

September 24 2017

Reading from the Bible Genesis 1:26-31

Sermon Sermon Series: Three Great Loves

“OK, Adam and Eve, Now It’s Your Responsibility”

If you remember the story of creation, it was first an oral story. I think in the Bible, we have something like a Reader’s Condensed version of the story of creation. It is a rather cut and dried version and I am sure that as people told the story they added more details about the different species of animals, but the focus was always on God. Every culture has a creation story but our story is about one God, one benevolent God, one faithful, loving God as the author of all creation. And the creation was good. Over and over again we read. “God saw that it was good.” And it happened just as God said it would. As we think about the story, we think about the people, God made them male and female in his image. Now the second creation story in Genesis tells about the appearance of evil and about Adam and Eve in the Garden. But this story has purpose that is not opposite but it does remind us that God choose us—each one of us and both male and female. And we are to multiply the earth and take care of God’s estate. I like the way it says and care for my creation and rule over the fish of the sea and the birds in the air and everything in the earth. In many Bible versions, the word dominion (control) is used; humankind was to have dominion (control) over everything of the earth. There are different ideas what the word image means in this passage. Some Bible versions say, let us make mankind in our image according to our liking. Where did the word OUR come in?

This has caused lots and lots of discussions. Some versions say- God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We as Christians understand it better when think about Jesus, who was born, died and lived again. And other talk about the royal plural—you are while we are the royal crown God is royal and God is also great God is so big God is all powerful. The living God made humankind in His image- male and female And humankind is to take care of the earth And the earth was beautiful and then on the seventh day, God rested from the creating work.

So what do we do with this story? Do we as children make mobiles of it? Do we posters of it? Do we art of it? It is like other two loves in the three loves series of our denomination theme we are think about-love of children, that we covered in an earlier sermon and love of neighbor and which was last Sunday’s sermon and now we say love of creation. All of the things of three that we have talked about, this one-love of creation is the most difficult to preach on for a couple of reasons.

One is that people three thousand years ago were conservative and put God and nature together. Those people thought that God is nature. God is not nature. Now would you like for me to say something different. St Paul said people thought of God as in the sea and God as in the land. God is not nature. God has control of nature. Nature does yield to God's will in a wonderful majestic way.

The second area that makes talking about nature or the environment or caring for the earth-God's creation difficult is politics. So much we talk about is politics. Should we have wolves and grizzly bears in Wyoming? As my husband would say, it is easy for someone living in a penthouse thousands of miles away in New York to say that there should be wolves or grizzly bears in Wyoming. I am a bit biased about Wyoming. Yes the animals should have a place but people keep spreading out into wilder areas where the animals used to roam. Some are saying let them come and others say no. How can you bring the two groups together for the good of the world without wrecking the good of the world? How can we look at the different concerns and work something out for everyone?

There are questions? I can't tell you about climate change. Where do we stand with people at both ends of the subject and some in between? People are saying what about the hurricanes or tornadoes earthquakes. I don't think earthquakes have anything to do with climate change. But are those things climate changes? I don't know? Are the warmer changes in temperatures of ocean water normal or not normal? I don't know?

What I don't know is whether these disasters are affecting the entire universe or not, but we need to put ourselves in the right perspective, God has asked us to take care of his creation. And how are we do love and take care of his creation? We know that God created it and wants it taken care of. When I rented my house, the people who rented to me said you can do anything that you want to this house. You can paint it, make cupboards, move things around but just think of it as your home. You know that is a lot of freedom. That is exactly what God has said about our world. He said, "You didn't create this world but I want you to look at this world as your own place, your own home. So stripping it, misusing it, being carelessness of it, is misusing what God created.

Everything was created before, we were created and in Genesis 3 people were to till and plant. We are to till plant and take care of it for future generations. So how do we love creation? Some people with dire warning think that Mother Nature is taking it out on us. I don't know? I don't know how to read that. I do know that the care and love of children has been extraordinary and the love of neighbors has been extraordinary in all these disasters. I am not a meteorologist; I am not a geologist but what I believe is that politicians need to take a calm view of world disasters and find solutions for the over- reaching and over population.

We need to recognize what we have control of and what we don't have control. So the first place we are going to start is right here in our homes, in Newport, not just Pend Oreille County, or eastern Washington or northern Idaho, or not the United States or all the earth but here. We have to take care of what we have and we need to love our world. We need to recognize our particular role. We have the freedom to be good stewards or we have freedom to do evil. You might never write a letter to your congress person about anything environmental. We need to do what God calls us to do. We might never worry about elephants and tigers in Africa but you may, so do know where your heart tells you. We hold the freedom to hold this land in trust for others and for God so there are some collective decisions that can be made. One of the things we can do is to recycle. Maybe you recycle at home because the government has told you to recycle certain items. You can decide that you like the three Rs-(reduce, reuse and to recycle.) I am thinking in my life reduce is probably one of the important ones. How much do I really need? If you don't use it in three years it is time to recycle. It is one of the important things to think about. How much do I consume? If you have recently had a garage sale and I love garage sales but it is appalling to me to think how much stuff people have in their garages. Think about how much stuff we shift from one garage to another. And renting storage units are a big business now in the United States. What to save? I can't tell you what to do but there are some things to think about in caring for the earth. In the next couple of years maybe we could adopt a part of a highway; maybe we could have a recycle day in town. I know of a little church congregation of older people who helped the neighbors clean up their town. They rented a couple of great big dumpsters so everyone in the neighborhood could bring their junk to the dumpster for free. This was small congregation of older people but they worked to clean up their town. There are lots of ideas and opportunities. Plant a butterfly garden or a garden next spring. Maybe you have other ideas of opportunities? We can all find opportunities for showing love to children and love for neighbors and now think of saving and caring for God's creation. We can't do everything but we can do something as we are to be faithful stewards of all of creation. It is an honorable calling. It is a good calling. We can recycle, and we can buy less stuff. We need to have ads to buy less stuff but as you know all the ads are about buy, buy all the time. Maybe one of things we can do is to put on new glasses and look at the messages that comes to us and see what we really need. We can show our love of creation by taking care of it.

Let us pray

Dear Lord, we thank you for this wonderful earth that we live in. Thank you that you have blessed us. Help us now to be faithful. Help us to do what you would have us individually do and corporately do to take care of your creation. You have

given Adam and Eve the responsibility to take care of your creation and now you have given to us that responsibility. May we be found faithful Amen