

Meditation For April 27, 2021

In my April 11 meditation, I talked about God's gift to humanity; that is, the world we live in, with all its beauty, with all the wonderful creatures that populate the earth, the trees, the flowers, the seas, lakes, rivers, etc. However, the main theme of my talk was based on God's expectations of us as stewards of this natural world he has given us, what guidelines God may have left us to look after his great creation, and how these guidelines are presented in the Bible. I would like to continue with that theme in this meditation.

Here's a few interesting thoughts to get your imaginations fired up, and possibly even evoke a discussion. I expect some folks may not necessarily agree with me. When we talk about God's "creation" we raise an interesting discussion. There are two main theories about how God created our world; his creation of the world as presented in Genesis, or God's creation of the world through an evolutionary process that took many, many years. Personally, I go along with the evolutionary process.....the scientists like to lay claim to this theory, but what do they know? lol It is quite likely that earth is a one of a kind miracle; a place with no equal anywhere else in our infinite universe; created by a miracle that only God could have accomplished. When earth was first formed, it was a hostile, featureless place, largely covered by water, but unlike billions of other heavenly bodies in our universe, God blessed earth with a unique environment, complete with an atmosphere that could support life. As this environment changed through time, life on earth adapted to these changes, and living creatures, forests and other living things changed so they could survive these changes. But as time went on, and in spite of God's careful instructions, we have become careless with how we have treated his planet, and it has become difficult for it and life on it to adapt to the changes we have forced on it. We are reaching a crossroad, and if we don't start paying attention to what God is saying to us about caring for earth, it is going to be in serious trouble, and ourselves along with it.

God's instructions in the Bible are not just about his environmental concerns or just for the benefit of man; he is very clear how he wants animals, birds, and other life treated. Stephen Jurovics in his book "Hospitable Planet," points out a few examples of this. Even animals, birds and aquatic creatures bound for the dinner table or for sacrifice, are to be treated with respect: Leviticus 22: 26-28. "And then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: when an ox or a sheep, or a goat is born, it shall

remain for seven days with its mother, and from the eighth day onwards, it shall be acceptable as the Lord's offering by fire....."

Deuteronomy 22:4 "You shall not see your neighbour's donkey or ox fallen on the road and ignore it; you shall help to lift it up." An example of helping not only one's neighbour, but also an animal in distress.

Deuteronomy 22:11 "You shall not plough with an ox and a donkey yoked together." God is pointing out here that it is not right to plough with animals of unequal strength.

What God is saying in the above excerpts is that yes, we may use these creatures for food and for labour, but they must be respected and treated humanely.

The population of our world has expanded exponentially, and the demand for food of all kinds has expanded with it. The 50- and 100-acre family farms of our childhood are no longer able to keep up with this demand, so now we have the so-called high-volume "factory farm." Even the term "factory farm" has an uncomfortable sense about it. Here's one small example; journalist, Nicholas Kristoff, in a New York Times article, noted that the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture reported that about 700,000 chickens a year are not slaughtered correctly, but are often scalded to death. It doesn't require much imagination to conjure up a mental picture of what Kristoff is describing. Our daily diet consists of foods that are the end products of factory farming; milk, eggs, chicken, beef, grain products, etc., etc. So, how about quality...is food produced in such high quantities as nutritious as food that would come out of a relatively small market garden, or small poultry or beef farm? The late author, Ruth Harrison, in her book, "Animal Machines," points to a couple of small-scale studies comparing the nutritional value of eggs from factory farmed chickens to those from free-range chickens. The Vitamin A and beta-carotene content of the factory-produced eggs was 4,510 IU per 100 grams, compared to 8,830 IU per 100 grams for the free-range eggs.....twice the amount. A second study showed that the Vitamin B content of free-range compared to factory-produced eggs was also almost twice as much. We may not like it, but we have to eat, don't we?

The few verses I have quoted from the Bible are only a small sampling of the many that are indicative of God's love and concern for the world he created, and for the

creatures and other living things that populate the world. As people of faith, we owe it to God to be guided by his wishes for the care and protection of his world and for all living things in the world, and while we cannot stop the things that I have described here, we can help reduce them by educating others and setting a good example ourselves.

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