

“Redemption And Peace For All”

Are you familiar with this fly killing device? I picked this one up a few years ago at a truck stop in Virginia. There's just something about the quick acceleration of the traditional flyswatter that is really satisfying when hunting down those pesky house flies, which I can't stand by the way. They're so annoying with the buzzing around trying their best to land on our food or our skin, so they can do whatever it is they do, which I'm pretty sure is rather nasty, considering the fact that flies can't chew. Plus, I read that more than 100 pathogens are associated with the house fly, including *Salmonella* and *E. coli*. But even though we might want to swat them all, flies do have more purpose in this world other than annoying us and making us sick. Baby fly larva have this wonderful ability to feed and develop in a wide range of decaying organic matter, which is important for recycling nutrients in nature. And when the larva hatch into maggots, some species are used by medical professionals to help people with flesh wounds, especially burn victims. And flies, in all forms, serve as an important food source for a lot of other animals like certain reptiles, fish, birds, and even plants like the Venus Flytrap.

You might be wondering why I'm talking about flies, especially since our Lenten sermon series is about the cross of Christ and the impact it makes in our lives and in the world. But believe it or not, the cross does have a connection to flies, because just like you and me, all creatures, in fact not just all creatures, but all of creation is connected to the cross. Because the cross is where God reconciled all things.

Listen again to what Paul writes to the Colossians. “For in Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross” (Col.1:19-20). This is an amazing, almost cosmic statement, of the absolute supremacy of Jesus Christ not only for our reconciliation, but for the reconciliation of the entire creation. And we seem to get the whole God reconciling us to himself through the blood of Christ, which is a good thing, because it's absolutely critical to our understanding of how redemption and ultimately eternal peace comes to us. But Paul says the blood of the cross is about more than reconciling us to God. He specifically says, "**All** things, whether on earth or in

heaven. Through Christ's death on the cross, **all** things are reconciled to God. And that brings me back to the common housefly. Well, almost.

First, I want you to think about this because it's really important. We all know that creation today is not as God first made it. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, everything is kind of "out of whack," both in our own bodies and in the wider creation. And life is a lot harder than what God had originally planned, because now we have this one thing we will all have to deal with and that thing is death. The harsh words God spoke to Adam recorded in Genesis Chapter 3 after that first sin speak just as harshly to you and me today. "Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:17-19). All relationships with God were thrown out of alignment because of Adam and Eve's sin including ours, all creatures, and ultimately all of creation. And as a result the whole thing suffers. Romans chapter 8 makes this very clear. "For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him (Adam) who subjected it" (Rom. 8:20). And now we all groan under the effects of sin as we wait to be set free from bondage and corruption. Harsh but true words. All of creation groans because now every creature struggles to live.

Most of us don't break a sweat everyday working the ground just to eat —I mean there's a grocery store on every corner around here. But each of us struggles in our own way to live each day. Think about it. The world can be a dangerous place. This community can be a dangerous place! All too often I hear sirens racing down the street. Someone is obviously struggling. Not to mention sickness and pain both physical and mental all of us have to deal with. And it's not just humans, it's all creatures. And this really does bring me back to the houseflies. Every one of them struggles everyday to live and not die! The same is true for every mouse, every bird, every creature, no matter how significant or insignificant we may think they are, each one's existence has gone from doing whatever God had originally planned for them to do to just trying to survive. Now I have no idea why God created the fly but I do know it was purposeful. "O Lord, how manifest are your works! The earth is full of your creatures; In wisdom have you made them all," the Psalmist writes (Psalm 104:24). But one day, we will know why because death is not the end of story of us and it is not the end of the story for God's creation.

Redemption and peace for all will be restored and thanks to Christ Jesus the Lord, those plans are already in motion. Hear Paul's words again. "For in Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things,

whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross” (Col.1:19-20). You see, the blood of Christ's cross sets straight once again the relationship between the creator and his creation that is so messed up. And while we are still living in the “now” and the “not yet” of God’s kingdom, this time that relationship has been set straight forever. The scriptures tell us the resurrected Jesus says, "Behold, I am coming soon” (Rev. 22:7). And when he does all of creation will be transformed back to a place where sin and death are forever banished—a place where this thing (fly swatter) will never be needed again.

But until that day, we have a responsibility to continue the God given task of looking out for his creation in anticipation of Christ’s return. Remember when God created the earth and everything in it, he declared it all “good.” And yes, it’s now broken and we can’t bring it back to the way it was. But we can help “stop the bleeding” by living in ways that don’t diminish or harm creation, but ways that respect the goodness of the physical world including all the creatures. No, I’m not suggesting we give up our fly swatters. But we do need to put some serious thought and prayer into this. Because the truth is God values His creation so much that he took on a human body, a human body that ended up on dying on a cross in order to reclaim it. Isn’t this more than enough of a reason for us to not only have an awareness of the goodness of creation but to do all we can to preserve it? This isn't about politics or earth idolatry. It’s about doing our part to see this thing through—a part given by God himself after he created our first parents and gave them the charge of taking care of all that he had made. Yes, because of sin creation is different now, but God isn’t. Through the blood of the cross, Christ has begun to make it all right once again. And until he, who now “holds all things together” (Col.1:17) returns to complete what he started, we continue to do what we can to help him move things forward. **Amen.**