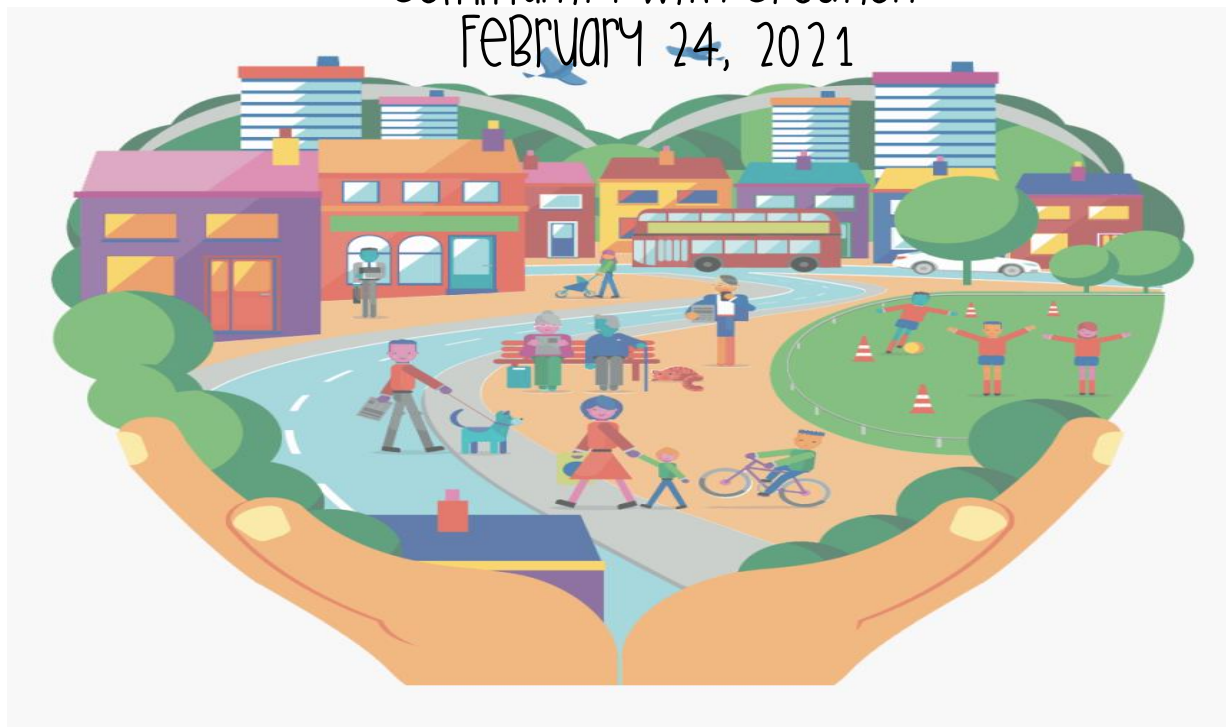


Pastor Gwen's message
1st Wednesday in lent
Community with Creation
February 24, 2021



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

Our readings for Wednesdays this Lent come from the Gospel of Mark. They are readings that invite the listeners to reflect on what it means to be in community with one another, with the world, with creation and with God. For we are created for community by God, to love one another and to live in harmony with creation. So not only is Lent a good time to practice individual acts of repentance, prayer and self-reflection, it is also a great time for deepening of community. Years ago, the weeks before Easter were a time in which the whole community took responsibility for training up the youth in the faith. Those studying the catechism were enriched by this effort from those in the community that were more experienced in the faith. And as many of us can attest, when we help another strengthen their faith we cannot help but deepen our own spirituality as well.

So tonight our topic is being in community with creation. The two readings tonight from Mark and Genesis both deal with water; a devastating flood and

an unruly sea in a violent storm.

The very first sermon I ever preached at St Olaf, was on Noah's Ark and since then I have come to appreciate this Bible story more each time it comes to mind. Noah's Ark is a story that we teach our children at a young age, but did you ever give thought to how violent it really is. In a snap shot; God gets sick of all that is happening on His earth and decides to send a flood to solve the problem. This flood wipes out every living creature on earth, including people, except for Noah and his family and the animals that two by two he ushered into the ark. WOW.

Yet, this story has captivated us since we were children. We have taught it here at Christ the Servant, several times in Sunday school and back when we had many kids here we actually did an entire VBS revolving around Noah's Ark. Any of you remember the huge ark Diane Johnson made out of cardboard, that stood right here on the altar platform? It was a fun lesson and the children loved it.

