

9/30/2018

## “Blessing All Creatures”

Scripture: (Genesis 1 & 2); Romans 8:18-21; Mark 16:15

Series: Season of Creation

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**Jesus sent his followers to proclaim his good news to all of creation, for all of creation longs for full redemption -- when God’s children will live in God’s true image and way.**

As we come to the conclusion of our sermon series this month on the Season of Creation, we again acknowledge our Creator and Heavenly Parent from whom all things came into existence and called them good. We look to the One who provides protection and care and calls us to do the same. We are not afraid to consider and acknowledge the contributions made by science, as well as its limitations, in helping us understand the mysteries of physical existence. And, we are grateful for the variety, reliance and fruitfulness of creation, including ourselves.

**So today, let us share in God’s blessing of all of creation, including humankind, by sending his Son Jesus, the incarnate Word of God. He was sent to most perfectly reveal God’s purpose and Way of true and everlasting life!**

And, just as Jesus died once and for all for the sins of all humanity, we who believe and have accepted that free gift of salvation are called to life in faith. We are to share that good news with others. I also believe that when we realize that gift and acknowledge God’s love for all God’s creatures, we desire to express it in our thoughts and actions.

† **Jesus sent his followers, including us, to “preach the good news” to all of creation**

As found in Mark’s account, following his resurrection, after appearing to his eleven remaining closest disciples, Jesus said to them, **“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”** (Mark 16:15 NIV)

Although these words do not appear in the earliest gospel manuscripts and some of the other ancient witnesses, it is interesting that Jesus may likely have used these very words. After all, as I have said before, Jesus often alluded to creation as bearing witness to his coming and purpose on earth. And, often, he used nature as a metaphor for his teaching and truth.

In speaking of the fulfillment of Jesus’ final coming in glory, along with the children of God in heaven, the Apostle Paul later writes to those Christians in Rome who are suffering persecution. He writes . . .

*“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to*

*decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.” (Romans 8:18-21 NIV)*

Wow! What a powerful vision of the fulfillment of God’s plan for all of creation. So, even creation waits with yearning and expectation of the time when all will be renewed and not subject to decay or destruction.

**But, the good news for us, and all of creation, is that we don’t have to wait for that day. In fact, Jesus tells us that we need to be doing, and not just waiting.** That applies not just to sharing the good news with others, but also in making a difference by our stewardship of creation.

We are already redeemed by the blood of the Pascal Lamb of God, Jesus. Animal sacrifices to God are no longer needed. Indeed, we can live in relationship to creation as God first intended.

To paraphrase one writer . . . The creation longs for the day when the people of God are restored to being the image bearers of God who exercise proper power, as first envisioned in Genesis 1. Part of growing in justification and sanctification is learning to exercise that power or responsibility now. By doing so, we foreshadow and give witness to what the fullness of the kingdom of God will look like when it comes in final glory.

“Because of God’s ongoing work of redeeming the world, through Christian stewardship, we help in a small way to release creation from its groanings (Romans 8:12-17)”. (Discipleship Ministries UMC)

As John Wesley preached,

“It may enlarge our hearts towards those poor creatures to reflect that, as vile as they appear in our eyes, not one of them is forgotten in the sight of our Father which is in heaven. Through all the vanity to which they are now subjected, let us look to what God hath in store for them.” (Wesley, “Sermon 60, The General Deliverance,” 449, based on Romans 8:19-22)

### † **We can bring blessings to all creatures and creation now**

As I’ve lived and grown in relationship with God and other persons, I believe I’ve come a long way. I can say that most of this is from God’s grace, by learning from Jesus and others, and by the Holy Spirit. Some of that learning has come from experiences and relationships with animals and other creation. I could tell you some significant experiences and lessons along the way, as I probably have.

A couple happened just this week. I have seen young deer in our back yard, less than 60 feet away. The last time was just yesterday, on the 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my father’s funeral. Karen and I took a few minutes to sit out on our back deck to enjoy the cooler air with a few of our pet “children”. A few days ago I had told her of my previous encounter of the deer. Now, she was first to spot them this time as they were in her line of sight. What a blessing!

Now, I’m not going to say that I’m a vegan. ☺ But I will tell you that I give thanks before every meal, and even at times to the animal who gave its life, if one has done so. And, my heart is grieved if I, or anyone else, is wasteful of such a gift.

I'm sure I'm not the first or only one who thinks and feels this way. We may consider Saint Francis of Assisi, who remains very well known for his love of all God's creation, even calling them "sister" and "brother".

So, spend some time today and through the week to reflect upon the questions in your notes. Consider ways in which you have been, or can be, blessed and a blessing to all of God's creation -- as God's children who live in God's true image and way!

When we reflect and desire to love our neighbor as ourselves, how can we, or do we, do that through our stewardship and care of God's creation?

Let us pray . . .

Creator God, give us the heart to be thankful for the abundance we experience. Give us the eyes to notice when our enjoyment comes at the expense or harm of another. Give us the wisdom to be wise stewards of all that you have entrusted to us. As we become better stewards and grow in compassion for the earth and those around us, help us to be aware that we are learning to exercise proper dominion (both power and care), and are also growing in Christlikeness. Amen.

(Discipleship Ministries UMC, adapted)

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**Questions for Reflection:**

**Who is groaning and why in Romans 8:19-23? How is this connected with humanity?**

**How does our understanding of humanity's role as image bearers of God and stewards of the earth relate to our understanding of the end times?**

**How can/should Christians advocate and bring blessings to all creatures and creation now? How do you?**