

## Season of Creation - Blessing of the Animals

October 5, 2025

Job 12:7-10a

Psalm 104: (24-25, 27-28, 30-31)

Romans 8:19-23

Matthew 6:25-26

### A Book Without Words

*A sermon preached by The Rev. Dianne Andrews at  
St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, Bainbridge Island, WA.*



#### Job 12:7-10a

But ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing.

#### Psalm 104

O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. These all look to you to give them their food in due season; when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you send forth your spirit, they are created; you renew the face of the ground. May the glory of the LORD endure for ever.

#### Romans 8:19-23

<sup>19</sup>For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. <sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that<sup>[a]</sup> the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

<sup>22</sup>We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. <sup>23</sup>Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

#### Matthew 6:25-26

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? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Statues of St. Francis seem to be everywhere. I don't know about you, but when I spot a statue of Francis... a sense of peace washes over me. Images of Francis are often found in simple gardens where birds feel at home and butterflies dance among the flowers. Francis is the saint who said, "Preach the gospel at all times, and if you must, use words." In silence, Francis continues to speak to people of faith and of no faith alike. At the end of this service, after we have blessed animals and broken bread together, we will pray the prayer "attributed to St. Francis." The prayer that begins, "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace," was most likely written in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and not by Francis. Nevertheless, the power in the words, "where there is hatred, let me sow love... where there is injury, pardon," and so forth... are a witness and invitation to know the abundance offered in a life of simplicity and faith.

Born into a wealthy merchant family at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Francesco Bernadone forged a very different path in life than that of his family. Having been a soldier and known the urge to conquer and dominate, Francis turned to a life of peace. Renouncing earthly wealth, Francis embraced "Lady Poverty" and the radical self-emptying that was an imitation of Christ's poverty and dependence on God's love. Francis saw God everywhere... especially in animals, in the poor, and in the outcast. In one account, early in Francis' life of devotion to God, "Francis came across a leper while he was riding his horse. A young Francis would have looked down at the leper in disgust and rode on."<sup>1</sup> But this Francis, "who had dedicated his life to God, stopped and dismounted his horse. He gave the leper a coin and kissed his hand. The leper kissed him in return. The experience filled Francis a deep knowledge of God's grace and a few days later he visited a hospice of lepers bringing them monetary donations."<sup>2</sup> For the remainder of his life, Francis served the outcast with humility and loving dedication.

Eight hundred years ago, the way of Francis attracted followers, and continues to do so today. Clare, the founder of the women's Franciscan order, was another child of wealth and privilege who chose to follow in the way of poverty and devotion. When her family was engaged in negotiations for her betrothal, Clare would sneak out of the house to hear the traveling friar Francis of Assisi speak. "She felt as if Francis was speaking directly to her... In the dark of night on Palm Sunday 1212, just before Clare would be forced to accept a marriage proposal, the eighteen-year-old sneaked past the guards at her house and met Saint Francis and some other friars at the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli. She had given her fine gowns and entire dowry to the needy. Dressed in sackcloth and the gray robes of the friars, and with the approval of the Bishop of Assisi, Clare and Francis stepped onto the altar. Under candlelight, the brothers encircled them and prayed as Francis cut Clare's long silken hair to symbolize her entry into religious life." Only after her stunned family saw Clare's cropped hair did they relent. Sixteen days later, Clare's younger sister Agnes followed Clare into the religious life. There is much to learn about Francis and Clare and the blessings of a life of simplicity and service. Clare wrote, "Love God, serve God; everything is in that." At the end of a life filled great meaning and purpose, Clare was filled with gratitude. "She had given it all away to serve the same endless round of mortality's demands – tending to the poor, caring for the sick who would never be well, coaxing life out of those who would, like all of us,

---

<sup>1</sup> Three Lessons We Can Learn from St. Francis of Assisi, (adapted) [https://ffhl.org/three-lessons-we-can-learn-from-saint-francis-of-assisi/?gad\\_source=1&gad\\_campaignid=23051282522&gbraid=0AAAAADGWO\\_b--qqrpxn88fXnmBoSKJr7&gclid=Cj0KCQjwovPGBhDxARIsAFhgkwS6J4lQXCBW0K2G\\_7n8JQqFFbmtEo7XchVv3REL0g3HYmichV9t7qQaAhuVEALw\\_wcB](https://ffhl.org/three-lessons-we-can-learn-from-saint-francis-of-assisi/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=23051282522&gbraid=0AAAAADGWO_b--qqrpxn88fXnmBoSKJr7&gclid=Cj0KCQjwovPGBhDxARIsAFhgkwS6J4lQXCBW0K2G_7n8JQqFFbmtEo7XchVv3REL0g3HYmichV9t7qQaAhuVEALw_wcB)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

eventually die. On her deathbed, Clare was heard to say to herself, "Go forth in peace, for you have followed the good road. Go forth without fear, for He Who created you has made you holy, has always protected you, and loves you as a mother. Blessed be You, my God, for having created me."<sup>[22]</sup>

The modern-day order of the Community of Francis and Clare, offers this vision of community:

*"We see ourselves striving to live a simple life that expresses our love of God and neighbor. We work to be prayerful, respectful, kind, and responsible. We relish all of God's creation. We identify with the voiceless and marginalized of our societies knowing that Christ is with them..."*<sup>3</sup>

The way of Francis and Clare has much to offer, especially in our day and age. Know, too, that there are Franciscans here among us today.

As we worship into this last Sunday in a Season of Creation... let us remember that the call to care for the goodness that God has entrusted to us... is to be part of our baptismal ministries... every day of our lives. To love God's creatures is to love God. To care for God's creation is to serve God. As we prepare to bless animals this day, I would like to offer a quotation from *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky:

*"Love all God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day. And you will come at last to love the whole world with an all-embracing love."*

...and words attributed to the mystic Meister Eckhart:

*"Apprehend God in all things, for God is in all things. Every single creature is full of God, and is a book about God. Every creature is a word of God. If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature—even a caterpillar—I would never have to prepare a sermon, so full of God is every creature."*

...so let us now continue this sermon... by blessing the animals among us...

---

<sup>3</sup> Community of Francis and Clare, <https://cfcfranciscans.org/>