissions of fossil fuels and the damage they have done to our atmosphere. How about soiled water, air pollution, and urban food deserts. These are environmental crisis that face the Earth. It is easy to be pessimistic. Yet God calls us to be a God of hope. God calls us to delight in our creation. If we are going to take this seriously, we need to fall in love with what God has called Good.

In the reading from Job this morning God asked Job if he had walked into the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep. We have a large body of water close to us so we sometimes take for granted the presence of water, but when I lived in Denver I would see a lake on the map, take the drive just hoping that it would be a little bigger than a pond, and always be disappointed. Let's think bigger: The ocean. Have you seen it? I've been blessed to see the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. They stretch on forever in their endless blue green mysterious beauty. The oceans and seas were once considered a place of danger, filled with untamed beasts and deadly storms. Yet, the Red Sea is where Moses led the Israelites as they crossed out of Egypt, being given a second chance to begin again. And Jesus uses images of water throughout his stories.

Water, oceans, seas, these are places where we are called to go deep to discern what it is that God is calling us to do. Ask yourself, "Where is God calling me to follow?" Consider the story of the fishermen out on the Sea of Galilee. They have fished all night yet have nothing to show for it; their nets came up empty. But Jesus tells them to go back out and throw their nets off the other side of the boat. Their nets come up so full they are breaking. The sea is filled with reminders of God's abundance. God is at work, even when we can't see it.

Peter sees the overflowing nets and is overwhelmed, he confesses, "I am a sinner." When surrounded by God's abundance and the glory of nature, Peter is aware of his humanity. How often have we looked at God's creation and thought, "This is amazing"? Jesus didn't judge Peter, he told him to not be afraid and to follow. The sea is a reminder of God's creation and Jesus is calling us to follow him.

Now let's move from the sea to dry land and open our ears to listen for God's voice in creation. I can remember one day a long time ago taking a drive with no purpose and no destination in sight. God led me to Heart's Content, a nature preserve located in the Allegheny National Forest in Warren County. It is a rare old-growth forest with white pine. I remember walking through the forest, being completely in awe of the natural growth of trees and fauna. My heart was filled with the beauty of God's glory. It was a wonder to behold.

Barbara Brown Taylor, a Christian author and preacher once said it is not the "believing parts" of Christianity that drew her deep into her faith, but the beholding parts. "Behold, I bring you good news of great joy." "Behold the Lamb of God." "Behold I stand at the door and knock." These mysteries of the faith are what drew her deep into her Christian faith.

And, if you take a walk, you can behold the good works of God. You can let the mysteries seize your heart. As you walk pay close attention. You may discover what has been missing from your life for a very long time. Pay attention and discover God's voice calling out to

you ---perhaps for the first time, or for the first time in a very long time. Take a hike and listen for the song of creation as it beats out the notes of God's grace.

Have you ever noticed there are two stories of creation in Genesis? And Psalm 104 is another. Most of us know the poem from the first book of Genesis. In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void..." the actions of God dominate this account. Creation is orderly and specific. In this account, God blesses men and women and says to them "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

Genesis 2:4-15 tells another story. There is just one day, not seven. God created the world and humans all on the same day. God reaches down into the soil of creation like a potter reaching for clay. God takes this soil and beathes life into the human. Out of this fertile soil God has made *adam*, the man. We have the connection to the soil. We are entrusted to take care of this planet, to live in connection and relationship to all of creation. Our actions in the world should reflect who God calls us to be. Our lives and our actions should be aligned with the music of God's creation. This is what God calls us to do: to move forward in joy, to pay attention to the song of creation. Let the beauty of God's creation fill you with joy --- and remember the need to stay in connection to that creation.

What about storms? There are some people who love a good thunderstorm, and there are others who run for cover at the first drop of rain. The novel I'm reading right now ironically has a woman who loves thunderstorms caught up in a flood caused by a tornado. Storms are scary and unsettling. And it seems as though the wildness of nature is becoming wilder.

In scripture storms are both signs of danger and reminders of God's gracious presence and power. Storms demonstrate that God has control over everything. Through storms we rediscover our connection to nature, and we hear the wisdom of God's redemption. At first, Psalm 29 may sound a bit like scriptural weather report. Listen to the verbs: "God's glory thunders over mighty waters; Yahweh's voice breaks the cedars; the voice of Yahweh flashes forth flames of fire." The Psalm continues: God's voice shakes the wilderness, shakes Kadesh. When God speaks, the oaks whirl ; it strips bare the forests. Then comes the response? "And in his temple all say, "Glory!" (Psalm 29:5-9). The Psalmist captures the mysteries of God in poetry. As the psalmist describes, God is never far from us in paths of danger.

Some people try to associate the storms of the world with God's punishment for sin. But what we hear in the words of scripture is a word about the wisdom of God that redeems our lives, a wisdom that stays with us, a presence that remains even as storms invade. Perhaps this is a way for us to celebrate God's creation. It is a reminder, in the words of St Teresa of Avila that "if we learn to love the earth, we will find labyrinths, gardens, fountains, and precious jewels. A whole new world will open itself to us. We will discover what it means to be truly alive."

Dive into the ocean deeps, take a walk in God's creation and in the raging storm be still. Be still. As storms rage around and within, discover the presence of God that calms the sea and restrains the overwhelming chaos. Be still: even during seasons of change in your lives, times when the dark storm clouds drench your spirits. Be still, and discover the promise of God that evokes wonder, praise, and trust, be still, so that in the face of crisis you may discern God's wisdom, God's peace, God's glory.

As we celebrate creation, we're led to see possibilities within God's creation we never expected or imagined we would find. We're led to a deeper communion with creation, better equipped to praise God, and better empowered to discern God's ecological wisdom.

When we dove deep into the sea, we were able to see the beauty of God's creation in our oceans, we were invited to take a walk and listen for the song of creation in the chirping of birds and the movement of the animals. In the face of storms God calls us to be still, and we sense God's protection. Lift up your heads! See the glory of God. Look at the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars of night. It is clear that humans are called to reflect on their deep calling as stewards of our earthly home. Lift up your heads, and see the gift God has given us.

All glory be to God.