

**A HOMILY GIVEN BY REV. PAUL J. KOTTKE  
UNIVERSITY PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**Sunday, June 6, 2010**

**Title:** The Days of God's Creation – Original Blessing

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:1-2:4 (1:1-5, 9-12, 26-27, 2:1-4) and Psalm 8 (read from *The Messenger*)

**Theme:** Ecological stewardship, an original blessing that is extended to us as faithful disciple leaders

A tragic irony confronts us. On the one hand, we are being bathed in the beauty of spring. The earth is alive. The landscape is fully green. The air is warm and with a pleasant fragrance. The birds are nesting. The Rocky Mountains are inviting us to come and explore. And then on the other hand, daily we are confronted with images of a broken pipe deep in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico spewing forth millions of gallons of crude oil. A deadly black presence that our modern technology has unleashed onto the world and for the last two months, at least, we have been unable to stop. The worst man-made ecological disaster in history. Two contrasting images: wondrous beauty and death-inflicting disaster. Perhaps, it is time to take seriously the ecological stewardship that is deeply woven into our faith. Perhaps, real change comes only from the aftermath of such a preventable tragedy. Or is the sad reality that we are so entrenched in our lifestyles that we will simply treat this as an unfortunate incident, and move on with our lives without any real change in our consumption?

When we turn to the scriptures, we are reminded that of all the ways in which we know and experience God, the first and foremost manifestation is that of Creator. It is this beautiful passage from the first chapter of Genesis, "In the beginning was darkness and void, and God's spirit passed over the surface of the waters and brought forth light and life."

The second attribute of God is this – that God desires a partnership in overseeing this created order. We are told that God invites humanity, invites you and me, invites men and women

from all the cultures of the world, into a partnership with God. We have been invited by God to be caregivers for the land and waters, for the plants and animals, for the sky, for each other. And so we hear from Genesis that we have been given dominion and we hear from Psalm 8 that we have been made little less than God himself. From the translation *The Message* are these words paraphrasing Psalm 8: "You put us in charge of your handcrafted world, repeated to us your Genesis-charge..."

"Genesis-charge" [the words of Eugene Peterson] – words that suggest that creation was not just a one-time event long ago but rather is an unfolding cycle even as we live today. Each generation carries the mantle of being caregivers for God's creation – for better or for worse.

So as with the Psalmist, as I look at the wonders of creation, I too wonder why God is so mindful of us and has given us such a responsibility – to be stewards of the created order. I wonder at times if God has not given us more responsibility than we can handle. It seems that too often humanity is very adept at looking out for our personal needs and that we find it difficult to truly care for the well-being of the whole.

Yet we are reminded that the original blessing of God is still with us, inviting us to mature into our divinely ordained role. It appears that God is staying with the bet that indeed we can truly become ecological stewards – helping to nurture this world into being once again the garden from which we came of old.

This homily series is an invitation for us to be responsive to the ecological challenges of our times, to understand our call to be stewards for Mother Nature, that being ecological stewards is integral to being a faithful Christian. This sermon series is an invitation to participate in the adult class study which begins next Sunday. Our task is to realize the extent of our relationship as caregivers. Once we have realized our relationship, our next task is to reclaim the responsibility that is ours as stewards, to understand the concept of dominion as that which brings forth the sustainability of life, not that which is given permission to use and abuse. Once we realize and reclaim our roles, we are then able to identify a strategy for reducing, reusing, and recycling our consumption of resources. This will become the invitation for our congregation over these next several weeks – to develop a strategic plan for how we will become ecological stewards. It is in this way that here at University Park UMC, we will continue to embrace the Original Blessing from God as caregivers.

I close with this prayer by William Cleary:

*Creative Presence, our God, we would be – with your help – wiser than we are. We would observe always what we glimpse occasionally: the wisdom incarnate in all living things, the harmonies and dissonances within the cosmic symphony. The moving, breathing world of creatures alive and living around us is full of astonishing feats of intelligence, wonderful patterns and structures of cells and organs that speak continually of your limitless divine life and confidence in us, confidence that we will find the way toward living perceptively. Guide us on the way of faith – and wisdom. Amen*