

“In His Hand”

Job 12: 7-10

I will tell you that I struggled to write this sermon this week, which is odd because creation care is such a huge part of my call as a person of faith as well as such a huge part of our own community of faith's vision of welcome to proclaim the Kingdom of God. Earth Sunday, Earth Stewardship - that should be such an easy sermon to write but as the week passed on, I couldn't figure out why the Holy Spirit was staying so silent.

It wasn't until I followed Job's advice and truly listened to creation that I discovered that the reason the sermon wasn't coming to me wasn't because the Holy Spirit was silent. It was because I had been listening to all the wrong voices in all the wrong places.

Let me explain: the no-brainer moment of my sermon writing came to me when I realized that I was trying to write a sermon about creation without being connected to creation. I was trying to write a sermon about the beauty and mystery of God's creation from inside my office. Hard to listen to what creation is telling me about our Creator when I'm sitting behind thick brick walls.

This seemed like such an obvious revelation about the voice of the Spirit and creation but then I realized that this is the reality of the world we live in today.

Majority of our time is spent indoors behind our desks, underneath harsh fluorescent lighting only looking out at God's creation through panes of glass if we are even lucky enough to have a window in our office. I have often told Jim Leer and Marlin Mitchell that I am envious of their work as farmers. Well maybe not all parts of their job but at least the part where they spend their days so close to nature, spend their time so connected with the earth, knowing that day end and day out, they are a part of God's creation.

And I know that I am not alone in this sentiment. Several of you have told me that you feel the closest to God when you are working in your gardens, digging in the dirt, pulling out the weeds, eagerly anticipating what will pop up from the seeds you planted because it is in those moments you feel completely connected with God's creation. You feel completely connected with the creative nature of our God.

But sadly moments like these are far and few between for the majority of us. We have to take vacations to feel as if we can get back to nature. Because we have compartmentalized our life so much that the worlds in which we work, the worlds in which we live, and the worlds in which we find God's creation don't seem to intersect anymore. The sad truth is that in our everyday lives today, there seems to be a growing disconnect between us humans and God's creation. And it is not just

adults who are feeling this disconnect. Our children are spending more time indoors as video games and video systems become more readily available.

I was talking with a friend the other day and she shared a story about how her nieces and nephews came over to play and she wanted to take all the children outside to play but when it came time to step outside the back door, one of her nieces refused to go because she had never touched grass before and was afraid. The friend described the comical moments watching the child gingerly touch the grass and then cautiously taking that first step onto the green, then once discovering that it wasn't going to hurt her, taking off running with the other children.

Now I will admit that the child in this story was young and it is only natural for her to explore her world cautiously but it got me thinking about how we as a society have created an artificial world inside while ignoring the beauty of the outside world around us, an artificial world which we have fooled ourselves to believe is safe and secure, even ordered and that we are in control.

And because of the artificial worlds we have built, There is a growing disconnect between God's creation and us humans, a disconnect that we've created, a disconnect that is deepening with each passing moment we stay indoors in our artificial worlds, a disconnect that is breaking the gentle strands that connect us to the web of creation.

As humans, we are in a danger of believing that we are no longer just part of creation but instead we are the creator in which seems like there is no place for God anymore. And with each passing day, we slip farther and farther away from what centers us, what gives our lives meaning. And as we slip farther and farther away from our connection with God and with creation, we find that we are no longer able to or even want to listen to what creation can tell us about our Creator. We are too caught up in the noises of our artificial world, noises that drown out the teachings of the animals, noises that quiet the stories as old as time told to us by the fishes, noises that silence the lessons told to us by earth itself. As humans, we are disconnected and are struggling to grasp the promise of creation; the promise of new life; the promise that brings us hope in our broken artificial world. We have forgotten that God is sovereign and holds all things in the palm of God's hand, including us.

Unfortunately, in this disconnected between God's real creation and our artificial world, we have ignored the basics of life that can be taught to us by creation if we would only step away from our artificial worlds and once more become part of the wider circle of life.

