

Psalm 8:

- ¹ O LORD, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
- You have set your glory above the heavens.
- ² Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.
- ³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
- ⁴ what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?
- ⁵ Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honor.
- ⁶ You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,
- ⁷ all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
- ⁸ the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

**Trinity Presbyterian Church
November 19, 2017
Creation Care Sunday**

“A Little Less than God”

There was once an inquisitive young girl named Lucy. Occasionally, Lucy’s parents would drop her off at her grandparent’s farmhouse out in the country for the weekend. Nothing to do there but feed the chickens and milk the cows. But Lucy loved being with her grandparents out in the wide-open country. Especially on a clear night when she could observe so many stars. Every night after dinner Granddad would dig out the binoculars and take Lucy by the hand as they would go out into an open field. Lucy would put down a blanket and they’d lay down, staring straight up at the night sky. Granddad would start tracing the constellations with his finger, “There’s the Big Dipper. And there’s her little brother the Little Dipper. Oh my, Orion the Hunter is looking mighty fierce tonight. Can you see it, Lucy?” “I see it!” Lucy would say. One night as they lay in the field on the blanket, Lucy inquired: “Granddad, why are the stars so small?” Granddad just sighed and answered, “Oh honey, the stars aren’t what is small...we are.”

Have you ever tilted your head up into the expansive universe and suddenly felt small? Knowing that every single speck of glitter was some far-away star that had its own solar system with planets orbiting. A while ago, we sent out the Hubble telescope to explore the celestial map and it beamed back images from lightyears away, showing us that what we visibly see with the naked eye is only one-billionth of what is out there. How else are we to feel but small? If we take into consideration the few short decades of our existence on this twirling blue ball, then we might feel even smaller. I was out walking the dog one afternoon in the woods by our house. I looked down and saw what appeared to be an arrowhead. Then the thought entered my mind, “Jon, you’re not the first one to live here. This land belonged to someone else and you are not the only one who has called this place home.” There were those there before me and there will be those after me, too. The truth is our earth has been around for millions upon millions of years, and over the grand arc of time, humanity has been a small blip on the screen. And to think we once thought *we were the center of the universe!* But no, we look up into the night sky with star-glazed eyes, and old granddad is right: the stars aren’t what is small...we are.

Well, the next morning Lucy went to church with her grandparents. They all sat in the same wooden pew in that same small country church and listened to the psalmist marvel: “When I look at your heavens...I wonder what are human beings that you would be mindful of us? And not only mindful of us, but would give us dominion over the works of your hands!” Of all that God has created—all the stars and the planets—somehow God has chosen us to be God’s image reflectors of who and what and how God is. Remember the creation story? God separates light from the dark, land from water, earth from sky and then creates all things with wild diversity: plants, animals, birds, and goldfish for our fish bowls. Then at the climax, out of the cosmic dust, God takes million-year-old soil and makes us. Then God smiles and says, “Finally, I have some partners to help care for it all.” The psalmist revels in the mystery of God’s goodness and explodes into a song of praise: “God, what are we humans that you are mindful of us; and have given us dominion over the works of your hands.”

When Lucy returned home to her house in the city that night, she paused on the front porch and looked up at the sky. It just wasn’t the same. Too many lights from the tall buildings. Too much smog from the factories. The mighty Orion didn’t look as fierce for some reason. She noticed a plastic bag being windblown down the street and McDonald’s wrappers discarded on the side of the road. And she remembered the psalmist’s words: “You have given us dominion over the works of your hands...”

So the inquisitive little girl went back inside and began asking Google where all the garbage she saw disappeared to. And up popped this video

{Show Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PFzYnLI9xxw>}.

Lucy kept finding more information about landfills that are overflowing. About a place called the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, where garbage has collected in the middle of the ocean in between California and Hawaii, which has grown larger than the state of Texas. About drinking waters being poisoned. About air laced with pollutants. About how our government is closing environmental programs and withdrawing from worldly efforts to clean up our planet. And an overwhelming sadness filled Lucy's chest as the psalmist's words kept replaying in her ears: "O God, you have given us dominion over the works of your hands." What God's hand have created, our hands are destroying. The psalm didn't feel like a song of praise anymore. Instead, it felt like a heartbroken lament...

So where's the good news this time? To be honest it is hard to find. Except there's you. People of the good news who care and who are made, "A little less than God." It's a strange thing to say, isn't it? That we are made "a little less than God?" Sure, we don't think of ourselves this way, but perhaps we need to if there is any hope for Lucy's generation or the generations after her. There are people here, in this church, who collect batteries to recycle. We have started a communal compost bin. This afternoon Megan Gregory is teaching us about an overture to send to our General Assembly to hold our denomination accountable to the environment by divesting from fossil fuel companies. There are people here, in this church, who care for gardens and point to the beauty of God's creation. All of which teaches our children about our calling as caregivers for the world God loves. Yes, we live in a world where five-alarm alerts pop up every-other day and we wonder what a small church like ours can do against the mounting problems. Truthfully, the good news is not easy to find. But please remember there's us: people of the gospel who feel deep in their bones the calling to partner with God in conserving a world for all generations to come. We have more power than we know; and we are made, "A little less than God."

Do you know what I hope? I hope there are people in Lucy's church who remind her and all the children of their little less than Godness status; who, even though they feel small, are living into it themselves. And maybe the next time Lucy hears the words, "You have given us dominion over the works of your hands," there is a little bit more hope. Because she sees that there are people giving of themselves to help make the psalmist words a song of praise once again.