

**Sermon on 1 John 1:1-4**  
**Susan Verbrugge**  
**Blacksburg Presbyterian Church**  
**April 26, 2009**

I started this meditation four or five times and deleted what I wrote. I wrote two whole meditations, but they didn't make the cut either. I think part of the problem was that I knew that I would have to stand up to speak after a great deal of beautiful music had been sung. What can a preacher really say that hasn't already been sung into the core of our hearts this morning?

I think the other part of the problem is the incredible urgency I feel when it comes to talk about "saving" the planet. There is something deep within me that is bursting to get out, and I don't know how to say it. The problems seem so overwhelming and vast that I throw my hands up in despair. Groans emanate from deep within me as I hear and experience the new ways we are working to destroy instead of build up.

So this week, I sat outside of my kids' gymnastics studio on Thursday evening wondering how to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ in the midst of what I was feeling was only bad news about the way we are treating God's creation. I decided to sit outside because the afternoon was gorgeous, sun shining, birds chirping, trees bursting forth with blooms and new leaves. Surely I would find some inspiration out there. So, while I was thinking, praying, reading, writing, and thinking some more about God's incredible gift of creation, a car pulled up right next to me. The woman in her car was obviously waiting for her child to finish her lesson and come out to the car. The problem was that the woman sat in her car with the car running. There I was, trying to sit and enjoy the outdoors and find something hopeful to say, and this woman pulls right next to me, tailpipe in my face, puffing out noxious fumes and noise, for at least ten minutes while she waited. Not that I was timing her or anything.

And if that wasn't enough, almost as soon as she had pulled away, another car pulled up and did the exact same thing. Except this person had the graciousness to only sit there with the car running for 4 ½ minutes.

Despair in my heart. Sadness in my soul. Tears in my eyes weeping for creation.

Good News? I hadn't found it yet.

But then, on Friday morning, I went to volunteer at Beeks Elementary where my kids attend school. I was in a first grade classroom where my daughter Kinsey, and Sarah Hunter and Garrett Knobl spend their days. All three of these kids are children of this church. And apparently, on Earth Day this past week, all three of them got to talk in their class about how we can all work together to take good care of earth. I was privileged to put up around their room art that they had made. In the center of their creations were suggestions that they had for all of us and for themselves about how to take better care of the world. None of the suggestions were earth shattering so to speak...recycle, pick up litter, turn off the lights, change the kinds of light bulbs we use. But, the fact was, they had spent time talking about it and wondering about it. I don't remember spending much time when I was a kid talking about such things in school...even though I do remember my dad yelling at us about turning off lights when we left the room. The hope for me is that these kids were talking about it. They were learning that what they do makes a difference for the whole of creation. They were learning that matter matters, and that we have a responsibility to take care of what has been given to us.

It was a start on the road to Good News for me. And, then, for some reason, I read the first chapter of 1 John. The writer of this letter has passion for what he is saying, for what he is testifying, for what he is proclaiming. I am taken with his deep devotion, his ardor. He is bursting to tell of the Good News of Jesus Christ. He can't help but proclaim it because he has seen it, he has touched it, he has known it. He tells it so that his joy can be complete. If he doesn't share the good news of new life that he knows in Jesus Christ, his joy will only be partial, not whole. It is in the sharing of it that his joy becomes complete.

I also hear the Good News of Jesus Christ in all the scriptures we have read this morning, from Jeremiah to Psalms to Romans to 1 John. God is the giver of life to all things, not just to humans, but to all things. God is the giver of redemption through Jesus Christ to the

whole of creation. That means that we are the sharers of new life, not that the new life in Christ is only for us humans. We share in it. We live into it with all of creation. And our joy can only be complete when we share that new life.

Does that mean it will be easy? I think we all know that it hardly ever is...moving into new life. We know that we must join in with the groaning of creation. We know that for Christ, the way to resurrection was through the cross, through death.

Right now, I'm reading a book about Paul Farmer, a physician who has given his life to work among the poor in Haiti. The book is called *Mountains Beyond Mountains*. I think I really like this man because he is passionate and leans toward the irreverent side. He has a wicked sense of humor and incredible intelligence along with compassion and servanthood. He is always saying unexpected things. For instance, he begins to talk about what he calls "WL's". WL stands for white liberals, though he admits that some of the most influential spokespersons for WL's are prosperous African American. He says, "I love WL's, love 'em to death. They're on our side. But WL's think all the world's problems can be fixed without any cost to themselves. We don't believe that. There's a lot to be said for sacrifice, remorse, even pity. It's what separates us from roaches" (40).

Moving into new life with creation, turning destruction into healing and wholeness for the whole earth, will not come without a price for us. There will be cost for us. But, in deep sacrifice comes real life. Isn't that what Jesus taught us? So turn off the lights when you leave the room. Yes, definitely. But what else? How else? In working together to find the answers to these questions, I believe, we will find the Good News of God's transformation of our lives and of all of creation as we live together into a new heaven and a new earth. Amen.