Because the amazing thing is that When we truly listen to creation and allow it to teach us, we will learn so many life-transforming things. We will learn balance. We will learn to begin to appreciate the cycles of life in all their varied

forms. We will learn patience and perseverance as we watch birds build their nests. We will learn about the beauty and mystery of life as we listen to the wind blow through the trees. We will learn that the true blessing, what gives our lives meaning and hope, as part of God's creation is that we know we can fully rely on God through all of life's ups and downs. We will come to understand and embrace that We are held in God's hand, no matter where life leads us, no matter what journeys we may be on. God holds the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being in the palm of God's hand. All we have to do is look towards creation and listen to them and begin to understand what they already know. They don't worry about getting ahead. Creation doesn't worry about having enough money. Creation doesn't worry about what clothes to wear. God has taken care of them and provided for all their needs. All creation has to do is enjoy life and become the best that God created it to be.

From the tiniest seed to the largest whale, the good news is that God holds all of us in the palm of God's hand. And as we listen to the lessons from the animals and the fishes, from earth itself, we will discover and will come to embrace the wonderful life-giving news that each day is a gift and each moment is a miracle and the best part of it all is that we know and can celebrate that God is a part of our lives each and every day. We are not alone. God holds us in the palm of God's hand.

The beauty of it is when we take time to listen to creation, we realize that God has not only written the Gospel of the good news in the Bible but God has also written the Gospel of grace and love in the trees, in the flowers, in the clouds and in the stars. God is filling our world with the good news that we are claimed and named as God's own Beloved children!

And As we listen to the Gospel of God's creation, we are reminded that God holds it all in God's hand. We are reminded that these are the same hands that brought this world into being. these are the same hands that created the trees for the birds to build nests. these are same hands that created the mountains for the goats to have a place to play. these are the same hands that made the rivers and the streams flow to provide drinks for all the wild animals. these are the same hands that formed us in the womb, that shaped us in God's image, that continue to guide us through life, and these are the same hands that now bear the mark of the nails because God loved us so much.

As we look around at creation, we realize that God's hands have shaped and formed a world for us as part of God's creation, a world of plenty, a world of beauty, a world of grace, a world of love. And that is the good news for us this morning! We are held in God's hands, no matter what life brings our way. We are safe and secure because our very being is held within the palm of God's hand.

The Gospel of creation calls us to celebrate and praise that God is a master designer, that God is the master architect, that God is the master artist. The animals, the fish, earth itself teach us that God has created an earth for us, and all of God's creation and has provided for all our needs. And God takes great joy in God's creation. God savors God's creation. God who is always creating, renewing, and rejuvenating, receives great delight from God's very own creation. Our God who has claimed and named us holds us in the palm of God's hand.

That is what creation is telling us if we would only stop and listen! They are singing for joy! They are chirping in celebration. And we are invited to join into their praise.

Because when we join in this song of joy and delight, we will discover what the animals, the fish and earth itself already know! God is in control and we are held in the palm of God's hand. So now let us join in with them as they sing out with promise and with hope. And let us stop and listen. Let us step out of our artificial worlds and join God in God's work of caring and tending creation, so that we can begin to live out the promises of the resurrection and new life. Because when we model the kind of love and care for the Earth that God has, the experience of the Kingdom of God becomes even more real for us as people of faith in our everyday lives and we again feel connected with God's Spirit and God's creation.

So this week, I invite you to listen. Listen to what the animals can teach us. Learn from the birds of the air. Listen to the stories that the fishes are sharing with us. Learn the basics of life from earth itself. And join in the celebration. We are held in the palm of God's hand, safe and secure from all alarms, living out the promise of hope, grace and love as we proclaim the beauty and mystery of the Kingdom of God.

May we continue to find ways to bridge the disconnect between us humans and God's creation and may we always celebrate the gospel of God's creation. Amen.