

SERMON They Know, Do We?
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Olivet Congregational Church, UCC
October 9, 2022

SCRIPTURE

Job 12: 7-10

(Job

answered) ⁷ 'But ask the animals, and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
⁸ ask the plants of the earth,* and they will teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.
⁹ Who among all these does not know
that the hand of the LORD has done this?
¹⁰ In his hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of every human being.

Matthew 6: 25-33

²⁵"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' ³²For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

SERMON They Know, Do We?

One spring morning, I was awake early and decided it was too nice to stay in bed even though the sun was just coming up. So I took my dog and we started down the path in the woods toward the pond. As we approached the pond, I could see Canadian geese, in a way I had never seen them before. The whole gaggle, more geese than I could count, was on the pond. They were all gathered on the pond, perfectly still, no squawking, no swimming. They were all facing east as the sun came up over the trees. It felt like I had happened upon a moment of

reverence. It was like this community of birds had paused and together were honoring the beginning of the day. It was like they were in prayer. I had happened upon a special moment, a sacred moment, one of community and of blessing. It was like these creatures knew that the new day was a blessing and they honored it together. They knew.

Speaking of Canadian geese, did you know that if one goose has to set down while flying, another goose will join that one. It accompanies and supports the one on the ground while it is waiting to return to flight. That's important for the safety of the downed goose.

After sending out the email about this service, Marci Dodd sent me a link to a video. It was of an animal rescue site in Florida. Someone had brought in a male goose with a fractured foot, with the broken bone having broken through the skin. Now, this goose was part of a couple that had been living around the site for years. And while the caregivers at the rescue site decided to do surgery, the female goose showed up at their sliding glass door. She was becoming agitated. So they let her see the male goose. And after the surgery, they put the male goose where the two geese could see each other. As the male goose recuperates, the center has rigged a gate in a doorway so that the two geese can be close to each other. The people think it will enable the male goose to heal and the female to remain calm. The geese will support each other. Geese know.

I imagine that some of you have heard about a cat named Oscar that lived in a nursing home in Providence RI and knew when residents were dying. Oscar would walk through the facility, visiting patients in their rooms. Somehow Oscar could sense death when he entered the room of someone who was near death. He would climb onto that bed and lay with that person. No one told the Oscar to go there. No one knew how that cat knew the person was dying. But that cat stayed with the dying person so that he or she did not die alone. That cat knew.

We have all heard about service dogs. They help owners who are blind to navigate their surroundings. They can bring medication or phones to owners who are differently-abled. They can be taught to open refrigerator doors. They can even detect oncoming seizures. Some of this they are taught and some of it they sense. They also have to have the right temperament and attitude to become a service dog. And they are of great assistance to their owners. Service dogs know.

And as for our pets, they comfort us when we are sad. They run to us and welcome us home when we return from work or an outing. Whether we have had a good day or a miserable one, they show us love when we walk in that door. They purr or wag their tails or nuzzle us when we pet them – encouraging us to do more, to continue to show we care, to connect with them. They know how to show us love and how to encourage us to love them. Our pets know.

In our scripture reading this morning, Job shares his wisdom about God and creatures. He tells his friends that creation, the animals, the birds, the plants and the fish will teach us because they know that "In [God's] hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being." Job reminds us that God breathes life into all living beings. We humans and all

creatures of this earth share the essence of life, the breath of God. We are all connected through God. Creation Knows.

And using the birds of the sky and the lilies of the fields as examples, Jesus reminds us that our God continues to care for creation.

“Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”

“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?”

Through creation, Jesus reminds us of God’s care for creation and that God values us even more than the other creatures of creation. We can trust that God will provide us with what we need and is always there for us. Jesus knows.

This morning we gather to worship our God. We also gather in gratitude for the gift of our animals and for the gift of animals that roam this earth. We are grateful for the blessings that they offer us – their presence and the joy they bring, their ability to sense when something is wrong, their protection or care in our times of need, and their unconditional love.

We ask God’s blessing upon our pets and upon all creatures. We also ask God to bless us so that we might learn from other creatures.

We can learn from the geese and take a moment, early in the morning and look to the east, to honor each new day and know that we are part of the community of creation that shares that day. We may not be like Oscar and know when someone is close to death, but we can keep our eyes and ears open to see and hear the stories, the struggles, or the suffering of others – whether they are physical, emotional, financial or social. We can pause to be present to someone who has had to “set down,” and be supportive until they are ready to fly again. We can advocate for those who are differently-abled. We can continually offer encouragement to our loved ones and try to love unconditionally. And we can work to protect all God’s creatures – whether it is in supporting organizations that work to care for and protect abandoned pets or ones that advocate for birds, animals or fish in the wild or our earth in general.

God has blessed us with the diversity and beauty of all living creatures. God has blessed us with pets who love us and are part of our families. Let us regularly take time to recall that we and our pets are a small part of the greater family of life, filled with the breath of God. In our hearts, we already know it.

