

September 12, 2021

**“Imagining and Imaging”  
Sermon by Rev. Susan Drake**

**Genesis 1:26-28**

*Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”*

*So God created humankind in the image of God they were created; In the spitting image of God! You look just like your father. male and female they were created. 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.”*

**Mark 10:35-45**

*James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” They replied, “We are able.” Then Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”*

*When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,*

**Sermon “Imagining and Imaging”**

The text from Genesis this morning is often limited by our understanding and imagination. For millennia now it has been interpreted as us looking like God, that we are all just little mirrors of how God appears. And for some reason God always ends up looking like the people in charge, the most dominating people.

But spirituality and faith are never about what’s on the surface right? Our spiritual life is about our inner landscape, how we tend the garden of our heart. How do we keep the path clear of the weeds of discontent, resentment and hatred and tend to the stuff we want to grow there like love, compassion and our connection to God?

It would be easier, or I guess less work, to just think of ourselves in the physical image of God, thinking we get to rule over the earth, take what we want, when we want because everything on Earth belongs to us. It's our God given right. But do we really think that's who God created us to be?

There's no doubt from this text that the writer of Genesis sets humans up as the crown jewel of creation but listen to this author, she calls herself Pastor Dawn. She wrote: "For centuries, the Hebrew word "radah" has been translated as "dominion" but when we go back to the roots of our myth we actually, quite literally discover a "root".

The Hebrew word, "radah" means "a point high up on the root of a plant." When gardeners who pull up weeds encounter the radah they discover where the strength of the plant is. The radah of the root is the center of the plant's strength. The radah helps the plant stay firmly in the ground when the winds come. What happens to the meaning of our Creation myth when we begin to understand the strength of a new translation?

She goes on to say that if we think about ourselves as the radah. The strongest part of creation that keeps it all rooted, that is the center between Earth and sky, we get a whole other different sense of this scripture. Our responsibility to the Earth is to act as God's representatives on Earth, to hold it all together, to be it's strength, to tend to it all and to love it like God loves it.

And if we think of ourselves not as in the physical image of God but rather as agents of God's will on Earth then we can see ourselves as reflections of God's love for the world, God's grace and compassion. We can ascribe to ourselves the ability to act with the creativity of God to find solutions, and tend to each other with forgiveness and unconditional love.

This is hard to wrap our heads around. To let go of that model of entitlement and domination but it is exactly where Jesus takes us in the New Testament reading this morning.

The disciples can't wrap their head around it either that there isn't hierarchy in the kingdom of God. That one person doesn't have more power than another or more favor than another.

Jesus tries to get them to understand that in the Kingdom of God we are equal, we are loved equally by God and Christ and that the way we find the kingdom is to serve one another in love. Very hard to understand for people shaped by a world that insists on hierarchy, on classes, based on political power, wealth and domination.

Jesus' words are just as true today as they were then to realize that whoever wishes to become great among us must be a servant.

As we kick off our year this year let's think about that. How can we continue to be a community that represents God through our love, creativity, compassion and service.

I have a feeling we are going to find some very meaningful ways to live out our call to be strong and rooted and resilient, the radah of God, let us be the strength of the world, in love with all of creation. AMEN

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