

“Going Green: Our Relationship with Creation”

(A photo of my Volt was shown on the screen.) Recognize the car on the screen? If you visit the church during the week while I am here, you most likely have seen my Chevy Volt in that parking space. I have had that Volt for a little over two years and prior to buying it, I leased another Volt for three and a half years. The Chevy Volt is an electric vehicle, which also has a gas engine, which produces electricity for the electric engine when the electric charge from my rapid charger runs out. My Volt, when fully charged can travel between 50 and 58 miles depending on how much heat or air conditioning I use. Do you know why I own and drive a Volt? Do you think it is because I have to have the newest of everything? Well, my reason for owning and driving a Volt is I like to save money by not buying as much gasoline as I use to and I believe it is an important way for me to work toward fulfilling my responsibility to be a good steward of our common environment. In other words, owning and driving a Volt is a way to “Go Green” as part of my relationship with Creation. Are we called to “Go Green”? What is “Our Relationship with Creation”?

Let’s focus for a moment on the issue of “Going Green” or protecting our environment. What is the status of our environment?

(A photo of mountains on the Antarctic Peninsula was shown on the screen.) This is a photo of part of the Antarctic Peninsula from the air. The caption, which came with this photo states, “Although the mountains are plastered in snow and ice, measurements tell us that this region is losing ice at an increasing rate.”

(A photo of ice crevasses.) This photo is of ice crevasses near the grounding line of Pine Island Glacier of Antarctica.

A press release from NASA on June 13, 2018 had the headline, “Ramp-Up in Antarctic Ice Loss Speeds Sea Level Rise”. Those photos were part of the posting.

To help us get an up to date understanding of the problem of our environment getting warmer throughout the world and its impact on planet Earth, let me quote a few portions of that press release. **“Ice losses from Antarctica have tripled since 2012, increasing global sea levels by 0.12 inch (3 millimeters) in that timeframe alone, according to a major new international climate assessment funded by NASA and ESA (European Space Agency).”**

“According to the study, ice losses from Antarctica are causing sea levels to rise faster today than at any time in the past 25 years.”

The press report also stated, “The team looked at the mass balance of the Antarctic ice sheet from 1992 to 2017 and found ice losses from Antarctica raised global sea levels by 0.3 inches (7.6 millimeters), with a sharp uptick in ice loss in recent years. They attribute the threefold increase in ice loss from the continent since 2012 to a combination of increased rates of ice melt in West Antarctica and the Antarctic Peninsula, and reduced growth of the East Antarctic ice sheet.”

The press release continued, “Since 2012, the amount of ice loss per year has tripled to 241.4 billion tons (219 billion metric tonnes) – equivalent to about 0.02 inches per year (0.6 millimeters) of sea level rise.”

The press release concluded, **“Antarctica’s potential contribution to global sea level rise from its land-held ice is almost 7.5 times greater than all other sources of land-held ice in the world combined. The continent stores enough frozen water to raise global sea levels by 190 feet (58 meters), if it were to melt entirely. Knowing how much ice it’s losing is key to understanding the impacts of climate change now and its pace in the future.”**

Friends, if the ice loss of Antarctica continues at this rapid pace, many low lying areas will find themselves either constantly battling flooding or of sinking into the world’s oceans. So, what does God want us to do about all of the climate change problems? These climate changes may not be totally caused by human behavior, such as burning hydrocarbons – oil, gas, and coal but those activities are clearly speeding up the climate change processes. Given that fact, let’s give serious consideration to what God calls us to have as “Our Relationship with Creation”.

Unfortunately, the popular understanding of “Our Relationship with Creation” comes from a faulty theological view based somewhat on a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of our Scripture of the First

Creation Story found in Genesis 1:1-2:4. Our cultural understanding is that God gave us the world for us to use for our own benefit. Therefore, the world is ripe for the picking!

