

“Consider the Ravens!”

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1 Kings 17:1-7 | Luke 12:22-34

October 22, 2023 - Blessing of the Animals

Intro

- Day where we bless all of God’s non-human beings and honor their place in our ecosystem, our shared Creation, and our relationship to the natural world
- Reference to the weather

Theme of the reflection

- Share some thoughts about an animal often overlooked and underappreciated: the common raven
- What comes to mind when you think of a raven?
- You may have gotten a chill down your spine, reminded of Edgar Allen Poe or spooky Halloween decorations or a number of scary movies where the raven is symbolized as an omen of misfortune and ruin
- Maybe, you’re thinking of the Norse God Odin’s messenger ravens
- The common raven, actually, is more more complex and complicated than these spooky conceptions
- The common raven has been a figure of cultural importance, mystery, mythology, and augurie for thousands of years in thousands of different cultures around the world
- As evidenced by the Hebrew Bible and New Testament readings today.... In 1 Kings, “The ravens brought him (the prophet Elijah) bread and meat every day,” and in Luke, “Take a lesson from the raven”—two sentiments that are as true and relevant today as they were over 2,000 years ago

Raven symbology that we can learn from, and that we see taught to us in scripture:

Wisdom, interconnection, and joy

- Wisdom of ravens: have 33 different calls, can mimic human and non-human animals’ voices and sounds, can recognize faces after years and thereby bond with non-raven animals, can recognize certain words, have rich and complicated regional dialects that vary from place to place.....And that’s mostly just language! They also are incredibly resourceful scavengers—they can eat and make their nests out of pretty much anything; they have an intelligent sense of direction and an impressive memory
- Wisdom of scripture: many books of the bible are called the wisdom literature (psalms, proverbs, ecclesiastes, song of songs, job); parables and teachings of Christ in the New Testament; live simply with the resources we have and learn from our world to better understand ourselves

- Factual Interconnection of the ravens: symbiotic relationship with human beings, foxes, and others—ravens will direct hunters of all species to pray, fly with them, and then feast upon any leftover carrion.... A little gruesome, but also pretty cool
- Mythological interconnection of ravens in many cultures: omen-bringers, future predictors, can peak into the future and deliver portents to individuals and communities
- Interconnection in scripture: we live more fully when we grow beside others, contribute to the welfare and wellbeing of others, and recognize our oneness in Creation
- Joy of ravens: misunderstood as dour and scary creatures, ravens are actually very playful—they'll bring sticks up into the sky and "swordfight" with other ravens, and they'll play tricks on human beings and other animals
- Joy in scripture: God's playfulness in creation had inspired "theology of play"—it is a good and right thing to laugh, to dance, to be spontaneously moved by the spirit, to create, and to dream

We have considered the raven, so....

- Let's give thanks to all of Creation
- What can we learn from the other non-human beings in our lives? From your dog, lizard, neighborhood racoon? From the animals gathered here today?
- Go forward—be inspired by the mystery and beauty of God's Creation