

## **CARING FOR CREATION**

### **It's All About Every Little Thing**

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The scriptures create many different word pictures when describing the depth of God's love for us. It is said that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without God's knowing; or that God even knows the number of hairs on our head (easier math for some than for others). It is said that we are known by God even before being knit together in the womb. Each image relates the detail with which God is present and active in our lives. The apostle Paul sums it all up by saying that in Christ all things live and move and have their being.

Traditionally, Christians have referred to the natural world as the second book; it is also a place where we read and learn about God. You may recall the Psalmist saying that the heavens declare the glory of God. What we read in nature is consistent with the paper scriptures. John Muir is quoted as saying that the more one looks at nature, the more one sees that everything is connected to everything else. Theologically, we refer to that insight as the relational nature of a Trinitarian God. God's very essence is to connect all things into one being.

Interconnectedness is also the major insight that binds environmental studies together. We are earth-based creatures and intimately connected to the whole web of life on earth. For better or for worse, all creatures are in this together. The life of one always impacts the quality of life for all. Where those interrelationships are healthy, biologists speak of biodiversity—multiple layers of plants and animals; each of which depends upon the other. God calls that abundance and it's a direct result of God's command to be fruitful and multiply.

What has become all too clear now, is that relationships within the natural world are not healthy. Business-style agriculture depletes and erodes the soil. Fertilizer runoff creates dead zones in the ocean. Building sprawl eliminates habitat for other creatures. And the burning of fuels upsets the carbon cycle, creating the specter of global climate change. The unbalanced consumption of resources by humans is now the primary threat to sustained abundance. In an interconnected system, it really is about every little thing. There are no innocent decisions. Each decision has consequences for the others who are part of that interconnected web.

Aldo Leopold is quoted as saying that environmental studies lead to a life of great pain. It hurts to know what's wrong with the world. It hurts to know how much has been lost. And, once you know, you can't un-know. Leopold is only half right. We are not lost in our sin and misery--to quote the catechism. Behind it all is a loving God who is working to restore, refresh and renew. Because God loves all of creation, God is working toward its re-creation, its re-formation. We are members of the Reformed Church in America, because at our core, we believe in that process of reformation.

Every little thing matters and we are able to make contributions toward the restoration of abundance. The life choices we make can help to restore ecosystems. Our challenge is to ask the ethical questions and to hear what God is saying to us about the way we ought to live. What about the food we eat? The homes we build? The energy we use? There will not be one simple solution. There will not be a quick fix. For your reflection on the way you live, I recommend a reading of *Living The Good Life On God's Good Earth* from Faith Alive Christian Resources/Grand Rapids. Do what you can with the resources that have been entrusted to you. A groaning creation needs to hear from us.

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