

2022 09 25 – Gratitude through Creation

Scripture: Psalm 104:24-35
Genesis 1:24-28 (The Inclusive Bible)

Twenty years ago, in May 2002, I moved to Nunavut, to a small town called Clyde River that is situated on the east coast of Baffin Island, just above the Arctic Circle. For fourteen months I was the director of the Family Services Centre in that small Inuit town. It was a huge learning experience for me. Every day I was faced with the modern issues of life in the Arctic including: poverty, illness, addiction, domestic abuse, and suicide. But, at the same time, I lived in awe of the ancient culture that had enabled these strong, independent people to live and thrive in a frozen desert for thousands of years.

In fact, the ice and the cold is literally the backbone of their way of living. The ice on Baffin Bay provides the Inuit with their best means of travel. There are no roads connecting the settlements on Baffin Island, and flying by plane is incredibly expensive, so the people travel by dog sled or snowmobile to visit family and friends in other towns. They wait until the sun returns and the temperatures begin to rise in April and they travel on the frozen sea. Hunters also use snowmobile and sled to travel across the tundra in search of far off caribou herds in the midst of winter. The frozen ice provides the Inuit with the means to hunt seal and to fish for Arctic char.

Twenty years ago, when I was there, the people of Clyde River were already experiencing the impact of climate change. The sea ice was disappearing faster each year. By June, hunting was becoming dangerous because cracks in the ice

were getting wider and wider. Sometimes the snowmobiles were unable to make the jump and sled and rider would end up in the ice-cold sea-water. Hunting was also getting difficult for the local polar bears and they were becoming hungrier and more aggressive. Even coming into town on occasion.

It is now well known that the impact of climate change is being felt most clearly and quickly in the parts of our world that are closest to the oceans. The Inuit knew this over twenty years ago. We are feeling it now. Yesterday on the [CNN webpage](#) I read:

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has warned that climate change will not spare other countries the sort of disaster that left up to one third of his country underwater and millions of its children at risk of water-borne diseases. He told the United Nations General Assembly on Friday to come together and "act now" before it's too late.

And, of course, this weekend our own Maritime Provinces have been hit with a storm called [Fiona](#), with winds and devastation like most Canadians have never seen before. We still have much to learn about the impact that climate change is having and will have on our country and our world.

Today we read from the book of Genesis a portion of one of the creation stories of the Israelite people. From ancient times cultures around the world have told stories in an attempt to understand the beginnings of our world and the role of human beings within it. In today's story, God blessed humankind and said,

“Bear fruit, increase your numbers, and fill the earth—and be responsible for it! Watch over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things on the earth!”

This particular translation comes from the *Inclusive Bible* and those of you familiar with other translations probably realize that some of the words are different. Instead of “be responsible for” and “watch over” the other translations used words like “have dominion over” and “subdue.” The problem is that these other translation have often been used as an excuse for the way that we have trampled our earth and abused its creatures. The *Inclusive* translation attempts to identify our true relationship with the earth, as stewards and caregivers of God’s amazing creation. We are “responsible for” and we are called to “watch over” the earth on which live.

As we begin our national week of Truth & Reconciliation, it is important to remember that Indigenous Peoples have lived for thousands of years on this land and they understand what it is to be stewards of creation. First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples have knowledge and skill that are crucial to the work of navigating and adapting to climate change. On the website [Climate Atlas of Canada](#) we find the following quote:

“Climate change is one of the biggest challenges that we're faced with today...” says internationally-renowned Inuk author and advocate Siila Watt-Cloutier. “For 20 years, many of us – including myself – have been signalling the urgency of this matter. And it's time, it's well over time, to act on these issues.”

... It is often said that Indigenous peoples are on the frontlines of climate change, because they are disproportionately affected by it, and yet contribute relatively little to the problem.

In 2017, a gathering of First Peoples took place at Turtle Lodge in Manitoba. It was called the [Onjisay Aki International Summit](#) and it brought together Indigenous elders and activists from around the world. Over three days they listened to speakers and had roundtable discussions that focussed on issues connected to our changing earth. From their meeting came twelve calls to action covering topics such as: ancestral knowledge, sovereignty, relationships and transformation.

Their final call to action reads as follows:

It is our sacred duty and responsibility to carry out the original ancestral instructions that we were all given, and to pass this knowledge to the youth of today, for them to become true peaceful stewards of the Earth. Working peacefully, in alliance with ancestral and natural laws to support the above mentioned actions, will initiate a planetary transformation that creates a healthier future for our children, grandchildren and seven generations to come. <http://onjisay-aki.org/onjisay-aki-international-climate-calls-action>

We too have been given ancestral instructions and we too have a call to initiate a planetary transformation. Let us praise our Maker and show our gratitude by doing all we can to care for this earth on which we live.

May it be so. Amen.