

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

The Earth

Gospel Lesson

Genesis 1:1-13 (NRSV)

¹In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

Bible/Sermon Focus

This week we enter into a new liturgical season called the "Season of Creation." The Season of Creation was created in 1989 in Australia. Its liturgical colors are orange and turquoise. We know other liturgical seasons (Lent, Easter, Advent, and Christmas, to name a few), but this one may be new to us. It runs during September of each calendar year.

The Season of Creation focuses on just that, God's creation. Which means that we get to talk about a theology of creation and something called ecotheology. Ecotheology is a constructive theology that considers all of the connectedness between the natural world and God. It explores the creation, sustenance, and destruction of the earth through a theological lens, and ethically asks about our role in these processes as stewards of the created world and as members of God's creation ourselves.

As Christians we often talk about loving our neighbor. And in our moments of stark honesty, we may find that we do not do it so well. We live in vastly comfortable homes, distanced from one another. We can go days, weeks, even years without meeting a next door neighbor. And, we know the Gospel calls us to something different. We know the Gospel calls us into relationship with others, that our redemption means that we are restored *to community*. We know that Christ teaches us to love our neighbor. But we struggle with this call. We live in a culture where the distance between us can be immense. The same is true for our relationship to creation.

Most of us cannot tell you where our food was gathered. Do you know where your steak came from? Where the cow was raised? Where it was slaughtered? How was meat production this year? Did the animals get sick? Did the farmers have a good year? Who gathered the vegetables and fruit you ate today? Where was it grown? How much petroleum was spent getting it to you?

The distance between us and our neighbor is strikingly similar to the distance between us and our food, between us and the earth from which all of our products for consumption come. If we are not made to be separate, if we truly are made to be connected, then this distance may give us insight into why our planet is dying.

How our consumerism affects the planet, and how our understanding of God affects our consumerism have remained separate for a long time. Stewardship is at the heart of this conversation. Rev. Dr. Timothy Eberhart, Professor and United Methodist Pastor says, "Today's global economy joins participants from around the world in a social and ecological web of relations woven through with the myopic energies of self-interested love."

We don't know our neighbors as well as we should. We don't tend the planet as well as we should. We don't know how our economy and consumerism affect things. It is time to lessen the gap between us. Our nearsightedness too often harms creation. We are called as Christians to do something about it.

Discussion Questions

1. What images and ideas does the word Ecotheology bring to mind for you? (eco (ecology) + theos (god) + ology (to study or think about))
2. How did this week's sermon speak into your understanding of Christian stewardship?
3. Reflect on this quote from Rev. Dr. Timothy Eberhart: *"Today's global economy joins participants from around the world in a social and ecological web of relations woven through with the myopic energies of self-interested love."*
4. What does the distance between us and our communion elements say about our relationship with God and creation?
5. What are things that we can do to help save the planet?

Prayer

God of creation, close the distance. Break the seal covering us, separating us from your creation. Open us up to your beautiful earth in all of its fullness and glory. Show us how best to care for the earth, your primary partner in the processes of creation. By your love, restore us into community with one another and with the world around us. Amen.

The love of God invites us to sit down together and eat and drink.