

Psalm 104 + Colossians 1:14-17

We belong in the community of creation

April 24, 2016 Creation Care Sunday

Roy W. Howard

When I walk in the woods along the stream near my home I often remember what the Psalmist tells us. The trees of the woods are shouting for joy, the rivers are clapping their hands, the fields are singing and the hills are ringing out with joy before the Lord. The Earth itself is a persistent reminder of what our faith tells us is true and science confirms: all creatures belong together in a community of creation. Scientists speak of the intricate balance of our natural world and the role that humans play in sustaining that balance. Theology tells us this balance – so wondrous and beautiful – is the delight of God and that humans, made in the God's image, have an obligation to care for this creation.

We are stewards of beauty. This is our original purpose in the community of creatures with whom we share this Earth. Scientists show us the finely tuned details of this bio-diverse ecological system that we share with all life – plants, animals, Earth itself. Theology tells us this is the beauty is of the Lord who in wisdom has made all things. In the ear of the believer, we can hear the Earth and all creatures resounding with joy and praise. We hear our family and they cause our hearts to soar with hope and delight.

But when our imagination fails us, we lose a sense of relation with our fellow creatures; we hear neither the songs nor the cries of the Earth. We do not see the world as the theater of God's glory. Science can tell us the consequences of our failure, but science cannot create within us empathy for the Earth. When we listen to God's word with an open heart, the Psalmist teaches us to love the Earth and all creatures. Rivers trashed, mountaintops scarred, animals endangered, soil removed, plants destroyed: the believer can hear the rivers crying, the animals weeping, the very Earth screaming in anguish. When we embrace the reality that we truly belong to this community of God's creatures then we can weep with those who weep. Science is bringing us the data that the consequence of human action is a climate overheated and a planet in peril. But if you do not care, no amount of scientific data matters. Only those who care can listen with the ears of the heart to the cries of the. Theology – God – tells us why the data matters.

The letter to the Colossians tells us the living Christ holds together our entire biological ecosystem. One translation puts it this way: the whole creation finds its coherence in Christ. Frankly, this is so profound that it stretches our capacity to comprehend. Rather than trying to explain the facts science give us, including the fact that "everything on Earth including humans is made of starstuff", our scriptures summon us to embrace this wonder in faith. We are bound together in common with all creatures sustained by the living Christ. More can be said but let me conclude with this.

In the Brothers Karamazov, Father Zosima says:

"Love all God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it.
Love every leaf, every ray of God's light.
Love the animals, love the plants, love everything.
If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things.
Once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day.
And you will come at last to love the whole world with an
all-embracing love."

Last week I invited you to tell me what creatures you would miss if they disappeared from the earth.
If you love them, you will care for them. They are your family with whom you share this creation.
You belong to them. They belong to you. And we all belong to God.

I've made a movie of your choices. Experience your family. Let us love one another.