

John 1.1-5; Genesis 2:4b-25
September 7, 2026, Feast of Creation in Christ

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I remember, as a child, wishing God hadn't put
the bad tree in the garden,
because then everything would still be paradise.
Even in my childhood innocence,
my human instinct
was to blame God,
to make all our problems God's fault —
which is what Adam did
after the fruit-eating incident.

In case you don't remember the details,
God asked the man
if he'd eaten from the forbidden tree,
The man blamed the woman
for giving him the fruit
and blamed God
for giving him the traitorous woman.
(Mind you, he was right there with her
when she pulled it off the tree.
He ate it knowingly.)
Then, of course,
the woman blamed
the serpent for tricking her into it.

It's amazing how accurately
mythical stories capture and convey
the truth of the human condition.
Think about it.

The creator crafted a planet
where everything is ordered
and delicately balanced.
It's a self-sustaining,
wondrous garden
that teems with life.
It's filled with all the treasures of the earth,
precious minerals and stones,

plenty of food to eat,
 and life-giving water flowing in every direction.
 Then God kneaded together
 a human creature
 from the very soil of the ground
 and gave humanity
 the garden as their home,
 with the instruction to till it and keep it —
 to be responsible for its well-being.
 God gave humankind
 the joy of relationship with other creatures
 and the privilege of naming them.
 To be the one to name a living thing
 is to assume guardianship or parenthood of it,
 to claim it as your family, your kin.
 To protect and nurture it.

God made humanity God's partner
 in caring for
 all that goodness —
 with just one specific instruction
 about the boundaries of our use
 of the gifts of creation.

The forbidden tree was intended to be
 the gift of knowing our limits
 so that we can protect
 the earth's delicate balances.

But there's that old serpent of selfish desire
 inside all of us;
 we succumb to its trickery, and
 we take more than enough.

We shake off our respect
 for the healthy limits and balances of nature,
 and we are killing ourselves,
 killing our planet, our *home*,
 with destructive overconsumption.

Why is it that we always want more?

This past week we lost one of

our most treasured champions
 of agrarian life and care for the land,
 Wendell Berry, American novelist, poet, essayist,
 environmental activist, cultural critic
 and mad farmer.
 I included his sabbath poem as our psalmody
 because, indeed,
 what more did we think we wanted
 than paradise?

On September 17th, we'll commemorate
 Sister Hildegard of Bingen,
 who lived in the 12th century.
 She was a revolutionary abbess,
 a bit too wild for the Roman Catholic Church
 at the time.¹

Hildegard wrote this:

God loans all of creation to humankind for our use: the high, the low,
 everything...If we misuse this privilege, God's Justice gives creation
 permission to offer humankind a reminder. ²

Then, in the early 13th century,
 a young nobleman, Francesco of Assisi,
 renounced his wealth and position.
 He stripped himself bare,
 and walked naked into a future
 of voluntary poverty and simplicity.
 Saint Francis became known as
 the model exemplar of what it is to be
 "healthy and holy
 in our relationship
 with the rest of creation."³

He saw the creation as

¹ Starr, Mirabai, God of Love: A Guide to the Heart of Judaism, Christianity, ad Islam, © 2012 by Mirabai Starr. Monkfish Book Pub., Rhinebeck, p 32.

² Starr, Mirabai, God of Love: A Guide to the Heart of Judaism, Christianity, ad Islam, © 2012 by Mirabai Starr. Monkfish Book Pub., Rhinebeck, p 32.

³ Starr, p 33.

the first incarnation of God
 (Jesus being the second)
 and committed himself
 to teaching others the value
 of sustainable living,
 protecting the most
 "vulnerable among us,
 and a joyful embrace of our place
 in the web of all life."⁴
 We'll celebrate his feast day on October 4th.

We honor and remember
 these people and their
 profound witness to the
 wonder and beauty and care
 that humankind can offer the creation.

At the same time we are facing
 humanity's greatest moments
 of ecological catastrophe
 as we continue to cross,
 one after another,
 critical tipping points of ecological change.

We are witnessing the impacts
 of those tipping points in events like
 the recent disaster in Nepal
 when a debris avalanche and flash flood
 buried and destroyed
 whole towns and villages —
 the result of a melted mountain glacier.

The earth is facing its sixth mass extinction event —
 it's the first mass extinction caused by
 the impact of a single species.
 Creation is offering us reminders
 of our limits.

Benjamin Stewart, a pastor and author,
 writes that this existential crisis
 isn't primarily a matter of

⁴ Starr, p 34.

ethics, politics, or economy.
 It's an eco-theological challenge
 to all the dominant cultures —
 especially to ours in North America.
 It's an urgent cry for to us remember
 our sacred relationship with all creation.
 This Feast of Creation in Christ is
 a call to imagine a liturgy that began,
 eons before humans existed,
 at the dawn of creation when God,
 in that lowest of B-flat notes,
 sang light into being.
 When morning stars sang together (Job 38.7),
 and when the Creator declared the creation
 to be "good" six times before any
 human creature came to be formed.

With this festival of Creation in Christ,
 here in the Trinity communion,
 we begin a whole seasonal focus on care for creation
 that will extend through most of October.
 We'll join our voices to the voices of
 the choir of creatures praising God
 for the blessing of their existence.
 We'll also join in their cries for need
 of food, protection, and healing.
 Maybe we'll even learn to hear and sing along with
 others in our human family
 whose lives are blessed by God
 and cursed by the degradation
 of our climate and atmosphere.
 And in that way, I pray that we'll be
 more respectful,
 more just,
 more responsible,
 more reciprocal with each other
 and with the natural world.

It seems like the 12th and 13th centuries
 were times of eco-theological

awakening and insight.
Maybe with this new festival,
shared across the church, East and West,
the 21st century will be a time
for humanity to reawaken and recommit
to eco-theological ways of living
in partnership with
this earthly mother of ours.
Just like in those earlier times,
when the awakening was inspired by
Hildegard and Francis (among many others),
the church is being called to lead the way.