

Scripture: Job 12:7-10

Sermon Title: "Love of Creation"

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One of the biggest treats in the summer growing up for me and my brother, was the trip we would get to take every other year or so with our grandfather and uncle to spend a few days at a hunting camp in the woods of Northern Pennsylvania. On these trips, we were not there to hunt because nothing was open at that time, but we were there to relax and enjoy the created order of the world. We would spend a lot of time out in creation, even if it was simply sitting on the porch of the camp for hours on end, looking out toward the hill of trees just beyond the creek less than 100 yards away from where we sat. We would see all kinds of birds swooshing in and out, seeing the occasional deer emerge from the trees for a drink of water at the creek, and of course, just the beauty of the landscape. We would go fishing but rarely caught a fish. We would take countless drives through the mountains on these dirt service roads trying to see some bear, deer, turkeys, or any other wildlife that would make an appearance, and these drives would take up an entire evening, until dusk finally turned to dark. And after dark, being so far away from the lights of a city, we could witness the vastness of the universe by looking up at the countless stars.

There was even one day that we drove 2 hours to go to this spot farther west in upstate Pennsylvania where there was a viewing location to see elk. And if you know anything about elk, one of the best times to try and see them is early in the morning, right before the sun is rising. So at 3am, we piled into the car and began our drive, arriving before the elk were up but eventually having some beautiful views of these majestic creatures as we spend several hours just sitting, waiting, and watching.

Now, I will admit that as a young kid, I didn't appreciate as fully all of this time as much as my grandfather and uncle did. Don't get me wrong, I loved sitting on the porch relaxing in the early morning, but after 10 minutes or so I got a little antsy and

would need to go in the camp, read a book, play a game, or something. I did enjoy fishing, but after 30 minutes of catching nothing, I was ready to go back to the camp. The drives were fun, but when we didn't see anything for a while, I was ready to turn around, and that 3am drive was just a bit too early for this kid. At the time, I didn't appreciate the wonders of creation with the same grandeur and even the same level of respect as my grandfather and uncle did. When I think back on what they were sharing with me and my brother, I realize now that they were showing us their deep love for creation. They were modeling for us the ways in which being out in creation can be such a calming thing, like spending hours on the porch. They were showing us that the beauty of creation is not something that we just glance at for a moment or even capture in a picture for they rarely too photographs, but that this beauty was something to be witnessed in depth and something to experience - to spend time taking it all in and just absorbing it by being present. It meant spending hours waiting for bear or deer or elk to come by for the simple pleasure of appreciating what they offer to the world. To appreciate their beauty and too cherish the Divine spark within them. In it all, I believe that my grandfather and Uncle saw God and in sharing these camping excursions with me and my brother, I too believe they were trying to show God to us as well.

In our reading this morning from the book of Job, we are reminded of something that we have talked about quite a bit in the past, something that most recently we reflected on at our blessing of the animals service - and that is the importance of creation. Not only for the ways in which this earth and its creatures nourish us in mind, body, and soul, but also the ways in which the created order of this world reveals God to us. Job says, "ask the animals, the birds, the fish, the plants even and they will teach you, they will declare to you, they will tell you about who God is in our world and the ways in which God's hand is witnessed in all of creation - that they have much wisdom within them." Job reminds us of the special gift that this world is to humanity. That it does not only feed us and provide for our needs, but it has something to teach us, something to share with us. In this way, creation is one of the most precious gifts that we have.

Today, as we consider our continued conversation on the 3 Great Loves, we now reflect on what it means to love creation. And maybe a way of reframing this is what does it mean to cherish the gift of the created order around us? After all, think about how you care for those meaningful gifts in your own life – and now I am talking about the things that we own that have a special or sentimental meaning – how do you protect it, keep it safe, how do you use it with the greatest of respect, how do you wish to eventually pass it on to another? Reflecting on that may just help us to see ways in which we need to be caring for creation. How is what we do on a daily basis respecting the world around us? How do we show our appreciation for the land and what it offers? How do we care for all the creatures that inhabit it? Part of this may be examining our own use of resources and maybe even changing how we engage with the world. How can we help keep our world healthy and improve its health for not just our own sakes, but for the sake of generations to come? For again, it is a precious gift of God that is there to teach us, to reveal Divine truths to us. Knowing this, how will we care for such a priceless gift and make sure that we cherish it and pass it on to the next generation, cared for and nurtured?

You know, sometimes I still find it hard to spend a great deal of time just soaking it all in when I am out in the world, for it is so easy to get wrapped up in the day-to-day tasks as we move about our everyday lives. However, I do my best to be much more open to what the plants, trees, animals have to teach us – for they have much to say according to Job. So may we cherish this world and the many gifts it has to offer. May we respect it and care for it. And may we listen to what it has to say. So be it and may it be so. Amen.