

God of the Universe – May 8, 2016
Proverbs 8:22-31 and Colossians 1:15-20

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I wonder if there is a time in every child's life where they think about being an astronaut when they grow up. To wear a space suit and fly around in a space ship. Traveling to new worlds and making startling discoveries. There is something fascinating, almost magical, about the universe beyond our little planet. And doesn't it seem funny to refer to our world as little? Yet taken in the context of the greater cosmos, earth is quite small. Rather insignificant. A tiny blip on the map of time and space.

And when we think of the earth as a tiny blip in the enormity of space, what does that make us?

Our existence seems so miniscule when examined in the light of the universe. And I suppose that realization could lead to depressing thoughts of our overall insignificance. Of course it is all a matter of perspective. How we view ourselves changes when we look from various perspectives. We might wonder about our significance in the eyes of God. The more we know about the immensity of the world and universe around us, the less we may think our life and actions matter.

For the past three weeks we've been looking at the created world and our relationship to it. We have been examining our world as a good and orderly creation by God and our responsibility to preserve its well-being. With advances in technology allowing us to do much more than previous generations could possibly imagine, we have also exponentially increased our impact on the world – for good or for ill. As part of God's creation and as followers of Christ, we have a responsibility to care for creation.

The passage from Proverbs 8 shows us a feminine aspect of the creative process. Wisdom is shown as a co-creator with God. Creation was not a haphazard event. Creation had its basis in God's wisdom from the very start. It was an intelligent, orderly process. And everything was originally created in balance. Our actions have disrupted that balance to an alarming extent.

Now when we think of creation, we tend to focus on this world and give little consideration to the universe beyond us. But if we believe God is Creator, then that would include the universe in all its awesomeness. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the church at Colossae, describes Christ as the co-creator with God of the Creator. "Christ is here portrayed as the cosmic power through whom all things visible and invisible were created. Christ is the cosmic one who is not only before all things but the one who is the unifying impulse in all creation. In other words, the Wisdom spoken of in Proverbs is here identified with the cosmic Christ, the agent and ordering force in all things." (Seasons of Creation) Much like the writer of Proverbs 8 shows the feminine aspect of God, God's wisdom as being an integral part of the creative process, so too is Christ present with God from the very beginning. He is a fundamental part of God's creativity which includes both the earth and the heavens. Furthermore, in this passage, Christ is identified as the agent of reconciliation. Through him estrangement with God and creation can find its healing.

So part of our walk with Christ involves reconciliation not only with people but with the created world. I know many, if not all of us here today, do quite a bit to help the environment. When I moved here from Indiana a year and a half ago, I was pleasantly surprised that recycling is mandatory in the state of Wisconsin. It's not in Indiana. It's not mandatory in a lot of states. Also, since I've been here I've learned about composting. Simple activities, but without education....

I know that we all are trying to do our part to be more green. But I know there is more that we can do. Each of us can make additional changes in our daily habits. Education is crucial. We need to learn about the issues, what is being done to make progress, and how we can help. What are some of the simple steps we can take? How can we do more to make a difference in the world?

Our denomination the Presbyterian Church (USA) is very much involved in promoting endeavors that work toward the healing of creation. In fact, this month's Presbyterians Today magazine devotes an entire issue to some of these programs. This summer's General Assembly meeting is being held in Portland, Oregon because it is one of the top green cities in our country. Other cities are beginning to follow suit as more and more people become aware of the crises. Also, with social media and the internet, more crimes against creation are being exposed.

It may seem like a daunting task to be able to make the needed changes to reverse the negative impact that humans have had on the environment, but improvements have already been made. Of course, the first thing that has to change is our perspective of how we view the creation – is this universe, world, and its inhabitants a beautiful and amazing result of God's creative activity, to be cherished and tended with respect? Or is it simply a cache of natural resources to be utilized and exploited until they are all used up? What legacy will we leave for future generations?

As followers of Christ, the author of reconciliation, let us not only work toward ministering to and loving the people that God expects us to call neighbor. But let us also be mindful of our negative impact on the world and its creatures, and seek to make positive changes.