

First Lutheran Church, Aitkin

Dear Friends in Christ, grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Amen

In Jesus, we see God face to face. That is good. In many other ways we see God veiled, hidden or behind a mask, so to speak. In the First Article of the Apostles Creed, we say that we believe in God the Father, creator of heaven and earth, that God is the creator of all. In creation, there is a bit of hiddenness to God as creator. We don't see God as clear as in Jesus, but yet there are some wonderful promises and assurances from God in creation. We need those promises and assurances as we live in this world.

If we go back thousands of years, we see a predictability to God's creation. The ancient stone formations of Stonehenge may have been set to help tell the changing of seasons for people. There is some thought that these stones help tell when the equinoxes and solstices occur. People then would know what was coming.

In the ancient Mayan civilizations in the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico, there was a very sophisticated astronomy culture. The Mayans had libraries of writings to tell when an eclipse would happen. This was important because there was a fear that an eclipse of the sun would mean the end of life. So the kings would be informed of a coming eclipse so he could tell the people to start praying for the eclipse not to kill the sun. Failure to make prayers could lead the king and the astronomers to be killed for their negligence.

Looking at the night skies, people long ago noticed patterns and began to give names and shapes to what we call constellations. These constellations also would rise in the night skies at various times of the year. They also noticed that other lights seemed to move at different paces and eventually they were called planets. Through all these studies of the skies and nature, people got a sense of order to their world.

We live in a part of the world where there are four seasons. Although some would say we only have two: winter and road construction. What do the four seasons tell us? There is a regularity to our world and life. Spring comes, moves to summer and then to fall and eventually winter. True, spring can be short and cool as this year. Winter can be cold and long with lots of snow. Or it can be milder with little snow. Through all the variations of the seasons, in spring trees begin to bud, grass grows and seeds that are planted grow. Summer matures the crops and there is a harvest.

We know that these seasons will occur and give us some predictability. We can also enjoy the seasons and look forward to the next. Life continues through the seasons.

As we continue looking at creation, we can look at the beautiful complexity it has. A painter by the name of Monet began to look at the variations of colors and shades in trees and grass. Trained to paint in the traditional style, he began to want to paint these variations in a different manner. Out of that came the Impressionistic style of painting, highlighting these variations more fully.

As we think about fruit and vegetables, we see how different ones ripen at different times. Flowers bloom on different schedules and in fall we see the beautiful colors of leaves. Even winter, with snow

falling and covering the landscape brings a nice change of scene. There is a complexity and regularity to all these parts of God's creation.

Behind all of what creation does is God as creator, our maker. We see a regularity to this from our God. I have a granddaughter, who is only twenty-one months old and when her mother leaves the room, she is devastated. I tell her that her mother will return, she always does and that she can count on that. It does not satisfy her, tho. As humans, we eventually learn that we can trust our parents coming home. That helps us with some security.

God is with us, Immanuel, a name for Jesus. But God is also with us in nature. We sing, "This is my Father's world and to my listening ears, all nature sings and round me rings, the music of the spheres." Yes, there are disasters in nature: droughts, floods, tornados, hurricanes, typhoons, tidal waves. These are terrible and not to be downplayed. That apostle Paul says in Romans 8 that even creation groans under the bondage of sin and waits for liberation.

Yet, life is renewed and continues through time. God is continuing the way of creation.

I hear from time to time people say that they can worship God as well out on the lake or golf course as in church. A question I have is, do they? If they do, that is great! God is there and can be seen. So let us today see God in or behind God's creation, our world. Let us revel in the beauty of creation. Let us be amazed at the complexity of God's creation.

In Psalm 148 all creation is called to praise God. All of creation is called to tell of God's power, God's beauty, God's control, love and care of God's creation and us. Amen