

BARTHOLOMEW AND THE OOBLECK

GENESIS 1: 21-30

August 18 and 19, 2018

How many of you would like to control the seasons? I know some of you would prefer it be summer all year long, or spring or fall ... I don't know about winter unless you're an avid skier or just can't wait for sledding season. And all this rain when are we going to get some sunshine?

If only we had control.... It'd be perfect weather in a perfect world all the time, wouldn't it?

It's that kind of thinking that got King Derwin and his kingdom in so much trouble!

All summer when the sunshine came down, he growled; in the spring when the rain came down, he growled; and in the fall when the fog came down, he growled; and in the winter when the snow came down, he shouted!

King Derwin decided he wanted to rule the sky. So, he gathered his magicians and asked them to make something fall from HIS skies that no other kingdom has ever had before.

And they came up with oobleck ... ooey, gooey, messy oobleck ... that wreaked havoc on King Derwin's kingdom. It wasn't until page boy Bartholomew Cubbins helped the King see the error of his ways, that he was able to utter the words "I'm sorry" and put the skies to the right again --and

for him to determine those four old-fashioned things – rain, sunshine, fog, and snow ... were good enough for any king in all the world, especially for him, old King Derwin of Didd.

I thought this was an interesting story for us to examine, especially in light of the unprecedented and record number of disasters and weather making events that are becoming commonplace across the world. It's not something we talk about a lot and yet one of our Social Principles as the UMC addresses our responsibility for the care of creation and a resolution from the UMW was passed at this year's Annual Conference to form a Creation Care Team.

Every few weeks it seems, a devastating violence of some sort or other is unleashed. An earthquake---a tornado--a tsunami---a massive storm---a flood---a drought---a rash of wildfires. And much like the oobleck that all but destroyed the Kingdom of Didd, these weather events level properties, destroy homes, decimate crops, claim lives. And survivors are left breathless in their wake, tasked with trying to piece their shattered lives back together.

Such catastrophes should challenge our thinking. They should demand that we consider some of the deeper questions we can all-too-easily ignore in more prosperous and peaceful times.

We'd almost have to have blinders on to not at least be asking the question -- what's wrong? Why are these where-did-this-come-from, never-before-witnessed calamities piling up on top of one another?

We're all over the place in our thinking about climate change. Some of us believe that global warming is changing our weather patterns and harming our earth and ecological balance. Some of us believe that it's not real and that everything is fine; it's hype to scare us and drive up the price of oil and consumables. Some of us are somewhere in between all along the spectrum.

And there are some that unless we're complaining about it being too hot, or too cold, or too wet or too dry for our taste, unless it affect us directly, don't even think about the climate.

It's only when it gets really nasty---when rains turn to floods, when snows stop our planes, when droughts demand water restrictions, when an earthquake topples infrastructure---that we even think to acknowledge the power the climate holds over us. Impressive as our society is, it remains vulnerable to the sheer elemental power of the weather.

Our very existence depends on the climate. Take rain. To the average city-dweller, rain has little bearing on day-to-day life; in fact, it's often just a nuisance. But to the farmer, rain is life. It nourishes the crops and the pastures. The weather and all its component parts, is the complex, interconnected, vitally important machine that sustains life!

And it's this very connection of the sustainability of our lives with the weather that points us back to our world's masterful Creator. The earliest chapters of Scripture depict God creating the oceans and landmasses, the atmosphere

and weather patterns, the various species of plants and animals, the ecosystems—and the vast host of laws that govern nature's successful operation. God put humankind in the garden to care for it, to till it and to keep it.

We who are made in the image of God, have rule over all of Creation according to Genesis 1:26. But ruling doesn't mean that we exploit Creation or that we manipulate it for our own purposes, because ruling means stewardship of, love for, care for. Having rule over the Creation that God has entrusted to our care means that, just like God cares for us so that we might be the best we can be in this life, we are called to care for the earth so that it can be the best it can be.

God created all that is and called it 'good' and we have the responsibility to see that it stays 'good'.

And yet, there are very few places in America that we might call pristine anymore. Trash covers our beaches, lies in the bottom of rivers and streams.

There are fewer and fewer places where a starry heaven can actually be seen because of all the artificial light we have created. I recently saw a picture taken from a satellite at night and it seemed the whole country was ablaze. When we stop looking at the stars, we can soon get an unduly exalted opinion of ourselves!

More and more people live in concrete worlds, going days, weeks, and months without even really seeing a tree or real grass. A news segment followed a group of children who

visited a dairy for the first time, their eyes wide with wonder at discovering that milk did not come from grocery stores!

Our food so often comes to us pre-packaged and pre-processed and pre-practically cooked for us so we don't see the connection with the soil, the water, sunshine, and creation from which they come to us.

We turn on our tap and out flows fresh water that we didn't have to go outside to fetch.

We've become detached from creation and have lost something vital, something essential to our own well-being. When we begin to take creation for granted, it has a way of humbling us, of reminding us that we're not so independent and in control as we might like to think.

The environmental crisis is a theological problem, a problem that stems from our view of God and how we relate to God and each other. It's not just a "political issue" as many like to contend. It's at the very heart of the charge humankind was given at the beginning... keep it "good!"

We can be like a King Derwin that encourages and permits destructive behavior or like a Bartholomew Cubbin that encourages right relationship and harmony will all of the created order.

It can be very uncomfortable to take responsibility for the brokenness of the earth around us. It took the inevitable destruction of his Kingdom for King Derwin to recognize his part in making it happen.

In a way similar to confessing what we've done to a person we've wronged, we need to own up to our part of damage that has been done to the earth. If we don't take responsibility for what's happening all around us, then change is not possible. Improvement is not possible, for us or for the earth.

Some folks will say that we can't possibly make a difference. They would say that one or two or even a hundred people who care about something are not able to speak loudly enough to drown out the voices of those with vested interests in maintaining the status quo

It would be easier to step back and stop thinking so hard about the environment, about pollution, about toxins, even about how care of the earth is important to our faith. But, we need to speak up, to act, to make a difference in any way we can.

Recycling everything we can... turning off lights ...car pooling... how many of you live right down the street from one another and could have carpoled to worship, but for your own personal convenience ... didn't? We can support policies and laws that seek to protect and preserve our environment... there are 16,306 endangered species – that's up 200 from last year ... and a close look at the list reveals the top reasons are species hunt by humans, destruction of habitats for "progress", and climate change.

The Creation that sustains us will continue to sustain us if we do our part... that's been God's promise from the very beginning. But, we have an obligation to each other, to future generations and to God. A sense of gratitude for

what we've been given and a sense of responsibility in caring for it would go a long way in changing the world.

Let us pray:

Christ Jesus, you reached out your healing hands to embrace all who were hurting. Guide us into caring deeply enough about the world around us that we, too reach out in order to bring healing. Show us how we might begin to heal some of the brokenness that is so evident today. May we live by our faith from our hearts and not just by our words. Amen.