

CARETAKERS OF THE HOLY GROUND



Scripture:

Psalm 8

¹O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens. ²Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.

³When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; ⁴what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

⁵Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. ⁶You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, ⁷all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, ⁸the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

⁹O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Luke 24: 36-43

Two of the disciples, Cleopas and a friend, have just come into a room full of others after walking with a stranger who turned out to be Jesus along the road to Emmaus.....

³⁶While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ³⁷They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” ⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate in their presence.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



ANYTHING TO EAT?

“Someone speaks on the other side of the room and you turn to look. ‘Peace be

with you,' he says. It is Jesus. Everyone recognizes him. How do you feel?" "Jesus looks at you and says, 'Have you anything here to eat?' What will you say? What will you offer Jesus?"

"Imagine going to get the food for Jesus. Imagine fixing him a plate. How does it smell? How does it feel in your hands as you carry it? Take the food to Jesus, look at him in the face and offer it to him. What do you say to him? What does he say back? Bask in his presence for a moment."

The thought of Jesus asking his disciples if they had something to eat to show them he was present with them and not just a spirit, is fascinating, isn't it? After Christ was resurrected from the dead, he showed the disciples his wounds. And then he asked for something to eat so he could share a meal with them.

Food nourishes bodies, spirits, and relationships between people. When you share a meal with others you are nurturing your bond with them. Having a sense of community connection, along with food, air, and water are all essentials for life.

OUR COMMUNITY GARDEN

The ground is sacred and God is Creator, Redeemer and Savior of the whole cosmos. Unlike fundamental interpretations of the Bible, we believe we are not meant to leave the world behind "at the end of the age." Rather we are to promote the thriving of all beings on a healthy planet and to build up the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. That is why our church is building a community garden and you are invited to be a part of it. Next Saturday, the 25th at 9:00 a.m. we will begin. I hope you will help us.

We are made of the earth, our sustainability comes from the earth, we go back to the earth. But in the meantime, we eat a lot! You know how people will say, 'Oh, I feel like I ate a ton!' Well they are

literally correct! The average American eats one ton of food in just one year! (This figure comes from economists who crunched food consumption data collected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.)

They also calculated that the fifty million tons of food Americans throw away each year wastes twenty-five per cent of our water consumption. The average American throws away twenty pounds of food a month. Most of us need to find a better balance between our needs and our use of resources!

It is so apparent from these numbers that we are taking more than we need from the land, throwing it out, and creating additional waste that harms the earth when it decomposes in landfills increasing carbon emissions and methane gas in our atmosphere.

We simply cannot allow one-third of all the food we produce to go to waste when eight-hundred seventy million people go hungry every day around the world."

(United Nations Environmental Program)

EARTH DAY

On this Earth Day Sunday, God calls us to face up to the condition of our planetary home. The head of Yale's School of Forestry warns that: "Half the world's tropical and temperate forests are now gone. The rate of deforestation in the tropics continues at about an acre a second. About half the wetlands and a third of the mangroves are gone. An estimated ninety percent of the large predator fish are gone, and seventy-five percent of marine fishing regions are being fished to capacity. Twenty percent of the coral reefs are gone and another twenty percent are severely

threatened. Species are disappearing at rates about a thousand times faster than normal. Our planet has not seen such a mass extinction in sixty-five million years, since the dinosaurs disappeared.”

Now, today, we are literally standing at the edge of destruction. Environmental scientists have lost their optimism and are calling for urgent action.

DOMINION, NOT DOMINATION

So let me ask you. Is this who we are? Was this God’s purpose for the human species, to destroy the earth? I don’t think so. God did not intend for the stewards of the earth to fail so badly. We were given dominion over all that is, dominion not domination. It is dominion in the same sense that we have dominion over our children and that God has over us.

We are caretakers of the Holy Ground. Our caretaking is to be shaped by compassion, love and generosity. God expected love and care from us when we were given dominion over the earth.

Every one of our actions and behaviors affects someone else on the planet. Our individual choices matter, but we need every institution, every business, every industrial utility, every hospital and every school to be looking ahead at what we are leaving behind for our children and grand children to deal with not only in this country but in all the world. For instance, what happens in Asia has a huge effect on our air here in the west.

Alex L. Wang, a law professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, studies Chinese environmental policy. He said, “A significant percentage of China’s emissions of traditional pollutants and

greenhouse gas emissions are connected to the products we buy and use every day in the U.S. We should be concerned, not only because this pollution is harming the citizens of China, but because it’s damaging the air quality in the western parts of the U.S.”

Caring for God’s creation gets more urgent with each passing day. The climate continues to warm, half of all the earth’s wetlands are gone, we are losing one species of plant or animal extinction every hour.

THE ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RELIGION

You may wonder what the condition of the environment and food consumption have to do with religion? Throughout scripture we are asked to love one another and to serve the poor. We cannot sit in church and profess a love of God while allowing what God called “good” to be destroyed through starvation, thirst, greed, and pollution.

A CALL TO ACTION

However there is good news in the midst of the bad. Our world in crisis is a call to action and an opportunity. We must not waste this opportunity. We have the chance to do what few generations have done and that is to come together with a shared purpose and the joy of working together as a unified global force with a regenerated view of the human purpose on earth. The understanding that we are one with one shared human purpose, in one earth, atmosphere and one global climate can lead to resurrection.

Remember, Rob Bell said, “Resurrection announces that whatever way death, destruction, and despair have got you in their grip, it doesn’t have the last word!” We can act together and do something to heal our sick planet.

Jesus often demonstrated the importance of gathering together to share food and shelter. After his resurrection he made a point to eat and strengthen his disciples as they were about to embark on a whole new way of doing ministry in the world.

Growing our community garden will be a new ministry to show the community we care about using a small portion of our holy earth to produce healthy food that we will share with any in need.

John Philip Newell, our guest preacher from Scotland a few months ago, created a video series where he talks about resurrection in the healing and mending of the earth. Here are his thoughts on Resurrection. (A John Philip Newell video was shown to the congregation.)

those in our church and region who need it the most.

**And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and forever more.
Amen**



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Benediction:

Do you have something to eat today? Thank God if you do. Don't waste it, don't eat too much of it, and share it with others if possible. May you support our community garden by praying it will connect to