

Creation 2C ~ Fauna
Peace, Seattle
June 13, 2010 epk

FAUNA

ERIK ~ FRAME

As we mark the SEASON OF CREATION this month, we're inviting you to join us in re-imagining our place as creatures made in the image of God and related intricately and intimately to the rest of creation.

What does that mean for how we understand our vocation—our calling to be earthkeepers?

Listen to a story from the collection by Wendell Berry: WHAT ARE PEOPLE FOR?¹...

[DAMAGE, Wendell Berry, pp. 5, 6]

ELDON ~ DAMAGE 1

In a real sense, Berry's story is typical of what we human beings do in a countless variety of ways. His rationales are very logical, his motives are noble, his efforts are deliberate.

But, not only does his artificial pond collapse, his story raises some questions that set the theme for today's reflections:

1. What about the animal life that's impacted?
2. Why do we do this? Rebuild nature?
3. What do we do about it? What's our vocation in this?

ERIK ~ DAMAGE 1

- Berry is aware that there's something wrong with his contrived pond – something about that pond tells him that it isn't a simple matter of fixing the pond (maybe adding a cement lining?)
- There's something about us as builders that's not well.
- And the scenario of the pond won't change unless we change the way we look at the earth and our relationship with it.

ELDON ~ DAMAGE 2

- When Berry builds his pond, he destroys an infinite number of soil organisms that have taken thousands of years to develop.
- Those organisms feed countless insects, worms, and earth creatures that enrich the soil.
- Those creepy crawlies feed the many species of birds.
- The richness of the soil feeds the squirrel, chipmunk, the deer, the elk, the bear, all the wondrous variety of wildlife.
- Berry's simple story is about how animals become endangered extinct.

ERIK ~ DAMAGE 2 CLOSER TO HOME

Closer to home, the example is writ large as we consider the health of Puget Sound.

The biggest single source of pollution is what's called non-point pollution;

- Non-point pollution comes from many diffuse sources, as rainfall and snowmelt moving over and through the ground and picks up natural and human-made pollutants, depositing them in our waterways.
- The contributors are so diverse and scattered that they're impossible to trace, but every time we wash our car or fertilize our lawn we make a contribution to non-point pollution.²

¹ Wendell Berry, *What Are People For? Essays by Wendell Berry*. (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), pp.5-6.

² For more information, check out the Environmental Protection Agency's website: <http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/qa.html>

- And the whole integrated system of flora and fauna in our watersheds are effected, from the salmon in Fauntleroy Creek to the Orca's in Puget Sound.
- When we gaze out our picture windows at the incredible vistas that West Seattle affords, do we see beyond the aesthetic beauty to our impact through hundreds of little acts every day?

ELDON ~ HUBRIS

We do it because we sin.

- Sin as hubris = trying to restructure the world in terms of ourselves. Curved in on ourselves.
- The scriptures tell us we're stewards, but what does that mean – how does a steward become a servant, not a consumer?
- Creation does not exist for our use, disposal, pleasure. Creation exists for God's purposes, God's promises
- We are creatures, not all that clever, (1 Corinthians) not at the pinnacle of creation, but integral to creation.
- We're different from other life-forms, but we are named by God as members of a wilderness of the wonder of life. Humans cannot sustain the complexity of the pinnacle posture we've assumed – it's killing us, and killing all life-forms on earth.

ERIK ~ JOB STORY

- Recall that in Genesis 1 humans are given the right to "dominion."
- But here in our text from JOB God, tongue in cheek, challenges Job to try and do just that.
- "Now, Job, as a human with the power to 'rule' animals, you should be able to get the wild ass to be willing to serve you, be like your handmaid. If so, Job, you would have the wild ass lie beside your bed at night to do your bidding or take care of your baby...and so on.
- **Implication is: no wild animal will be a docile servant. The way of the wild ass is not to serve humans.**³

ELDON ~ RESPONSE...

- Our role is to understand the unique character of our kin in the wild, to preserve their habitat in the world and not assume that we can treat them as beasts of burden or objects of curiosity.
- Ps 104 – has God rejoicing in nature, playing with Leviathan like a ruby ducky in the bathtub.
- God continues to rejoice in wonders and celebrate with wisdom all the mysteries of the cosmos.
- Yet we humans have turned God's celebration into sadness, because we regard ourselves as somehow separate from the animal, the creature, the natural. God's laughter is turned into lament.⁴

Lyanda Haupt, author of Crow Planet, and near neighbor to us here at Peace, writes:

"We live on a changing earth where ecological degradation and global climate change threaten the most foundational biological processes. If the evolution of wild life is to continue in a meaningful way, humans must attain a changed habit of being, one that allows us to recognize and act upon a sense of ourselves as integral to the wider earth community...In spite of the string of magazine covers announcing the contrary, we all know that ten simple things will not save the earth. There are, rather, three thousand impossible things that all of us must do, and changing our light bulbs, while necessary, is the barest beginning. We are being called upon to act against a prevailing

³ Insight from Norm Habel, at Season of Creation website: www.seasonofcreation.org

⁴ Ibid.

culture, to undermine our own entrenched tendency to accumulate and to consume, and to refuse to define our individuality by our presumed ability to do whatever we want.”⁵

ERIK ~ GOSPEL STORY 1

In our Gospel story, Jesus introduces the kingdom of God by taking us first to the kingdom or realm of the wild.

- **At first Jesus sounds ridiculous!** “Don’t worry!” he says. “God takes care of the creatures in the wild, so God will take care of us!” “Consider the ravens”... So are we to live like ravens?
- The song beneath the words is: IF YOU’RE GOING TO STRIVE FOR SOMETHING, STRIVE FOR SOMETHING THAT MATTERS – THAT’S AT THE HEART OF THINGS. STRIVE FOR THE KINGDOM.

ELDON ~ GOSPEL STORY 1

- A realm/a domain, way of living that is opposite to the impulses of hubris;
- A way of being in relationship that’s in contrast to political or economic kingdoms of nations, where it’s all about power and productivity, exploitation, increasing possessions.
- The Solution to hubris isn’t inner reflection and guilt, but to look outside ourselves, beyond “ME” to what the New Testament calls the REALM OF GOD, to what St. Paul calls “the new creation.”

Hard to define VOCATION. And we can’t define another person’s vocation.

- Vocation isn’t a set destination or identity in our life, it’s a voice from beyond ourselves that calls us to follow.
- Nor is it an obligation something about which to feel bad or guilty.
- **It’s our freedom**, the freedom to discern what God is calling me – you – us to become.
- And we find that call by listening to the needs of our kin in creation, and by listening to you, my brothers and sisters in this community of the promise.

SO...To what is God’s promise calling you?

What is your calling in creation?

ERIK ~ CLOSING Excerpt from Wendell Berry.⁶

I

The grace that is the health of creatures can only be held in common.
In healing the scattered members come together.
In health the flesh is graced, the holy enters the world.

II

The task of healing is to respect oneself as a creature, no more and no less.
A creature is not a creator, and cannot be. There is only on Creation, we are its members.

To be creative is only to have health: to keep oneself fully alive in the Creation, to keep the Creation fully alive in oneself, to see the Creation anew, to welcome one’s part in it anew.

The most creative works are all strategies of this health.

⁵ Lyanda Haupt, *Crow Planet: Essential Wisdom from the Urban Wilderness*. (New York: Little, Brown and Co. 2009).

⁶ Op cit., page 9.