

Created Companions

P13-19, Sept 8, 2019
Gen. 2:4-25

The Rev. Dr. Chris Hagen
Lake Nokomis L. Ch., Mpls

The purpose of the Creation Story is to announce God's plan from the beginning,
God's intent from the very start.

The Lord God's plan
was to make man and woman *integral to creation* and all things connected—
physical, environmental, social, spiritual, relational,
all connected in perfect symmetry.

The Lord God made man and woman of substance of the earth,
created beings among creatures,
breathing the same air,
drinking of the same water.

The proteins and DNA and minerals and flesh of our bodies
are made of the same elements and similar biological structures
as that of beast and birds and fish and pets.

And so their health is the coalmine-canary of our health.
Their survival is our survival.

We are part of the earth,
creatures among creatures,
placed in Eden *to till and keep*, to work and preserve and improve.

This second creation story of Genesis
does *not* place humans in position of dominion and power.

The words used in this second story is that of *service*, of *stewardship*,
of working on behalf of and for the sake of the rest of creation.

We are given our place in the order of things *to preserve and conserve and nurture*.

And so it is about the continuing saga of Polymet mining
in the Superior National Forest and near the Boundary Waters.

The elements to be mined in northern Minnesota
are used in cell phones, computers, rechargeable batteries, and anything stainless steel,
devices and things we use everyday and take for granted.

But there are *environmental* concerns with mining these needed minerals.
First, Polymet has never done any actual mining.¹

It is just getting in the business
and so has no experience in mining and the inherent environmental difficulties.
It has no track record of responsible mining
and no experience in waste containment.

Secondly, it has only half the money it needs to begin mining.
At this time it is not financially able to sustain mining in Minnesota
and does not have anywhere near the \$1 billion of "financial assurances,"
the funding *available to the state to close and clean up the mine,*
and pay for long-term water treatment,
if the company went bankrupt or for some reason walked away from the project,
*which has happened historically with this kind of mining in other states.*²

Polymet has not enough funds to address any disaster it might cause.

¹ Dan Kraker and Cody Nelson, "Four things to know about the Polymet mine," *MPR News*,
<https://www.mprnews.org/story/2018/01/05/4-things-to-know-about-polymet-mine>, accessed 9/6/2019.

² Dan Kraker, "State: Over \$1B likely needed in PolyMet 'financial assurance'," *MPR News*,
<https://www.mprnews.org/story/2017/12/20/state-over-1b-likely-needed-in-polymet-financial-assurance>, accessed 9/6/2019.

God created us to serve creation,
 to preserve life and conserve resources for future generations,
 the very foundation of *conservative* values.
 Preserving and protecting the environment was at one time *conservative values*.
 The issue is *not* whether this mine is bad or wrong;
 we need the minerals to make things we use.
 The issue is *how careful* this mine will be should it begin operation,
 the care it takes to protect the environment for those living there
 and for the water and air quality for us all.

Our American thinking sections off areas of life,
 money and financial security is one thing,
 taking care of pets and our yards another,
 marriage and what we do in the bedroom is no body else's business,
 food has little connection to driving a car,
 and our relationship to our neighbor has no bearing on what we do at work.
 But the Bible description of creation makes everything an integrated whole.
 The Lord God created all things connected—physical, environmental, social, spiritual, relational.
 The man was formed of the ground,
the same substance as trees and plants and animals and birds.
 The man was put in the garden to work it and make it produce,
in partnership with animals and birds.
 Not dominating lord,
 not consumer of anything it can get hands on,
 not polluter and depleter,
but partner and part.

And living within creation, as part of creation, has *social* implications.
 Out of the very substance of the man God creates woman,
 identical flesh, one body,
 given the same duties and responsibilities *as partner fit for one another.*

We are made social creatures.
 We belong to this earth
 and we belong to one another.
 We need one another.
 For our mental well-being,
 for our physical health,
 for our emotional strength
 we need each other.

“It is not good to be alone,” declares the Lord God.
 Friends are critical for life.
 Church is to be one place we are assured there are people for us.
 Preferences and procedures and personal wants take distant place
 to doing our part to welcome and to enjoy one another.
 Friendships are not given, not automatic and expected.
 Friendship is created.
 Friendship is the creative impulse of the divine within us
 to connect to one another and live for each other as God intends.
 Friendship is an expression of God's Spirit within us.
 The social relationship between man and woman in this creation story is not about sex.
 The terms used and the description given
 is about partners fit for one another.
 The nuance is about people living for one another,
 friendships that we all need to survive and thrive.

Last weekend Ann and I drove to Ames, Iowa to visit her mother.
 My mother-in-law now resides at Northcrest Community in the assisted living facility.
 Mary Jo and her husband Harry lived in Ames most of their adult life,
 raised wonderful children,
 faithfully worked important jobs,
 contributed to the community,
 and made deep friendships along the way.
 As they aged and their house became ever more difficult to keep,
 they made the move to Northcrest, a natural decision, they have friends there.
 The people they came to know over the many years and made their friends
 have moved there.
 As children moved away and house was sold and possessions distributed,
 what remained were friends.

Last weekend we visited Mama at Northcrest.
 Her memory is fading and she doesn't speak much.
 But in the dining hall were friends she knew most of her life.
 She doesn't say much to them, but they are there.
 They know her and greet her each day.
 Even as memory slips, friends remain.
 Even as loss follows loss, we still belong, we still are loved.
 We are created social beings,
 connected to one another, belonging to the earth,
 in community with nature and climate and each other.

This life is all we have.
 This world is a mere fishbowl in which we swim and eat and foul.
 Geologists identify specific changes in earth's development
 from volcanoes to dinosaurs to ice ages to our modern era.
 The last glaciers retreated about 12,000 years ago
 which allowed human migration across the globe.
 We are now entering what is called the Anthropocene Epoch.³
 It is the era when human activity
 permanently alters the earth environment and upsets ecosystems,
 including human-induced climate change.⁴
 An easy analogy is my daughter's fish tank when she was a child.
 The goldfish swam and ate and fouled their tank.
 At first it was not noticed, but the fish kept on eating and fouling.
 By the end of the week, the tank became toxic to the fish.
 Their environment was fouled by themselves,
 they slowly poisoned themselves.
 That is climate change.
 That is what carbon dioxide emissions are doing to our air.
 That is what household trash is doing to our oceans and lands.
 We are now in a geological epoch never before experienced
 when humans are poisoning our own living space.
 The choices we make about our cars and how we travel,
 the choices we make about what we eat and who grows our food,
 the choices we make about who gets to live where and who is allowed where,
 the choices we make about what we use and how we discard trash
 affect the quality of the air and water and land in which we live, affect our fish tank.
 This life is all we have.

³ Welcome to the Anthropocene, <http://www.anthropocene.info/>, accessed 9/7/2019.

⁴ The Anthropocene Project, <https://theanthropocene.org/>, accessed 9/7/2019.

The Lord God made us an integral part of the earth,
of same substance and structure as beasts and fish and fowl,
of same elements as trees and flowers and insects.
We are biologically and physiologically and spiritually
part of this creation and connected intimately with it and with each other.
Partners with creation, partners with one another.

We are made from this earth and belong to this earth.
We are given this day and this place to nurture and secure life.
We are given place among each other
to live as partners and friends in this gift called life.
We are set in this time and in this space
to give of ourselves for each other,
to connect and enjoy and partner with one another.
We are placed here, in this garden called Earth, "to till and keep."
Amen.