However, a more careful reading of a few verses from our Scripture and from other quotes from the Bible help us to get a more accurate understanding of our calling from God. **Verse 26 of our Scripture states, “Then God said, ‘And now we will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us. They will have power over the fish, the birds, and all animals, domestic and wild, [d] large and small.’”** “[d. Genesis 1:26 One ancient translation *animals, domestic and wild; Hebrew domestic animals and all the earth.*]” As an interesting note, God is quoted as speaking as a plural noun. The actual Hebrew name here for God is “Elohim”, which is a plural. We don’t use that name for the Creator because long ago the name, “Yahweh”, which was originally mistranslated into English as “Jehovah” won out in usage by the followers of Judaism. Returning to our Scripture quote on the screen, as footnote “d” quotes one of the ancient versions of the text, we are to have “power over” – meaning “authority over and responsibility for” all creatures and “the earth”! **Further, we are to follow God’s example in Creation – not destruction and consumption because we are created in the image of our Divine Parent and are to be like God.**

Daniel B. Clendenin put it this way, “The Genesis poet affirms that every single human being is created in the image of God (1:26). The imago Dei isn’t something that you can earn by being smarter, wealthier, or more ethical. And no person, for any reason, is ever bereft of the divine likeness. We can distort or enhance God’s image by the choices we make, but we can never forfeit the divine signature.” **“Affirming this image of God doesn’t place humanity at the center of the universe, as is sometimes charged. Far from it. God alone is at the center of the creation story.”** “Humanity, says the Psalmist, is made ‘a little lower than the angels’ (Psalm 8:5), charged with stewardship and care for ‘all the earth’ (Genesis 1:26).” (“The Poetry of Creation” by Daniel B. Clendenin posted on the “Journey With Jesus” blog)

In the Apostle Paul’s Letter to the Romans, he provided us an important insight into the interrelatedness or woven relationship between humanity and Creation. **Paul wrote in Romans 8:16-17, 19-23, “God’s Spirit joins Himself to our spirits to declare that we are God’s children. Since we are His children, we will possess the blessings He keeps for His people, and we will also possess with Christ what God has kept for him; for if we share Christ’s suffering, we will also share his glory. ... All of Creation waits with eager longing for God to reveal His children. For Creation was condemned to lose its purpose, not of its own will, but because God willed it to be so. Yet there was the hope that Creation itself would one day be set free from its slavery to decay and would share the glorious freedom of the children of God. For we know that up to the present time all of Creation groans with pain, like the pain of childbirth. But it is not just Creation alone which groans; we who have the Spirit as the first of God’s gifts also groan within ourselves as we wait for God to make us His children and set our whole being free.”**

The Apostle made it clear we have a very close “Relationship with Creation”. **“Our Relationship with Creation” is one in which Creation and our Calling are woven together.** Since the Gospel of John tells us Jesus Christ is the “Word” made flesh and that God created everything through the “Word”, the very nature of God’s Son – the embodiment of the Divine Parent’s **Agape Love is the “Tie which Binds” us to Creation and one another.** “Going Green” – working for the healing of Planet Earth – being God’s Servant for the World is part of God’s Agape Love for Creation, all creatures, and for all people.

John Holbert has said, “The image of servant of God’s world has the possibility to make us new creatures, helping us see our rightful place as God’s servants for the world. In short, we need conversion to a new way of thinking about the creation, the environment. The world, the cosmos, is not our oyster. Rather it is God’s pearl, and we are assigned the twin tasks of serving this pearl and protecting it from all abuse, especially abuse from ourselves.” (“A Needed Climate Crisis Conversion: Reflections on Genesis 1:1-2:4a” by John Holbert)

With today being Father’s Day, it also valuable for us to remember how our fathers, including our Divine Parent, have sought to be God’s Servants – bearers of the God’s Agape Love with reference to our welfare individually and for all humanity and Creation. **Seeking the welfare of all people and of Creation means – manifesting agape love, we will be “Going Green” because of “Our Relationship with Creation” – how we are woven or interrelated with all people, every creature, and the Earth! Amen.**