

May 28, 2017
Genesis 1
Psalm 8

A Part in Creation

What are we, human that you are mindful of us, O God? What are human beings that you care for them? In the wonder of all of creation, the awesome works of God's hands, who are we really, the Psalmist wonders. Just think of what surrounds us. The plants that give us a thousand flavorful foods, the amazing flowers that bloom in every color, the grasses that grow taller than a building, the diversity of trees that produce shade and give off oxygen. And all the creatures of every shape and size. The cattle, sheep, horses, chickens that each supply our needs. Dogs and cats that accompany us, birds that delight us, dolphins and whales that astonish us; badgers and leopards and hummingbirds and ant colonies. Chameleons with those eyes that move different directions; monarch butterflies that migrate thousands of miles; mountain goats that, as soon as they are born, can leap across rocks; spotted skunks that do a hand stand to spray their stinky skunk spray. Octopuses that have two-thirds of their neurons in their arms, which means each arm has a mind of its own. And all of this, all of this amazing life, on a perfect

planet with a perfect mix of oxygen and carbon dioxide and nitrogen; with the perfect amount of water; that is the perfect distance from the sun; that has perfect enormous planetary neighbors to deflect most asteroids. The moon and the stars that wink at us from the serenity of deep space. All of it the work of God's hands. So who are WE in all of this? Who are WE, really, in this amazing creation?

We are a small part of a great masterpiece. Just a part of the wonderful work of God's design. We are so small. And yet God expects big things of us. We have a big job. We are just a part of creation, but we have an important part to play. Because each one of us is made in God's image, according to God's likeness, to be God's representatives on earth.

Each of us has a part to play in creation. Each of us made in God's own image to act on behalf of God in this world. It is a very big job when you think about it. We are in charge of this place. In Genesis, it's the first job God that gives us. To stand in for God, to have dominion over God's handiwork. We are to be fruitful and multiply. To fill the earth and subdue it, it says in the Bible. We have a big part to play in this creation.

Now, according to some, that means we can do as we please with creation. Some hear the words fill and subdue in Genesis and take it to mean conquer and overwhelm. And get out the bulldozers and the backhoes. It means clear the wilderness. And mow and pave and develop. Be fruitful and multiply all over the face of the earth. Take over. Dominate. Subdue the dangerous and wild world without appreciating it. Or understanding it. Or feeling connected to it. Even though it, too, is the work of God's hands.

But our very good God made this world and called it very good, and then put us in charge of it. We have a part to play and a job to do. It is the job of being gardeners. And educators. And caretakers. And protectors. And people of love. And people of self-sacrifice. Because this is what we are created for. That is the image of God we are made in. A God of life and love and connection. Not a tyrant God. Or domineering god or an impatient god or a my-way-or-the-highway God. We are made in the image of a God who is merciful and compassionate, to be merciful and compassionate. To be creative and joyful and interconnected. To coax out the best in the world around us. To honor the

handiwork of our very good God. Whose work is not random or valued by our standards of usefulness, but divine and holy. The least we can do is respect it.

We are a part of God's amazing work. Just a part of the creation that began billions and billions of years ago. We are such a small part of it, but we have such an important part to play. We are made in the image God, our very good God, to care for God's very good world. To be representatives of God's holy love. And God believes we can do it. God trusts that we are up for this challenge. To be in charge of God's creation. So let us be stewards and caretakers on behalf of God. Let us embody God's mercy and compassion. Let us represent God's life-giving grace, for the sake of all creation. And for the sake of ourselves and the generations to come.