

Sermon: Creature Beings in Love**Scripture: Psalm 148****Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans****Date: October 16, 2016**

This morning we are not merely human beings come together to worship the God of Life as many of us do on Sunday mornings tucked away within sanctuary walls. Instead, we are worshipping more as we ought to be this morning, outside under the canopy of trees and clouds and blue sky, gathered together not just as *human* beings but as Creature Beings– human and dog and cat and rabbit, also bird and squirrel, earth worm, ant, and spider, fly, gnat and chipmunk and somewhere around Winchester, all of us offering our worship of God in this remarkable diversity of life. This is what we were made to do as God’s creation to praise our Maker. The Psalmist offers a litany of creation praising God from the sun and moon and all the shining stars to the wild animals, sea creatures and the mountains and trees. There is the suggestion that creation itself is a pouring forth of divine creativity and love and the purpose is a response of praise and love back to the Creator. At the end of all things, the book of Revelations suggests, is a consummate final coming together of all creatures to sing and praise God for the extravagant gesture that is creation itself.

Hear the words of Annie Dillard, author of “Pilgrim at Tinker Creek”, when she writes:

If the landscape reveals one certainty, it is that the extravagant gesture is the very stuff of creation. After the one extravagant gesture of creation in the first place, the universe has come to deal exclusively in extravagances, flinging intricacies and colossi down aeons of emptiness, heaping profusions on profligacies with ever-fresh vigor. The whole show has been on fire from the word go.

It is a small and distorted vision that sees God like a monarch on a throne who sits over a static world as a judge keeping things in order, rewarding good behavior and punishing bad. This is not the God that Jesus Christ came to reveal but rather more the God that Annie Dillard speaks of – a God of extravagances and grace drawing forth the processes of the world in endlessly creative ways, not separate and distant from us but a presence we participate in, from which we draw our very life's vitality and without whom all of life would cease to be unfolding and evolving and cease to be.

So we gather as Creature Beings participating in this extravagant gesture of life, participating in the very presence of God as one creation. The animals that we have brought with us to worship and that we bring forth for blessing are not lesser beings than ourselves within God's divine household, but equally they are God's creation. And the love we feel for them is not a lesser love than we might feel for another human being but rather that love and all love participates in God's love that brought forth and brings forth all creation.

Our animal companions draw out of us an attentiveness and love, a gentleness and care, a dependency and patience that helps fill the world with more of those qualities...and for this we are grateful for this world could use some more of those qualities, couldn't it? Especially, in this time of election news and twitter exchanges, the taking sides and the demonizing of the other, we need to be sure at times to turn off the TV and come into the presence of our animal companions, get on the floor with them, look into their eyes, and allow them to teach us what

unconditional love and acceptance is about, and what it means to be fully present to the moment, and how to offer love and devotion.

God blesses this world and our lives with the experience of love, creature to creature love, and we must take every opportunity to foster it and develop it and to place such love at the center of our lives however it is expressed and made manifest. So in a moment we will invite you to bring forth your animal companion to receive a blessing with the sign of the cross. As Christians we do the sign of the cross when we offer a blessing because it is the cross that reveals just how deep and broad, how unconditional and sacrificial, God's love for this world and for you and for your animal companion truly is. It's an apt symbol because you sacrifice in your life for the love of your animal companion and your companion sacrifices him/herself in their love for you.

If you have lost a pet recently and the loss still weighs on your life, we welcome you to come forward and receive a blessing yourself, for the pain that we all experience in losing an animal companion goes to the very heart of the cruciform nature of love in this world. Where the infinite nature of love meets the finite nature of our existence, there necessarily is heartbreak that accompanies endings, but still we choose to love over not loving because it is love that gives our lives and this world its meaning and purpose.

So please come forth and receive a blessing, in love and grace of Christ, Amen.