

Perceiving the call of creation

We are currently experiencing a hot summer, under which forests, rivers and animals suffer and falter. In the faltering of creation, we can also perceive the call for the sons of God to take responsibility for the Earth (Rom 8:19). Many issues of our time are ecological in nature. Regardless of how we may judge the political discussion about the climate crisis, global warming and the progressive extinction of species, the environment, nature and animals challenge us to focus more on them. We need a new togetherness, a connection with creation. This is especially true for us in the Western world, who, overloaded with information and technology, are in danger of losing connection to nature. We are acquiring more and more mental knowledge through research and science, but at the same time we are losing a deep and intimate understanding and interaction with creation. As God appointed us to look after creation, dealing with creation does not only encompass the political level with its questions around an energy transition and the reduction of CO₂, but also touches a spiritual dimension and a call from God to us. From the beginning of time, the environment has been sensitive to human behaviour - to injustice and guilt. Can it be that God is calling us again into a new connectedness with his creation and that there is also a calling for us to discover this in prayer?

(1) Creation - the place where God reveals Himself.

Creation is the place where God reveals Himself. Heaven and earth, the spiritual and natural worlds, come together here. Throughout time, God has spoken to man through creation. God's nature, wisdom and beauty become unmistakably visible in it (Rom 1:20). A glance at the faces of animals reveals to us something of the grace and loveliness of a Creator whose creativity, joy and love are boundless. Creation is indeed the expression of an all-surpassing love for mankind. That is why God is not indifferent to it. The creation in its complexity, size and beauty in every respect is also a place of the revelation of God's glory. He himself wants to see to it that this earth is filled with his knowledge and glory. "But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, (Num 14:21).

(2) Creation - a place of worship to God.

In many places in the Bible we read of the vivid interaction of creation with its Creator. *"Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy wind fulfilling his word! Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!"* (Ps 148:7-9). Creation is a place of worship to God. When we fulfil our mandate to care for creation, a symphony of communal praise to God emerges. Can you imagine what that sounds like when we worship God along with the song of whales or the hum of flowers in the field? God wants to open our eyes and ears to perceive the praise of creation - the mountains, fields, skies, stars and different kinds of animals! Everything is created for Jesus (Col 1:16) and he keeps everything alive. In the Book of Job we read that animals cry out to God when they are in need: *"Who prepares food for the raven when its young cry out to God and fly astray because they have nothing to eat?"* (Job 38:41). In this passage, too, we sense something of the interconnectedness of creation with God's heart.

(3) What does God want to show us?

I believe that God once again wants to touch our hearts deeply when it comes to His creation. We have probably become very guilty by our indifference towards and exploitation of creation. We may be able to distance ourselves from ideologically driven political agendas - from man's idea that he can save the Earth without God. Untouched by this, however, is our God-given responsibility, which includes the care, healing and restoration of creation. I believe that we will serve God's heart once again in ways we have never imagined. If we discover this task anew, we will realise how clearly God speaks through his creation. Our union with creation will thus probably be very important in the coming years and we may discover anew that the Earth is not simply a place of destruction (apocalypse) according to our (often unspoken) ideas - as if God were indifferent to what happens to it - but becomes a place of God's knowledge and glory.

(4) The Covenant of God with Noah

And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." (Gen. 8:21-22) The covenant with Noah shows us that God Himself cares for creation. Included in the covenant are explicitly the Earth soil and all living things. We are in a covenant with God in our appointment to care for creation. The Letter to the Romans 8:19ff. also reports the hope of creation that it will be set free "from the bondage of corruption" (v20). In addition God seeks righteous action from us towards creation. This is especially significant at this time. For the care of God's creation and the use of existing resources (water, air, biodiversity, etc.), a whole new experience in spirit and wisdom awaits this generation, if we allow ourselves to be called anew by God into this responsibility.

Final thoughts

We look onto this world through God's eyes. It is no longer the critical view that shapes us, but the healing view of mercy, patience, of mindfulness, gentleness and deeper wisdom that leads to restoration. With this view we also grow in authority to command storms, rain, masses of water. We may rule with Him (Rom 5:17), provided our hearts are moved by love. Then we stand up for justice and his kingdom, and the gospel has the power to turn every situation into something good.

We sense that in the wake of heat and drought, the extinction of species and our consumerism, we may learn something. But change does not only come from the outside - from politics - but it happens when people discover their hearts more deeply and get in touch with each other and their environment. So connectedness is the key here as well. If we live in friendship with God and others, the Earth responds. In the same way, the Earth responds when greed, strife and injustice shape our lives.

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, we invite you

- that you reveal to us anew the Father of all creation and the love he has for creation.
- that you show us where we may have become guilty concerning creation with our indifference or our abuse of resources.
- that you bring us into balance with creation, so that we can serve God and fulfil our appointed responsibility.
- that we may appreciate the work of farmers who work directly within God's creation and support them in their mission.
- that you will reveal your ways in all environmental issues and in politics and the economy in our country. That there will be both: rethinking of consumerism and new innovative ideas. In everything you shall get the honour!

Perhaps you might additionally take responsibility for a part of a forest, a field, a river, etc. in your vicinity for a time in prayer, and in this way have new experiences through being connected with creation.

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