

Third Sunday after Pentecost

Rev Nancy Wakely - June 14th, 2015

When I was a kid my dad was a deer hunter. Every deer season his buddies and sometimes my uncles would travel to Colorado and stay in what we called, “The cabins at Bear Creek”. Lest you picture a luxurious setting, the cabins were the remnants of a lumber jack camp with two little tar paper buildings. Both had two wrought iron beds, a wood cook stove, and a kitchen table. There was a frigid creek to bathe in and an outhouse that got further and further away as the night closed in.

Our extended family used to go there during the summer and one summer my dad decided to teach me to spot deer. We drove in his jeep higher and higher up old lumber roads to the places he knew from his hunting trips. He could always see a deer first and shared his secret with me. “Don't look at that big

old forest. Picture in your mind what you're looking for and then look for the little movements between the trees. It's not always the big things that are important. Sometimes it's the little things”. The lesson I learned was sometimes you don't always need to focus on the big picture—the vast forest filled with towering pine trees and quakies—but rather focus on the small movements and shadows between them. It was a lesson that did not take until a little later in life but it was a beginning step in my interest in the nature and eventually what was moral and ethical as far as our environment is concerned.

I started out at O.U. as a vocal music education major but after the first semester announced to my piano teacher that I was giving up the frivolity of a music degree and going for a degree in marine zoology. I could sail the seas and save the whales with Jacques Cousteau. Dr. Frings, head of the zoology department at

OU, was excited to have his first marine zoology major and plotted out a course of study all the way through a masters and then on to a PhD. The big picture of saving the whales went by the wayside when I flunked Zoology I, made a “D” in college algebra, and barely passed a swimming class for my fear of deep water. Still looking at the forest instead of between the trees.

The big things that are overwhelmingly important in life, the actions that catch the eyes of others, the grand gestures are not what Jesus was about. He spoke in parables about the little things, the

everyday things...the mustard seed that sleeps underground, sprouts and grows, and then becomes home and shelter for little birds. It is a small thing, sometimes a hidden thing, that grows into something bigger and that makes a difference.

Big issues can be addressed with simple gestures and the small ways in which we protect the earth, God's creation and our island home. Martin Luther said that "God writes the gospel not in the Bible alone, but on trees and flowers and clouds and stars". That is what speaks to my heart when I hear the first gentle breeze right after dawn stirring the trees. That is speaks to me about creation and God and the movement of the spirit.

You don't have to set sail on a Greenpeace boat to save the whales. But you can recycle and be aware that our trash is creating big islands of floating debris in our oceans. You can be aware of what herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizer you are putting in your yard and the damaging effects on soil ecosystems...the kind damage that affects the mustard seed and eventually the wild life that relies on the plant. We can all say "no" to farmers that are indiscriminately spraying and planting seeds containing poison that are killing the bees that pollinate crops. I don't speak about the poisons we are spreading by reading the Sierra Club magazine. Our own bee hives were decimated, a toad in the garden is a rare occurrence, the quail are gone, and the killdeer no longer nest in our driveway. This is happening in our own backyards because of the reckless acts of those who do not respect the earth.

We need to be looking beyond the grand gestures we think we have to make and start looking between the trees. Hold those in power accountable and speak truth to power. Tell those in power, a United States Senator no less, that throwing a snow ball on the Senate floor to disprove global warning is not a joke. It's not funny. Tell them that they need to look at what's going on around them and at what is staring them in the face.

As individuals we need to throw that small stone into the water and make a small ripple that will flow into eternity. Blend your one voice with the voices of many and make the earth roar in joyful thanks. We may not see the benefits in our lifetime but the little things we do, the small seeds we plant, will eventually affect one flower, one bee, one river, or one tree...some small part of creation. Picture in your mind that one thing about the environment and creation that causes your heart to ache because if it makes your heart hurt, chances are...it makes God's heart hurt.

I leave you with the words of another:

Wherever we turn, we hear the voice of God and behold his handiwork. From the solemn roll of the deep thunder and the old ocean's ceaseless roar, the glad songs that make the forests vocal with melody, nature's ten thousand voices speak His praise. In earth and sea and sky, with their marvelous tint and color, varying in gorgeous contrast or blended in harmony, we behold His glory. The everlasting hills tell of His power. The trees that wave their green banners in the sunlight, and the flowers in their delicate beauty, point to their Creator. The living green that carpets the brown earth tells of God's care for the humblest of His creatures. The caves of the sea and the depths of the earth reveal His treasures. He who placed the pearls in the oceans and the amethyst among the rocks is a lover of the beautiful. The sun rising in the heavens is a representative of Him who is the life and light of all that He has made. All the brightness and beauty that adorn the earth and light up the heavens speak of God.

God left us in charge of that which he lovingly gave us and we have a moral obligation, an ethical obligation, an obligation as Christians, to go beyond the quick fix and keep our minds on the future of those who come after us.

Alan Hovhaness, an Armenian composer of music said, "I've always regarded nature as the clothing of God"... as should we. Let's be actively thankful, in whatever small way we can, for this beautiful gift. Amen.