

Spring Communion Service
May 14, 2008

Genesis Ch. 1 – Selections

“I Asked For Wonder”

Prayer: O God may the words on my lips and the thoughts in our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, our Creator and Saviour. Amen.

The Hebrew Scripture text for this week is from Genesis chapter 1 and I will preach this afternoon on vs. 31 “God saw everything that God had made, and indeed it was very good.”

“God saw everything that God had made, and indeed it was very good.”
That sentence almost needs a couple of exclamation marks after it and typed in bold letters. Indeed God’s creation is very good!!!

My favourite season is Spring. I know for a lot of us the coming of Spring this year was much anticipated and thankfully received after our long snowy winter.

This winter in particular it was hard to get around, a number of people fell on the ice, and our ability to get outside was compromised.

Visiting with some of you we marvelled at the first signs of crocuses and daffodils coming up out of the ground. The exploding of blossoms on crab apple, magnolia, cherry and apple trees, forsythia, tulips, have been a feast for the eyes.

The earth, dormant through the winter, has come back to abundant life. We see the goodness of God’s creation.

Some of you know that one of my passions is birding – birdwatching.

It is a great hobby, it gets me outdoors, it gives me opportunities to wonder at the beauty, majesty and mystery of God’s creation.

The past two Monday’s from 7a.m. to 9a.m. a group of us from the congregation have gathered at High Park to do some birding.

This past Monday we were blessed with Thomas and Carly, two children in our congregation. We could learn a lot from children about wonder!

One of the special moments on our walk was when Thomas and Carly put sunflower seeds in their open hands and chickadees landed on their hand and took a seed. Wow! The feeling of their little feet on your hand, their ability to trust us big human beings.

We also had a wonder filled moment when we went to the Zoo at High Park and saw a mother wallaby with her baby! So cute! The baby was peeking out of the pouch and then jumped out and jumped around with glee!

“God saw everything that God had made and indeed it was very good.”

In my family one of the things I’m known for is my bug bottle. I keep it in our condo, it has holes in the top, and when a hornet or a moth, or some other creature gets in our place, I catch it in the bottle, take it out to our balcony and let it go! When it comes to an approach to nature I could easily be a Buddhist. Some Buddhists sweep in front of them as they walk so they don’t step on any living thing.

“God saw everything that God had made and indeed it was very good.”

Stories and images from nature can speak to us about our life as a loving Christian community and of God’s call on our lives.

I’ve always loved the story about a flock of geese. As we know geese fly in formation, often in a V, sometimes it looks like another letter!

The idea behind flying in a V is that those in the front deal with the most wind resistance, making it easier for those behind. Because being in the leadership position is more difficult, they take turns, when those in front get tired, they drop back and others take the lead.

This is a wonderful metaphor for the church community. Those in positions of leadership can get tired, sometimes they need to drop back and have others take the lead.

Another thing that happens when geese fly in formation is that they honk from behind; those in the back encouraging those who are in the leadership position in the front. Again, this is a wonderful model for the church community, encouraging and supporting those who are giving leadership in our shared ministry.

The other thing flocks of geese do is they keep company with the fallen. If one goose is injured and is unable to keep up with the flock, it stops to rest and seek to recover. Another goose will drop out of the flock to stay with the injured bird. As a Christian community one of our ministries is the ministry of pastoral care, of caring for one another, of staying with those who are going through difficult times, accompanying them so that they are not alone.

The Genesis account in Scripture reminds us that God is the Creator of all and all that God created is Good.

“God saw everything that God had made, and indeed it was very good.”

Sometimes we struggle to see ourselves as good, and we struggle to see others, especially those people we don't particularly like, as good.

And yet we are the crown of God's creation, the apple of God's eye.

In Genesis we hear God declare – “Let us make humankind (adam) in our image, according to our likeness and let them have dominion..... So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. God blessed them....God saw everything that God had made, and indeed it was very good.”

Each and every one of us is made in the image of God! Wow!

If we really believed this and lived this it would change everything!

Rabbi Abraham Heschel wrote a book called “I Asked For Wonder”.

For Heschel, “wonder leads to piety, and piety leads to holy deeds; for without the deed, wonder and piety are incomplete.” Heschel lived through the Holocaust, which “devoured his family, his community, and that whole irreplaceable world of learning and piety in Eastern Europe”. It became Heschel's calling “to remind people, with a testimony all the more convincing since it came from one who had experienced the fullness of evil, that despite the absurd and the apathy, the world is filled with mystery, meaning, and mercy, with wonder, joy, and fulfillment; that we have power to do God's will, and that the divine image in which we are made, though distorted, cannot be obliterated. In the end, the likeness of God will triumph over the mark of Cain.”

Wonder leads to Piety and Piety leads to Holy Deeds.

Wondering at the beauty and diversity of the world, we are led to faith, to trust that God is the Creator, that this is God's world. Having wonder and faith, we are led to holy deeds. And so the Church, God's community, responds to evil and violence and destruction with acts of courage and hope.

Last night some of us from our congregation gathered to hear about the evils of human trafficking and how children are sold for sexual favours and violence and abuse becomes an everyday part of their lives. And hearing about this evil, people are moved to respond with deeds of love and compassion, seeking to end the violence.

And last week the world was shaken by the cyclone in Myanmar. And The United Church of Canada responded by pledging \$100,000 in aid and launching an emergency appeal for funds.

We can give money through the Church to help the people overcome by this tragedy. Please speak to Linda or I if you would like to make a financial contribution.

Many of us through the years have supported the Mission and Service Fund of The United Church of Canada. Through this fund our church continues to make a difference for good all around the world. Through holy deeds we align ourselves to God's will for all of Creation.

This past Saturday we had a Kenya Fun Day at our Church. It was a beautiful afternoon to gather for games and food. We raised \$1200 to go towards building another school room in Kenya where our Youth last summer helped build a school room. Our youth this Fall have raised \$1800 and combined with this \$1200 it put us over the top.

Through holy deeds we align ourselves to God's will for all of Creation.

Wonder, Piety, Holy Deeds. Made in the image of God, this is our calling, this is who God made us to be. And it is very good.

Amen. Thanks be to God!