



Creation Season

Proper 24, Year B, October 18, 2009

*Humans interacting with 'this fragile Earth, our island home'
We feel isolated and the world's bounty seems far from us*

A Bulletin Insert for the congregations of the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota

Lessons (Revised Common Lectionary)

Job 38:1-7, (34-41) Psalm 104:1-9, 25, 37c Hebrews 5:1-10 Mark 10:35-45
Isaiah 53:4-12 Psalm 91:9-16

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, in Christ you have revealed your glory among the nations: Preserve the works of your mercy, that your Church throughout the world may persevere with steadfast faith in the confession of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

In his book *Collapse* Jared Diamond explores the response of various societies to environmental crises. Some were able to avert disaster and others were not. One key factor in success or failure was the ability to adapt cultural values to the new context, keeping that which remained useful, but discarding that which exacerbated environmental problems. As the predominant religion in the most resource intensive society on earth, Christianity's understanding of human relationship to nature is critical for meeting the environmental crises facing the world.

Christianity has at times contributed to the degradation of the environment. Some Christians, emphasizing the dominion over birds and animals given humankind in Genesis (1:26), have treated the world as merely a stock of resources and a waste dump, to be used as people see fit. This understanding of our relationship to the natural world contributes significantly to a way of life in the United States that is *out of harmony* with nature.

On the other hand, strains within Judaism and Christianity support the care of creation. Many Christians understand God's incarnation in Jesus as the sign of the broader reality of God's continuing presence in the world. In scripture, the most direct statement on the responsibility of human beings for the rest of creation is found in Genesis 2:15 "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it." (NRSV) The other direct instruction regarding treatment of creatures is in the Sabbath law. The sabbatical year and Sabbath instructions specifically include the land, the vineyards, and the animals. All shall be given a chance to rest.

What does it mean to live in harmony with God's creation? The list of specific steps to be taken and behaviors to be adopted is as long as the list of human endeavors. In general we are called in every setting to take actions intended to protect, nurture, or use sustainably the complex ecological systems of the natural world, and protect or nurture other creatures.

In response to God's love, and out of our own love for children, grandchildren, and generations yet unborn, we need to move from an attitude of domination and exploitation to a faithful life of harmonious, mutually beneficial interrelationship.

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