

God's Creation, Our responsibility
By The Reverend Damaris D. Whittaker

Matthew 6:25-33
Psalm 104:10-25
“Blessing of the Animals”

Let us pray...

This morning, we are excited to be celebrating a special service—a service during which we will bless the animals.

I have learned that this is something you have not done before. So, we are also doing something new as a community of faith.

I want to welcome all of our animal friends ~ the dogs and cats, and others. They, in so many ways, enrich and complete our lives.

In the gospel lesson this morning, we have a promise ~ a promise of care. And when we first read it, we almost miss it.

We miss the emotions that this text provokes in us. First, it tells us “Do not worry about your life.” *Don't worry?! Are you kidding me?*

Many of us came in this morning with heavy hearts, filled with worry; perhaps filled with regret...doing an inventory of a series of events or circumstances and still trying to figure them out.

We worry about our families, our relationships, our church, the economy. Just a few days ago, I read an article that urged my generation not to retire until the age of 70 in order to maximize our social security benefits. And I remember thinking ~ I don't think I'll make it that long!

So, it is a challenge to find solace in the words *do not worry about your life*.

Another emotion that evokes in me is the false perception or understanding of not needing to do much to provide for one needs.

In the 21st Century, we live in a world where we obtain food and clothing through gainful employment.

Yet, life is more than food and clothing. And perhaps the right thing to say is, “life is more than food and clothing for those who do not have to worry about where their next meal will come from.”

There is a call in the scripture this morning to trust God for our needs. Let’s not misunderstand that call to trust for a permission to neglect.

And that is where we are today. More and more, our climate is changing because of our use and abuse of resources.

We have managed to wipe out complete species. Destroy and endanger eco-systems, and while the evidence is overwhelming, there is resistance to acknowledging that we, man, have changed the birds’ habitats and the fields where the lilies grow.

So, this morning, we get together to bless the animals. But we do not forget that they are our responsibility. Our actions affect their lives.

Our actions also affect the lives of other human beings. As we speak this morning, there are hundreds of children trying to cross the border from countries like Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico.

We are encouraged, at this time, to trust God and to also to act.

The United Church of Christ stands in solidarity with the children who seek refuge here. Our churches are fast becoming part of a network built to respond to these overwhelming needs.

As a local church we are invited to act in the following ways:

- Pray for the children who seek refuge across our southern border, and see in them the face of Christ;
- Support with your donations organizations that house, clothe, feed, educate, and provide medical care to the refugee children;
- Write to your elected Representatives and share with them your concern for these children, asking them not to see them as a threat to us or as criminals;

As a church, we will be exploring ways to stay connected to this crisis and to respond.

This morning, the scripture invites us to consider entering into relationship with God, the God who is infinite, and whose love for us and all creation is infinite as well.

Love operates from a different "economy" than money.

And when you live in this kind of relationship of love and trust, you've entered into the realm of *abundance*, the world of possibility, the world of contentment. Suddenly, in this world -- Jesus calls it the "kingdom of God" -- *not worrying* actually becomes an option.¹

Maya Angelou, wrote an amazing poem, "A Brave and Startling Truth," I will share a few verses this morning,

"We, this people, on a small and lonely planet
Traveling through casual space
Past aloof stars, across the way of indifferent suns
To a destination where all signs tell us
It is possible and imperative that we learn
A brave and startling truth

And when we come to it
To the day of peacemaking
When we release our fingers
From fists of hostility
And allow the pure air to cool our palms

When we come to it
When we let the rifles fall from our shoulders
And children dress their dolls in flags of truce
When land mines of death have been removed
And the aged can walk into evenings of peace
When religious ritual is not perfumed
By the incense of burning flesh
And childhood dreams are not kicked awake
By nightmares of abuse

When we come to it
We, this people, on this minuscule and kithless globe
Who reach daily for the bomb, the blade and the dagger
Yet who petition in the dark for tokens of peace
We, this people on this mote of matter
In whose mouths abide cankerous words
Which challenge our very existence
Yet out of those same mouths
Come songs of such exquisite sweetness

¹ David Loose, Working Preacher Commentary

That the heart falters in its labor
And the body is quieted into awe

When we come to it
We, this people, on this wayward, floating body
Created on this earth, of this earth
Have the power to fashion for this earth
A climate where every man and every woman
Can live freely without sanctimonious piety
Without crippling fear

When we come to it
We must confess that we are the possible
We are the miraculous, the true wonder of this world
That is when, and only when
We come to it.”

May the God of all creation lead us in being good stewards of all creation. Amen.