

Festival of God's Creation (Earth Day), April 25, 2010

Genesis 1:1-2:1

God Saw That It Was Good

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came in to being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

These words from the Gospel according to John echo the words in Genesis, “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth.” Christ, the Word of God, was there. And all things were created through the Word of God.

Genesis tells us that each day for six days, God spoke and things happened.

God said, "Let there be light," And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters." And God said, "Let the waters be gathered together and let the dry land appear." And God said,

And it happened. Whatever God said, whatever the Word of God was, it happened.

Creation came into being when God spoke.

God's words were powerful.

And the Word of God did not stop with “Let there be” all the things that God created.

After each time God said “let there be,” God looked at what had just been created and “God saw that it was good.”

Everything, every part of creation, when God looked at it, looked good to him.

There was nothing that looked like a mistake, like something that shouldn't have happened.

Even the aardvarks and the duck-billed platypuses (platypi?) were pronounced good by the creator. Even the snails and the cockroaches.

Nothing that God made was bad. There is no verse in there that says, “And God saw that it was just plain ugly!”

In the Garden of Eden, everything was good. There was enough to eat, and life was in harmonious balance. God gave humans dominion over the rest of creation, but that dominion was care-taking, providing order and reason so that creation did not return to the chaos that had existed before God created order and beauty.

Then people went and messed it up.

There was only one thing that Adam and Eve were not supposed to do, eat the fruit of the tree that was in the middle of the garden. That was the only rule and they couldn't follow it! That rule held back the chaos and randomness that God had put in order.

Once that rule was broken, creation was once again subject to chaos and ugliness. And that lack of order has persisted down through all the ages.

Many years later the prophet Isaiah said, "The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants, for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant." The people were still breaking God's laws. It wasn't just Adam and Eve.

And we are still breaking God's laws. A decade or so ago, William Sloane Coffin, who was a writer and the minister at

And while today people argue over whether or not global warming is true, no one is disputing the fact that the pollution and the abuse of our planet, God's creation, is increasing.

I am one of the many, many people who feel closest to God when I am out in nature. The beach, the mountains, the desert, they all feel holy to me. Yosemite, the Oregon coast, the Grand Canyon, the central California coast, Utah's national parks, and more----all feel like holy ground to me.

Without these holy places I would have a much poorer spiritual life. Without these parts of God's creation, I would not have the same understanding of God's power or God's love.

I think many of you feel the same way!

As the body of Christ, we are called to care for the work of Christ. We are here to build the Kingdom of God! We are called to become the people that God created us to be.

And that call extends to working to restore the rest of God's creation---the creation that took place through Christ----to the way that God created it to be. As creation took place through Christ, so the restoration of creation needs to take place through us, the body of Christ.

If we are to be the hands and feet of Christ in caring for his creation, then we need to walk more gently on this earth, and care for it more carefully with our hands.

We have all heard what we can do to take care of our environment. I don't need to say it all over again.

I know it's not always easy or convenient to be "greener."

So I would encourage you to do one thing to be kinder and gentler to our planet, just one thing. When that one thing becomes a habit, then add a second step, then a third.

Buy some reusable grocery bags. Or walk a little more instead of driving. Or turn the lights off whenever you leave a room. On a bigger scale, if you're doing any home improvements, look into using materials that are more environmentally friendly.

But I am really not here to lecture you. I am here to celebrate the glory and beauty of God's creation, the creation that he pronounced good!



At least twice a week I watch the sunset. There is no practical reason to do that. It isn't productive. It's not accomplishing anything. Many times I have to stop working or gardening or cooking dinner to go outside and watch it.

I stop what I'm doing and just enjoy the sunset as the gift from God that it is. I take the time to just breathe and if I think of words at all they are just "thank you" to God for the beauty of the earth.

Last week one of the roses I planted outside the parsonage began blooming---beautiful red flowers. Beside it are two geraniums with amazing purple blossoms. They began blooming the next day. The plum tree I planted is sprouting leaves and growing. The ground cover in front is spreading and the flowers that Michael planted beside my house are getting more beautiful every week!

And that's just the parts of God's creation that are in my yard!

Here at the church the flowers are growing lush and gorgeous. On Friday LaNoel pointed out to me that an unusual plant outside the sanctuary is going to bloom soon and I can hardly wait to see what the flower will look like!

And I am sure that all of you have noticed all of the flowers beside the freeways and roads! It is spring, and God's creation is showing its beauty!

Last Wednesday evening I went over to Ocean Beach. With the storm, the surf was absolutely frothing, more just turmoil than breaking waves. The ocean seemed to be swirling and surging, and the peaks of the waves were hitting the bottom of the pier. God's creation was showing his power!

On Thursday evening I went over to the zoo for a couple of hours. I enjoyed watching the pandas and koalas eat and sleep, the grizzly bears gnawing on a bone, and the giraffes standing and looking down at me. I got a kick out of the laughter of the kookaburras! God's creation was showing its diversity!

We need to take care of God's creation in responsible ways, yes---- but we also need to enjoy it, take time to really see it.

When we look at it, we will see what God saw in the beginning-----we will see that it is good!

And then maybe, just maybe, it will occur to us that we are PART of that creation, and so God has said that **we** are good!

And in the end, maybe we will live up to that----remembering that we are made in God's image and caring for creation and each other the way that God cares for us----creating order out of chaos, creation not destruction, love not abuse, care not convenience.

So you have one challenge----to make one change in your life that cares for the environment.

And you have a second challenge ----- to find a way to celebrate the beauty and glory----to fully appreciate the goodness!---of God's creation on a regular basis!

Watch the sun set. Watch a flower bloom. Watch a baby grow! Go have picnics on the beach or in a park or in the mountains. Visit the zoo!

Give your full, undivided attention for a few minutes on a regular basis to creation! Celebrate all that God has made!

God said, "Let there be light and sky and dry land and oceans and plants and animals and human beings."

And it is good, so good!

Let us be grateful for all of creation!

Amen!