

The Pastors Connection

God Cares for All His Creatures

“Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people...and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned for that great city” God to Jonah in 4:11

When Pastoral Team designated 2012 a year to “Stand firm by dwelling in the Word together” we identified monthly texts for sermons and Sunday worship reflections; plus personal and committee devotions. Many joined us in the Jeremiah 31:27-34 January “Contrasting Covenants” text. We invite you to invest some February time in ____.

I’ve been inspired as others shared dwelling insights. Last week my eyes settled on Jeremiahs promise in verse 27 that blessing would “plant the house of Judah with the offspring of men **and of animals.**”

This text does not definitively outline Gods care for animals. It could be read as God increasing productivity of livestock simply to bless His people. A couple in the Bible Study Cindy and I lead helps pay for private education by selling purebred puppies. A litter of ten is a significant blessing over three!

But the Jonah text clearly articulates God’s animal care. God’s rationale for offering grace towards repentant people who had brutally terrorized His chosen people included the reality that judgment would also destroy cattle. Many Christians would be offended by a declaration of God’s love toward the Taliban. Imagine the ridicule if we named the cattle of radical Muslims as reason to call forth God’s grace. Yet even before Christ taught enemy love, we find this profound declaration of God’s love for all creation.

Scripture opens with God declaring “good” each creation day. The day He fashioned humans was “very good”. By the time of Noah God regrets that declaration. In our throw away culture some use the instruction to “Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish...” as justification to destroy created beauty. But a proper understanding reveals a Creator in love with creation commissioning humans to steward wisely His garden and His creatures. Sin led to distortion that Romans 8 applies to creation groaning for liberation “into the glorious freedom of the children of God (v. 20-22).

Some believe creation care cannot be reconciled with hunting. I conclude otherwise. Hunting deepens my awe of creation, causing me to fall in love anew with clean water, fresh air, healthy soil, and majestic mountains. I do believe followers of Christ should challenge the tendency to kill God’s creatures simply for blood lust. I am grateful dad taught me the Native American discipline to only shoot when confident a clean kill will avoid wounding or wasting an animal harvested.

Christians appropriately hold varied positions on issues of fracting, global warming, cancelation of a pipeline to transport Canadian oil to the Gulf of Mexico, off shore

drilling, tax policies targeting renewable energy, and farming practices that increasingly rely on chemicals and modified seeds. But while a biblical people may disagree on how to apply stewardship principles; all should affirm with Psalm 24 that “the earth is the Lords and everything in it” and recognize that care of God’s earth is close to God’s heart.

God still invites we Jonah’s to join him in concern for all His children, including our sworn enemies; “and for the cattle as well!”

Joyfully living His story with you, Pastor Bob Petersheim