



First Christian Church of Orange (Disciples of Christ)

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April 30, 2017 | Palm Sunday

SERMON: It Was Good – Land | Creation Care Series #2

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 1:9-13

By Pastor Dayna Kinkade

Genesis 1:9-13

And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then 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. The 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. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

It's not very often that we get to dedicate three babies on the same day. Dedication is not just something parents do – it's something we do as a church. When we walk a baby down that aisle and ask all of you if you are willing to participate in the shaping of this young life – it's not just religious mumbo jumbo. Our "yes" means we are making a commitment to that baby to provide a future that includes God...and God's creation.

It is not very hard to make the connection between a baby dedication and a sermon on caring for our land. There is a proverb that says, "We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children." We are borrowing the redwoods from Ryann. We are borrowing the delta from Reagan. We are borrowing the desert from Kathryn. We are borrowing the rich soil of the Midwest from Aayla. We are borrowing the sandy soil of California from Liam. We are borrowing the mountains from Eleanor.

The general rule is that when you borrow something you return that something in the same or better condition it was in when it was loaned to you. I don't know that we will be able to do that with the land we borrow from our children. We can give them a watch that answers their phone but we won't be able to give them a rain forest. We can give them talking toys but we can't give them unspoiled prairie. We can put tracking devices on their cars but we can't give them a wetland and all its inhabitants. We can tell them a story of creation based on love and beauty, but we can't explain why we didn't care for it. When we repay the loan, what will we say?

A farmer/restaurant owner told my husband about the time kids from the city came to tour his farm. He pulled a carrot from the dirt to show the kids. One boy asked him why he kept his carrots in the dirt. It seems that the more advanced we get the further removed we become from the sources of our nourishment, the further removed we become the less we care.

A Senegalese environmentalist, Baby Dioum wisely says, "We won't save places we do not love; we can't love places we do not know; and we don't know places we haven't learned."

Is there a place in your life that you love – that inspires you – a place of natural beauty. I once had a friend that wanted to share a spot with me. It was a place he loved – a place that connected him to God and to creation. It wasn't a fancy place, with a parking lot or entrance fees. It was a swath of grace in the middle of a field in central Iowa. He wanted me to go on a dark night and without a flashlight we navigated barbed wire and underbrush until we came to this spot where a gurgling sound could be heard. He spread out a couple of towels and we sat down. That gurgling sound was a spring – the beginning of a river. He then pulled a simple little camp stove out of his backpack and boiled water for tea. And there we sat – drinking it in. The beauty of that place was matched by his love for it.

My husband and I wanted to share this kind of love and fascination with his girls, but we didn't do a very good job. We made it to Yellowstone and sat on the benches surrounding Old Faithful. Both girls were complaining, with their backs to the geyser. "You mean we have to sit here for twenty minutes to watch water shoot out of the ground?" Driving through the Grand Tetons Milissa had her head buried in a Seventeen magazine looking for a new haircut. We went places and we did things but we didn't do a very good job of sharing our love for a special place that connects us with creation.

Several weeks ago, Mary Lou Savage fell and broke her femur. I went to see her in the hospital, before she had surgery. We talked about her fall and her leg – but what she wanted me to know was that there is a crown of thorns and a ray of light in our garden. She thought it would be a perfect place for our prayer vigil on Good Friday and those two plants were especially fitting. She was so excited to tell me. Mary Lou, Mark and Bonnie Kamp, and Miguel Cosme have revived our garden just to give us this gift of beauty. When was the last time you were that excited about a plant?

It seems like these days we are so busy trying to take pictures of everything and documenting our every move – we fail to capture the beauty right in front of us. We are in such a hurry to get places, we miss beauty along the way. We have no time for awe, reverence, and silent wonder.

It's never too late to learn those things – and it is never too early to instill a love and reverence for nature in our children. It's always the right time to read the creation story from Genesis and sense God's delight in it all.

There are so many things we can do and should do and must do to care for our land – learning to love it is a good place to start – learning how to appreciate its generosity and resilience – learning how it connects us with the past and the future and God. Then maybe we can learn to care for it – and fiercely defend it if need be.

Our responsibility for Ryann and Reagan and Kathryn do not end at the FCCO property line. Our responsibility extends to the mountains and the beaches, to the aquifers and the atmosphere. They will need untainted food to eat, uncontaminated water to drink, and fresh air to breathe. They will need to see and experience the unspoiled beauty of God's creation. That's on our watch.

We have so much to share with these children! Let it not be our bad habits.