

It's Good!

First Congregational Church, Branford

6/23/19; Old Turtle; Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 27, 31

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As God created the world,

⁴God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

¹⁰God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it... was good. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it... was good. ¹⁸ God made the sun and the stars to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it... was good. ²¹So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it... was good. ²⁵God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it... was good. So God created humankind in his image, male and female he created them. ³¹God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was *very good*. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

It's all there, isn't it? God's great love for the earth that he created; how pure and innocent it was in its inception - how lush, abundant, balanced and ordered. God called it all good, including the creation of humankind - and while it wasn't in our shortened scripture reading, it goes on to say that God gave humankind dominion over the creatures of the earth. It's interesting that the story doesn't say that God gave us dominion over the waters and the earth... but we sure took it, anyway, didn't we? We may not have set out to harm the waters and the earth, but we have.

It's like Old Turtle said - destruction of the environment has happened because we haven't remembered who we are, or where God is. That we belong to Someone, we're not the owners of these good waters and earth.

I believe that when we remember that, it makes us want to care for the earth, and leave it better for those who will follow. Perhaps it's true that the further we go along the spiritual path, we become more "other" oriented, wanting to make life better for others. You know how in the story when the mountain and the waters and the antelope, etc., etc. kept trying to say who God is based upon themselves, but then later, in an effort toward peacemaking, each one said that God was like the other- they were no longer committed to claiming God in their own image.

When we remember who and Whose we are, we seek to live gentle upon the earth (you know that wonderful quote, *to walk softly upon the earth*. I still clomp around too much!) - to consume less, be less wasteful, and more grateful for this good place we've been given.

Even though there's been a good bit of education about it, the average American probably doesn't live very green. Most people don't realize their personal impact upon the earth. I know how overwhelming it can be to read all of the magazine and newspaper articles on the environment, and to know where to begin to make a dent. Maybe I could challenge each of us here today to do *just one thing*, to make one change in how we go about our daily lives. If you're already doing one thing, add another.

Like, doing away with paper cups, plates and plastic silverware - that end up in our ever-expanding landfills.

When Oprah had her talk show, she shared that her company went through 1,600 paper cups *a day*! So, they dispensed with paper cups at Harpo productions - everyone brought in a mug. That's HUGE! Imagine if every company and corporation and church took such a stand.

I look at where I've consumed excessively in my life, and ask myself, what one thing would I dare to live without. I knew the answer to this long ago, but wasn't willing to give it up or cut back. I take a filled to the brim bath every single day, 7 days of God's week. That's almost 100 gallons of water a day, 700 gallons a week. But, before you point the finger at me, if you take a long shower, you're using even more than that! It's been my one real luxury - it's my "Calgon, take me away" time - soothing, meditative, and inspiring. I would like to love the water of the earth more than I love my bath time. Maybe two days I could take a 4 minute shower - but, because I hate them, I do them in 2! The other day I did it in one!

As for washers and dryers, I know that many people are using water and energy-efficient ones. So, that's good.

You may know that if everyone in the United States flushed the toilet just one less time per day, we could save a lakeful of water a mile long, a mile wide, and four feet deep every day... - just one less flush a day.

I remember when the UCC church in Mansfield, CT was designated a green church. They wanted to be better stewards of creation, so they created environmental stewardship guidelines and began doing one simple thing at a time. And, momentum grew. When you think about the creation story, it makes a lot of sense for churches to help spearhead the way.

The United Church of Christ would like us to join together to address the environment, especially climate change and global warming. There's a growing consensus across religious traditions about all of this. Some years back, even Southern Baptist leaders spoke out against global warming. You may remember when the Pope challenged 500,000 worshipers to say "yes" to care for creation.

In the church office we do a good job of putting our paper trash in recycling wastebaskets. And, we do a pretty good job with turning lights out. In my office I only turn on my spots and bring them up just a little. As often as possible let's try to go with natural light at home, work, and church.

I don't know if FCC can stop using paper cups, paper plates and plastic silverware - no one wants to do dishes! John Woods wouldn't be happy with that suggestion! But, it's something to consider.

Green cleaning products are good; for window cleaner you can use vinegar, alcohol, and water.

Some people are always in a dilemma about drying their hands in public bathrooms - to use a paper towel or the hand dryer that consumes energy. I often just shake my hands and wipe them on my clothes!

More towns are waving goodbye to single-use plastic. As of this past March, Connecticut is moving toward a statewide ban on products including bags, straws and take-out containers. It's good how so many people are using canvass.

Anyway, it *can* be overwhelming, so back to that just one thing - if everyone made a commitment to do just one thing, it really would have a huge impact. *And*, it might change us, too - to make us more mindful of who we are, of the goodness and purity in which we were created.

For the love of this good earth, a good God, and good people, let us not remain indifferent...

And, after a long, lonesome and scary time, the people listened and began to hear. And to see God in one another and in all the beauty of the earth. And Old Turtle smiled. And so did God. Amen.