Serving Creation

Narrative Lectionary

September 8, 2019

Genesis 2: 4b-25 Russell Mitchell-Walker

Did you know there are two creation stories in Genesis? It is appropriate as we enter the Season of Creation for September that we begin with Genesis. The first creation story goes through the 6 days of creation, and resting on the seventh day. The second story is the one we heard today, which focuses on the creation of humans and the animals. It is generally understood now that each one was written by a different author, in a different time period to address different situations in the lives of their people, and their different contexts. Each story seems to make the fact of God’s creative work relevant to their own context, using language and imagery that would be familiar and applicable. One of the messages we get from the story read today is that God is in a learning process. While the first creation story names everything as ‘good’, the second story identifies that something is not good – it is not good for the man to be alone and God works to create a helper for him. Not someone subordinate to him, but who can provide companionship and work together to care for creation.

God starts with the animals as a helper. In creating the animals, God gives the man, Adam, which is from the word ‘clay’ or ‘dust’ the responsibility of naming the animals. The act of naming in the ancient world was a means of defining and shaping the character and essence of the one named. Thus by inviting Adam to name the animals, the man participates with God in co-creation. Earlier God tells the man to care for the garden of Eden. The word often translated as “till” in this verse actually means ‘to serve’. So the man, humanity are meant to serve the soil, the creation, to be partners with it, protecting it and guarding it. How well have we done at this? God’s creation is beautiful and worthy of protection, and having the abundant beauty all around us is another way that God tells us that we are loved. Working to protect the creation is a way of returning that love.

We live in a time when creation seems threatened, and this includes the animals Adam has named. How can we, and how are we working together to address these issues?

Recently we have heard about an increased amount of fires burning in the Amazon, which is incredibly important to our global ecosystem. What started as blame toward the Brazilian president has shifted to a global effort of working together to assist in battling the problem and putting out the fires. We have seen the devastating effects of Hurricane Dorian this week, especially in the Bahamas as one of the largest hurricanes on record. I expect we will see a global response to assist the islands most affected to rebuild. The United Church is accepting [donations](https://www.united-church.ca/hurricane-dorian-relief) for those most affected by the hurricane.

These are responses to some results of the effects of climate change. When we think about what we can do to reduce the effects of climate change, it can be overwhelming. What inspires you during these times of feeling overwhelmed by the immensity of the problem. I am inspired by young people like Greta Thunberg.

Greta Thunberg, is a young climate activist who has mobilized young people and adults around the world to get the message across that we are in a climate emergency. At eight years old she became depressed when she first learned about climate change. She says:

When I was about eight years old, I first heard about something called climate change… if this was true we should not have been talking about anything else….

But no one ever talked about it… To me, that did not add up. It was so unreal. So when I turned 11 I became ill. I fell into depression, I stopped talking, and I stopped eating. In two months, I lost about ten kilos of weight.

As she expressed her concern to her parents, they said it would be OK, but that wasn’t enough. Her Aspergers syndrome would not allow her to let it go, while others could think about something else, she couldn’t. She continued to worry, read, educate herself, and her parents. Then they started listening and responding more. She got out of her depression by realizing that it was a waste of time feeling this way, that there was a lot of good she can do with her life. Greta realized she had a powerful gift of persuasion. Her mother gave up flying. Her father became a vegetarian. She was inspired by the Parkland school students who went on strike to protest US gun laws and decided after friends in a group wanting to do something about the climate crisis could not agree what, to go it alone and went on strike for the climate. August 20, 2018 at age 15, was her first Climate Friday Strike. This September 20 and 27 there will be a global strike calling adults as well as young people to protest against climate change and demand governments, corporations and those in power take bolder action to address the impacts of our consumption. This is important work toward protecting the planet, God’s creation. It is important but not easy, and will require sacrifice. I know for myself, that while I have committed to ride my bike more regularly regardless of the weather, I can do better. I have still driven my car when I have appointments or hospital visits can that feel like too much riding and/or would take too much time to ride my bike. We take the steps we can, and keep working to take more steps and encouraging others to do the same.

I am inspired as well knowing that people in our community are taking steps to make a difference.   
I am inspired by knowing that Sheila has been talking to Brian about what she has learned about converting lawns to clover which can help encourage the declining bee populations.

I am inspired by the amount of gardeners in our community, growing their own food as evidenced by Bonny Manz bringing rubharb to share over the summer, and the conversations I have shared with Mait and Rachel about their gardens.

I am inspired by John Robinson who has been working to design and create tiny homes for those who want to live more simply and who has been taking these designs across North America.

I am inspired by Bonnie Yake who will often ride or walk to church and work.

I am inspired by Carl who I see walking home from work at Wascana Rehab.

I am inspired by Ken and MaryBelle who support a local butcher when they buy meat.

I am inspired by Clare making apple jelly and sharing it with Congregational Care members and others.

Who inspires you? This inspiration can not only motivate us to take steps to change our lifestyle but can also give us hope, knowing that we are not alone, that in relationship with one another, working together as community and encouraging one another we can make a difference.

In the creation story, the animals did not turn out to be a suitable companion for Adam, so God creates a helper, out of the rib of the man. They are created to be in equal relationship – where Adam says that the woman is ‘bone of my bone’, he is indicating that they are related to each other, they are equal partners. God has designed a world where we are meant to be in mutual relationship with each other. We are called to be in community. We may live alone, but we are meant to be with others, which is why finding and being in community is important. This is why the church can be an important place and can offer important an ministry – to provide opportunities for people to be together, to build relationship and community. Together we can work on issues, celebrate successes and joys, and become community. This can be a real blessing. This is God’s purpose for creation, to be in relationship, to care for and protect one another and all creation. May it be so.