

Earth Day: April 22, 2018

Timothy Kingsley

*May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.*

*In the name of the Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit, Amen*

Throughout the month of April, all over the Nation, organizations have been hosting a variety of Earth Day activities that make caring for the planet fun for all ages. Inspiring care and love of the Earth and the World we call our temporary home. You can pitch in and help clean up any of the Nations parks or attend a family event that includes learning ways to improve our environment and make a difference. Earth Day, the modern environmental movement, has been celebrated each April 22 since 1970.

The founder, Gaylord Nelson, began the movement as a Senator from Wisconsin after witnessing the global damages of the massive oil spill in Santa Barbara, California in 1969. Today, millions of Americans participate in the fight for a clean environment.

Yesterday, I witnessed the most amazing event, Create Harmony: Earth Day Celebration. When we join together, we create harmony. A beautiful day of community, celebration, dance, poetry, stories and earth day action in the park. Together they envisioned this experience as one that would inspire attendees to live into a world we are working for, one that is just, equitable, and sustainable, where everyone's needs are fully and fairly met.

*Genesis 1-In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth...*

*"O Lord, How manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures"(Psalm 104:24)*

Some of my fondest memories of my youth are spending time with my Dad and Mom at our rustic family cabin. Lake Rabideau in Blackduck Minnesota. **No** tv, **No** phone, **No** electricity, and an outdoor biffy, just a hunters cabin, a Franklyn stove and a fireplace, and Gods creation what more does one need. At least in Dads and my opinion; Mom had a different opinion on how to enjoy cabin life.

But I loved it. Lazy days of fishing, walking in the woods, seeing the wild life and the wonder and awe of the night time celestial display.

Knowing my love for nature, my father convinces the YMCA that his son was ready for sleep away camp at 7, 11 being the norm. I was given the privilege to try it out for a two-week camp. I love my parents, but when I came home from that experience, it was clear to me that Camp Warren was home, and a place that I would later learn cultivated my love of God's creation and all things in it. For the next 9 years, I spend the entire 10 weeks of my summer in Northern Minnesota on Half Moon Lake in Eveleth, with session breaks at my Uncles Cabin on Lake Vermilion.

One of the traditions at camp was to wake up before everyone else as the sun rise broke, and a small group of kids with their counselor, get up and go to the swimming dock. We would have a short prayer service and yell BORP at the top of our lungs and jump into often very cold lake. The Camp Warren Polar Bear Club.

I remember one year's excitement; as we celebrate this tradition, screaming with an amazing screech from a huge pine down to the water for a surfacing fish was the most beautiful Bald Eagle. My Camp Counselor was absolutely beside himself with excitement, leaping and screaming at us all to look up, hoping we would take it all in.

What the young Tim didn't realize was how rare sighting we just had ... I had no understanding that the Bald Eagle had been on the endangered species list since 1967 and had recently been upgraded to threated/potential extinction in 1973. It was hard for me to understand, how can anything so majestic and beautiful be almost gone?

In the sermon by the Rev'd John D. Paarlberg on April 22, 1997 he wrote:

The Endangered Species Act has been an important way that we as a nation exercise our God-given responsibility to serve as guardians and protectors of God's creation. The Act has helped the recovery of such endangered species as the American bald eagle, the peregrine falcon, the American alligator, the gray whale, and the whooping crane, as well as a host of lesser known but important plant and animal species.

Protecting endangered species is not merely a matter of politics and economics, but one that touches the very deepest of human values. People of faith celebrate creation as the gift of a loving Creator. "O Lord, how manifold are your works!"

sings the psalmist, "In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures." (Psalm 104:24) For the psalmist, the astonishing variety of life on earth was a cause for wonder, praise, and thanksgiving.

Each creature, from the wild goats of the high mountains (v.18) to the creeping things in the depths of the sea (v.26), is an indication of the power, wisdom, and continuing care of God. Lutheran theologian Joseph Sittler wrote, "I have never been able to entertain a God-idea which was not integrally related to the fact of chipmunks, squirrels, hippopotamuses, galaxies, and light-years."

Biblical tradition affirms that humankind occupies a special place in creation. Of all creatures only humankind is created in the image of God (Genesis 1: 26 - 27), made a little lower than angels (Psalm 8), and given dominion over other creatures (Genesis 1: 26 - 27). Often these texts have been interpreted so that the rest of creation is viewed simply as "resources" for human use, or worse, used as biblical warrant for the abuse and exploitation of creation. Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggemann, offers a corrective to that interpretation of dominion:

The dominion here mandated is with reference to the animals. The dominance is that of a shepherd who cares for, tends, and feeds the animals... Thus the task of "dominion" does not have to do with exploitation and abuse. It has to do with securing the well-being of every other creature and bringing the promise of each to full fruition.... The role of the human person is to see to it that the creation becomes fully the creation willed by God.

-- Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982,) pp. 32 - 33.

God has woven creation together like a beautiful and marvelously intricate fabric. Human greed and exploitation, however, are pulling the threads out of this fabric one by one. As many as 75 to 100 species are becoming extinct each day. If that trend continues it will only be a matter of time before the entire fabric unravels and the eco-system collapses around us.

Creation does not belong to us; creation belongs to God. We are not the owners of creation, we are but God's stewards. Christians affirm that there is only one Lord of creation, and that Lord is Jesus Christ, in whom, through whom, and for whom all things in heaven and on earth were created (Colossians 1: 15 - 20.)

In today's Gospel, we heard Jesus say "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep". If we are called to be a part of this mystical body of Christ as stated in our post communion prayer, we are all called to be "Good" shepherds and be good stewards of all that God has created and given to us. Gods flock, Gods good gift, Gods Creation,... the Earth

### A Prayer

Oh, Eagle; come with wings outspread in sunny skies.  
Oh, Eagle, come and bring us peace, thy gentle peace.  
Oh, Eagle, come and give new life to us who pray.  
Remember the circle of the sky; the stars, and the brown eagle,  
the great life of the Sun, the young within the nest.  
Remember the sacredness of things,

Amen.

—Pawnee prayer