

## Pastor Roy's Sermon from August 2, 2015

Exodus 16:2-4,9-15; Psalm 78:23-29; Ephesians 4:1-16; John 6:24-35

Picnic worship. Outdoor worship. Why do we gather outside?

It's beautiful outside. And outside we are reminded of the foundation of our faith. What is this foundation? Look around you. **The beginning of faith is a creator who has never stopped creating.** New creatures come to life every day. From generation to generation we all adapt to our surroundings. The creator is nudging creation forward, slowly, with abandon, in love. Left to ourselves, sometimes we get stuck in our frustrations, our weaknesses, the slow way we learn, our fears, our anxieties. The Creator draws us along in all of this. The creator continues to create *us* too.

As we observe systems of plants and animals, seen and unseen; there is goodness and mercy in all. **The environment in which we live teaches us about God.** Yes, we have the Scriptures, but the writers following the Spirit received their orientation ultimately from creation. They listened. They learned. Yes, God is love. No part of creation is unimportant. It's all valuable. We are valuable. Every creature matters. God's justice flows from creation.

Being outside reminds us who we are—part of something greater than me or you. It reminds us who God is. That which draws life from matter, from the elements. The one who stirs up nurture in all creatures. As we learn about how we are put together, how our bodies function, the more we realize that we are made of the same stuff as everything around us. The same processes at work. The same building blocks of life.

God created and continues to create all of this around us, and so, so much more. We are learning more each year about planets very similar to our own in distant, but observable solar systems. God is creating there too. The vastness of the universe should not make us feel small but remind us that we are part of something amazing. The Creator gives life, making joy and beauty. As close to us as our breath, as our eating and drinking.

The life giving, nurturing presence of God is the foundation of the universe--of our lives. John says of Jesus, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." Jesus is in touch with the foundational grace in the universe. Freedom from hunger and thirst comes not because we are constantly eating and drinking, but because we are learning from creation to be satisfied. To take the time to listen. Setting aside at times electronic things so that we can learn first-hand from the creator's creation. To learn to be satisfied. To learn to be still at the deepest place of our souls, to get to know ourselves, our neighbors of all species, and God who gives us life. Many have found that when we stand still in creation, our union with God makes us free. Free to notice and be noticed. Free to love. Free to give. Free to receive. Even, ultimately, free to die. For nothing in creation is forgotten. Nothing is too small. All is held in the holy, eternal presence of the creator. To be is to be known, to be loved. Wonder of wonders! Jesus learned grace by being in creation and looking over the shoulders of the men and women who wrote the scriptures. He waited and learned to eat and drink deeply of the bread of life and the living water. He was free.

John calls us to seek the bread of life in Jesus. --That which truly endures. That which can never be taken away from us. The bread of life. The essence of the goodness of life.

Jesus leads us into this life. We follow him. This bread is to be known and loved by the creator. Sometimes we need to get over ourselves. Of course God love us. We set ourselves up on a pedestal that if we don't get it just right, every time, God is displeased. The universe does not revolve around whether we get it right. It goes on. God holds it together, not our capacity to get it right. Herein is the freedom of the bread of life. This bread is deep trust. Trust that the creator will continue to create me and you and us—regardless of our sin or error or many losses. Regardless of whether we live or die. The moon and sun, and the vast goodness of creation tells us clearly, it will all be ok. We are safe and secure in the care of the Creator. Thanks be to God.