

**God's Abundance in Creation
Blessing of the Animals Service
September 25, 2022
Luke 12:22-31
Rev. Laurie Crelly**

Potlucks are a fun, weird sort of tradition most churches have. We invite everyone to bring something to share and make a meal out of it. We all fret a little when we do it that way. What if we get tons of deserts and no meat? What if I bring the same thing as someone else? Oh, and we all have our favorite items we pray will be there like Sue's wonderful potato dish. But no matter what happens there is one thing for sure at a potluck. LEFTOVERS – there is always way more food than we could possibly eat. As clean up begins we always see the plastic bowls, ziplock bags and tin foil come out as people beg one another to take some of the food that's left.

Whenever we gather, whether it is a potluck, a service project or worship, we offer a part of ourselves and share with one another the abundance of God's love and grace with each other. Today, we have gathered here not just to share ourselves, but also our pets with one another. To celebrate the unique and special ways that animals, pets and even service animals and livestock enrich our lives. Today, you may see a different side of someone as they interact with their pet. As we hear stories of how we came to have this pet, or how we chose the name, again we will discover something new and perhaps surprising about one another. The most wonderful stories come when you ask someone what it means to them to have this pet. During coffee hour later ask one another about stories of how this pet has taught you about God or how you see God in this part of creation. You will be amazed and blessed.

In today's readings we hear in scripture how animals and nature are object lessons of faith. Jesus, is teaching us about faith and trust in God's care reminding us that worrying about the future does nothing to make our lives better. Jesus says we should see how animals do not have storehouses of food and yet daily they find food and water provided by God's hand. We

should look to the flowers of the field to see what true beauty looks like, clothed in color and warmth.

Look around you and consider the beauty of God's creation that gives us so much more than we deserve. Consider the wonder of the trees, the grass, all of these diverse animals that bless our lives. Consider the abundant blessing that the crops of the field are providing for us with food, fuel, and livelihoods for many of us. God is caring for us in some very generous ways. It is like a potluck table when we stop and observe. When we stop and reflect on God's goodness all around us, instead of taking it for granted.

Unfortunately, for too long our society has taken for granted, and even exploited the abundance of God's creation. We failed take seriously the interconnectedness of creation, but instead allowed greed strip the world of its resources for personal gain. We also need to be mindful and aware of the ways we may be harming the very things that give us life and fulfillment. Many of us have indoor animals. How many of you take precautions to not bring in plants that could make your dog or cat sick if they ate them. How many of us make sure that our pets get good food for their health needs, or make sure they get to the vet if they become sick. I encourage all of us to extend such care also to all of nature around us and to the safety of our water, the source of life for all of us.

A few years ago I had a spiritual awakening regarding caring for our water resources when I joined a Nibi Walk as it came to the convergence of the three rivers in St. Louis. A Nibi Walk is a spiritual prayer walk led by Native American faith leaders. These Nibi walks happen all over North America. My friend Sarah Thomsen from Duluth was part of this group of women and men walking along and praying for the waters of the Missouri River. They started at the head waters in Montana and ended their walk at the Columbia Bottom Preserve in St. Louis at the confluence of the Missouri, Illinois and Mississippi rivers. They were coming into St. Louis at the end of their 54 day prayer walk. So I decided to join them for the final miles. Sharon Day, the spiritual leader of the Nibi Walk called for all of us to pray for the water, to remember that it is the source of life and that humanity is guilty of polluting it in so many ways. She also

challenged us to find three daily practices that protects and conserves water as a spiritual practice of caring for the water.

And so today, as an extension of Sharon's words, I want us to also be praying for all creatures that share the waters of life with us. As we take time today to pray for God's blessing on our beloved pets, let us also take time to pray for other animals that are endangered, neglected or exploited. Let us remember God's charge to humankind from Genesis 2:15, 18-19 "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name." Let us renew our commitment to follow God's command to care for creation and all for the animals in our care for they are our fellow companions in this world. Amen.