But you and I know that floods are devastating. I saw the results of the flood in Rapid City in 1972 when I visited some friends less than a month after it happened. Houses were picked up and moved off their foundations. Street signs were bent over at their bases and lying on the ground. Mud and dirt were everywhere. Many homes were ruined and lives destroyed. Water is powerful and there is nothing cute or sweet about a flood.

In the Noah story, God does get fed up with how the humans he made, are destroying the perfect world He has made. Sinfulness was so bad that I think God was actually sad that he made us. At creation God said all he had made was good and His people were very good. But this was not the case any longer. God lamented the world that had been created and so in anger God brings the rain down on creation, all but Noah and his family and animals he managed to save on his boat. Everything else is gone.

If you think about it, it did not take long for humans to mess up the world. This part we never tell our children until they are old enough to understand what we have done to the earth. And today, I think that there is a concerted effort to combat global warming which if you are a believer in it, is a reaction of the earth to how humans are destroying the ecosystem.

Just as we should be cognizant of how we are caring for God's creation, our home, we have to admit that we are using up resources, polluting the air and

destroying waterways every day. God was sorry that he destroyed creation and promised never to do it again. And we all know the sign, a rainbow, that He sent as proof of his covenant with humanity, that he never again would destroy everything on the earth. We should be sorry and repent for all the sin we have brought into the world as it too destroys this beautiful creation that God gave us to live in. Our sign to God that we will try to live according to His plan will be our faith in Jesus Christ, His Son our Lord.

In our Gospel reading from Matthew we have a storm that is beginning to create waves threatening the safety of those in the boat with Jesus. And during this storm, Jesus, of great faith, was asleep in the stern. It gets so bad that the disciples wake Jesus and ask Him if he cares that they are going to perish from the waves that are about to sink the ship. The disciples were afraid of dying and they are panicking. They turn to Jesus and want Him to share their concern for their situation and find some urgency in their situation. And we all know what happens next. Jesus awoke and told the wind to cease. "Peace, be still" Jesus says and His authority over the wind becomes immediately evident. The winds cease and calm is restored. Jesus has power over the wind and the sea. The disciples must have, in their hearts, wondered about how Jesus has command over creation. Jesus is truly God's son, God's incarnate with unyielding Godly power over creation.

Yes, Scripture tells us that God and His Son, Jesus have power over the creation they made for us. It is evident in many places in God's word that He is still in control. And note here that God is not just concerned about us and how we live in community together, but I think he is genuinely concerned about all of His creation, animals, plants and all that He has made. And that concern extends to how we interact with the created world.

Let's think for a minute or two about a few things about being in community with creation. What is one way you are dependent on creation in your daily

life? Now folks, this is the interactive part of the message. Can anyone think of a way that we are dependent on creation? Don't be shy.

What is one way you are in danger from creation in your daily life?

What is one way our lives endanger creation?

What is one way our lives enrich creation?

So where does that leave us in our understanding of how we are to live in community with all of creation? How is our human existence interdependent with the entire created world?

I would like to remind you of the 1 Corinthians 12:12 & 14 passage. "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ." "Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many." The eye is no more important than the foot, etc. In my quarterly issue of All God's Creatures published by Guideposts as a daily devotion for animal lovers, there was an interesting story on Feb 4th using this scripture text. I would like to read it to you. It is by Tez Brooks: "Meerkats are funny little mammals known for sticking together. At home on the African savanna, several families may live together in a large clan—each member with a different role.

One meerkat may act as a babysitter while another may serve as a lookout by standing on its hind legs. A critical role within the meerkat community is the teacher, who shows the pups how to hunt.

Even when a meerkat is digging a burrow, other meerkats come and assist, forming a lineup. The team passes the loose soil upward, toward the opening. There, another meerkat builds a mound of dirt so the guard can stand and keep watch.

Although each has a particular job, they unite for many jobs. The entire group works together against danger. Following the directions of the leader, meerkats defend their homes and stand up to dangerous predators, like snakes. If a lone meerkat attempted to defend itself, it would fail.

Community is important for meerkats. We need community too. Being alone is dangerous. One of the most important teams is our local church. This is where we find strength in numbers, using our varying gifts to serve one another.

Scripture reminds us how desperately we need others to live and grow as Christians. Although each of us has special gifts and skills, none of us can say

we don't need anyone else. Together, we can encourage and defend one another and accomplish so much more for God's kingdom."

Well, a good reminder of how not only humans but also animals work together to live in God's created world. We all live work and play in this beautiful world. We are ultimately connected to every part of it. I know that our Lord expects us to care for it as we live out our lives, waiting for our eternal life in heaven. So I hope this week you will give some thought to those questions I posed. And give thought to the awe, the beauty and the power in all of creation. And let all of God's creation sing as we work together for the glory of God. **AMEN**