

Animal Blessing Homily

Sardis Baptist Church

September 17, 2023

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Genesis 1: 26, 29-30 (The Message)

God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, and yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth."

Then God said, "I've given you every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth and every kind of fruit-bearing tree, given them to you for food. To all animals and all birds, everything that moves and breathes, I give whatever grows out of the ground for food."

God is an animal lover. In Genesis, God created plants and animals before they created humanity, and then they ordered us to be in charge of this creation: to be stewards of their beloved Earth and its inhabitants.

Being made in God's image doesn't mean that we are superior to the rest of creation, it means that we are *responsible* for its care and management. As history has progressed, we have formed bonds and rivalries with, reverence and fear of different parts of that creation, but whatever the relationship, we are inextricably linked to all of it.

St. Francis of Assisi, the so-called Patron Saint of Ecologists, said, "if you have men who will exclude any of God's creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men." He said, "not to hurt our humble brethren is our first duty to them, but to stop there is not enough. We have a higher mission—to be of service to them wherever they require it."

We are gathered here today to honor and bless our beloved animal companions—those we've brought with us in person, those at home, and those that have gone before us. We are here to thank them for the gift of their friendship; their unconditional love. But we are not only here for the animals that we live closest with—we want to praise all animals that exist in our world and affect the ecosystems we all exist in. The apex predators, the smallest rodents, the annoying gnats and mosquitos and the creatures that feed on them. All life is linked, and all life is sacred. It is our duty to protect it in any way we can and help it to prosper, because its prosperity is ours as well.

The Lakota people of North America have a phrase in their language that means “all are related”: *Mitákuye Oyás’ŋ*. At the conclusion of this service, members of our ministry team will come around and offer thanks and prayers for any and all animals that are gathered here, whether in person or in spirit. Take a moment as we do to offer your own personal thanks for our relations in God’s creation.

Amen.