

Bible Study for Earth Day Sunday April 21, 2024

- Genesis 1:1-13
- Psalm 23

Opening Question: Do you agree that your faith should inform/shape how you care for Creation? What does that mean for you? How far should that go? Should it inform/shape what and how you buy things? Things like cars, clothes & food?

Genesis 1:1-13

1 In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, 2 the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. 3 Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

6 And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' 7 So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. 8 God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

9 And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. 10 God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

Do you have a favorite part in this Creation story? What is it and why?

What does this tell us about God that it is in this Creation that humans were placed?

What happens when we think all of this Creation is just for us humans?

God "saw that it was good" three times in this part of the story (v4, v10, v12). The Hebrew word "good" can mean a lot of things, from something moral to something well done or fitting, to something lovely. Does it make a difference what we think it means here? What difference is that?

Further in the Genesis text (1:26) we read: Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

A purpose stated for the creation of humankind is to “let them have dominion” over the other animal creatures. What do we understand “dominion” to entail? (For instance, we might think of “sovereign authority,” “power,” “control,” etc.) Then, in that understanding, what actions regarding other creatures are appropriate? Why? What actions are inappropriate to the way we understand dominion? Why?

How might human dominion over other living creatures relate to God’s dominion over Creation (and us)? Why do we think this?

Psalm 23

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;

3 he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake.

4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil;
for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

What do you hear in this psalm?

What does it mean to “lack nothing” in the presence of the Lord?

The author of the psalm, David, was a shepherd, so he did not use this term lightly. He knew that shepherds exist to care for their flocks. Having the geographic know-how to find flourishing greenery and water resources — a love for the earth — was a necessity. There is a relationship between shepherds, sheep, and the land in which they reside. Also, the sheep are not without some responsibility. As followers of the Creator, we are obligated to care for the environment because our relationship to God is tied to our stewardship over what God owns.

- What do you think of this statement and how might it shift your understanding of our responsibility to and for Creation care?

Verse 6 talks about dwelling in the house of the Lord. We often think of that as after we die, but the rest of the text speaks to how God will be present in *this* life. How might an understanding of where we dwell in this life as the “house of the Lord?” Does that change the implications of this text for you? How so?

As we recognize and celebrate Earth Day, what one thing would you like to make the world know about God’s Creation and our part in it?