



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, July 17-23 (A) – Romans 8:12-25

Focus: *Creation Waiting for Redemption*

word of life

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.” (Romans 8:22-23 NRSV)

Read Romans 8:12-25

None of us get to choose the circumstance of our birth—time, date, location, or parents. Each of us has our own unique set of circumstances, yet each has been created by God in God’s own image. Because it is God who has brought us into being, we can consider one another brothers and sisters.

The apostle Paul expands this basic understanding of what it means to be children of God: “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ....” (Romans 8:14-17 NRSV)

The Spirit brings us into a specific relationship with God—as adoptive children, ones who dare cry out with “Abba! Father!” The word “Abba!” means more than “Father”, but it reflects a tender intimacy. Imagine a little girl and her younger brother who run to their father crying “Papa!” Imagine the loving father who reaches out to hug both children.

1. *How do you describe the fundamental bond you share with all of humanity?*
2. *What does it mean for the Spirit to lead you to become a child of God?*
3. *How does it feel to be adopted by God?*

It is one thing to be led by the Spirit into a unique relationship with God which is described as adoption, but it adds another level of significance to realize that adoptive process includes becoming heirs of God. We do not deserve to be heirs of God, but are heirs only because God is gracious and has acted on our behalf through Christ.

4. *Take a moment to ponder the significance of being an heir of God. What words come to mind?*

We are linked to Christ as a joint heir. At first, that sounds quite impressive. It may be something to boast about to our friends. Paul reminds us that being yoked to Christ includes sharing his suffering as well as his glory. As long as we live on this earth, suffering continues. In fact all of creation is captive and waits for God to transform this earth to be a heaven with no more suffering and pain. Paul writes of this cosmic redemption, “We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.” (Romans 8:22-23 NRSV)

As beautiful and wonderful as creation is to experience, there is something more than our days on this earth and this battlefield. God is at work, and we are heirs of God’s mighty acts. And so we wait, but we wait with hope. We wait confident of God’s grace. As we wait, we bear witness to the hope which is deep inside of us—a hope pointing to God at work in Christ Jesus.

5. *What does it mean for creation to be groaning in labor pains?*
6. *How does a Christian bear witness to the hope of Christ?*

Word among us

The Old Testament begins with two familiar descriptions of God creating the world. Genesis 1 describes a powerful God from afar who speaks the word, and creation—including humans—comes into being. God takes six days to create the entire universe and rests on the seventh day.

In contrast, Genesis 2 describes God as an artist who sculpts the first man, *adam*, from the earth and breathes life into him. God walks in the garden and enjoys harmony with creation.

1. *If you could spend a week anywhere in God's creation, where would it be?*
2. *Name something in creation for which you are particularly grateful.*

In addition to these passages in Genesis, there are brief references to God's process of creation in both Psalms and Proverbs. But for the most part, the Bible tells the story of God and God's relationship with one part of creation—humans after the fall from the garden. (Unfortunately, the first humans were not willing to live in God's created garden under God's terms.)

Much to the chagrin of environmentalists, there are limited references to creation in the Bible beyond doxological praises. That's what makes this passage from Romans jump off the page. Paul writes, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies." (Romans 8:22-23 NRSV)

This passage along with Colossians 1:15-20 and Ephesians 1:9-10 opens the possibility of a cosmic redemption. These passages suggest creation will be included in God's plan for deliverance. Creation eagerly yearns for redemption, waiting in pain like a pregnant woman ready to give birth to her child.

3. *Do you agree that creation is included in God's salvation plan? Explain your answer.*
4. *How important is it for you personally for God to redeem creation?*

faith practice in daily life

Strive for justice and peace in all the earth

God's Spirit is at work in our baptism to bring us into God's family as children and heirs of God. We are linked with Christ in both his suffering and his glory. We know all too well human suffering continues on this earth. Hunger, injustice, and human need abounds.

In the name of Christ, we act in solidarity with those who do not have a voice. This passage from Romans gives support to lend our voice to creation and its care. We act with hope of a final victory which comes by the grace of God. Paul is bold enough to include all of creation in this victory. Thanks be to God.

5. *How and why are Christians to care for creation?*
6. *How do we keep hope alive?*

Prayer

Creator of the Universe, hear the prayer of all of your creation and bring us peace. Amen

last word

Breathe deeply and savor this day created by God.