

**Proper 11C, 2022**  
**Church of the Holy Trinity**

Today's passage from the letter to the Colossians clearly makes a connection between Jesus and Creation, saying "for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible...all things have been created through him and for him." This reminded me of an icon I have of the fifth day of creation which depicts Jesus surrounded by birds, all winged things, fish, and all manner of sea creatures created on that fifth day as recorded in Genesis. My icon reflects the understanding of Colossians--and of John's Gospel--that Jesus was in the beginning with God and that all things came into being through him. John says "without him not one thing came into being." Jesus, as part of what later became understood as the Holy Trinity, was part of God's creative acts. Not only that, but Colossians goes on to claim that Creation is also part of God's redemptive plan—that the plan is not just concerned with humans, saying "For in [Christ Jesus] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself **all things**, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross." Colossians connects the dots, tying the cross of Christ to the salvation of Creation as well as of humankind.

We followers of Jesus have not always paid attention to the connection between Christ and all Creation **and** ourselves. We have been late to join the conservation and environmental protection bandwagon. We have not understood God's plan of salvation to include things like Chickadees, pollinators, and eco-systems. Colossians jubilantly claims that this hopeful gospel of reconciliation "has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven." And even if this proclamation has not been conducted in St Francis style by preaching to every Northern Right

Whale or California Condor, the Bible is making clear that as God's creatures, they are also heirs through Christ of God's redemptive plan. Perhaps these creatures carry within themselves the seeds of hope in that promise in this time when species extinction and environmental degradation seem inevitable.

In any case, the beauty, majesty, and mystery of God's creation point us to the wisdom and grandeur of God. Creation is, therefore, a sign and source of hope to us. Creation connects us to our Triune Creator.

So how about a recent example of this phenomenon? I am sure most of you have seen the recently published images taken from NASA's James Webb Space Telescope. When the first photo one was released, it set off an amazing wave of media reports and reactions.

**[How do those amazing photos of never-before-seen stars and galaxies strike you?]**

For me, I immediately thought of Psalm 8: "When I consider the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?" And in posts all over the internet, comments on Facebook under that first James Webb photo, I saw similar reactions. Who do we think we are? What are we in comparison to all of this? The photo had managed to enter our hearts and minds and change our perspective. It brought us out of the everyday into some place deeper. I was amazed at the people suddenly quoting Scripture—some people I never knew were even acquainted with Scripture!

This bigger picture was changing us. It reminded me of the time an astronaut in a space capsule many years ago had aimed his camera out the little window and, just like any tourist,

snapped a picture. It was a pic of planet earth seen for the first time in a tourist photo from outer space. That photo, now instantly recognizable to all, became the icon of the fledgling environmental movement. What the BCP calls, “our fragile island home.” Stepping back and looking at the God’s eye view of Creation changed us. We began to care more for our environment.

Colossians says “in [Christ Jesus] all things hold together.” We are living in a time of great upheaval and uncertainty when structures, institutions, and traditions which have provided stability—sadly at the expense of some-- are now being challenged. Make no mistake. They need to be challenged and reordered, even though the process is often painful. We need this reminder that it is in Christ Jesus that all things hold together. In the midst of the changes and chances of this world (as our Prayer Book says) we need to focus ourselves on the one in whom all things hold together in the way in which God intended: Jesus.

One way to sharpen that focus is through our attention to Creation. I think the James Webb Telescope view of the vastness and beauty of God’s Creation has arrived at just the right time. Like a divine shock and awe event. We need to gain a new perspective on ourselves and our Creator. This new and humbling perspective may help us to recalibrate. It provides opportunity to refocus our view of the universe, to find our true part in the enormity of God’s plan and to come into right relationship with one another and with all creation. Because that force which Colossians says holds all things together, the force that keeps the planets in their courses and orders the protons and neutrons in every atom is revealed to us in Jesus Christ. It is revealed as emanating from a God who values mercy over power, a God who finds strength in

service, a God who finds every part of Creation good and worthy of God's care. That force is love.