

Genesis chapter 1 is the most detailed and intricate poem celebrating the wonderful gift of creation. Not only does it show how the Lord brings order out of chaos, as we read yesterday in the Bible's opening verse, as we go through the poem we see God the master artist giving shape to the canvass of creation. On days 1, 2 and 3, is described God forming the World and then on days 4, 5, and 6, he is depicted filling the World with the multiplicity and variety of flora and fauna that is stunning in its variety and complexity. Then on Day 7, we see God the master artist step back and celebrate with joy the wonder what he has created!

Today we focus in on days 5-7. These verses from Genesis 1 create the effect, like in film, where we move from a macro scene, the sweep of the oceans replete with living creatures, to the sky where the cacophony of bird song can be imagined and then move onto the land where animals of every kind are walking the face of the earth. It is at this point that it is as if the camera zooms in and focuses on two creatures:

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth"

These beautiful and famous words zero in on a biblical understanding of who we are as human beings. It celebrates the setting and vocation that God has commissioned us to fulfill under his Lordship and rule.

The setting is one of profound richness. We live on this planet that is teeming with life and filled with wonder and awe.

Yesterday afternoon I went for a walk through the Elbow River Valley and up the Britannia Slopes. The snow was glistening like a garment replete with dancing diamonds, the colour of the snow was white, but there were hues of blue created by the reflection of the sun. On the distant horizon there was a fog in which was captured a sun dog, that vertical like rainbow that is visible on either side of the sun. Then beyond that was the outline of the mountains.

The setting in which we live out our lives in one that daily shows the wonder of our master artist. One aspect of what it means to be human is the gift we have to truly appreciate this created world with thankfulness. With the psalmist David we declare:

***O LORD, our LORD,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!***

It is within this setting that we then have the vocation to join with God in being stewards of the created world. This is something that is particularly important in our own day where we have a special concern for the environment. There is a kind of biblical ecology that is intrinsic to what it

means to be made in God's image. This is an environmental concern that is rooted in our understanding that just as our bodies are not our own, neither is the creation ours. Psalm 8 puts it clearly:

***You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,
7 all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the sea.***

As Christians our environmental concern is rooted in this understanding that God has entrusted to us dominion of the earth, a theme also echoed in this verse from psalm 115:

**The heavens are the LORD'S heavens,
but the earth he has given to the sons of men.**

These verses from Genesis chapter one celebrate for us that we live our lives on the most amazing canvas, created by the most imaginative artist. Knowing the beauty of this setting is to inspire us to treat with care this most spectacular creation as those called to the vocation of cooperation with God because we are made in his image.