

“Christ-Soaked Creation”

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Psalm 96 | 1 Peter 1:13-16, 19-21

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In the first episode of the podcast “Another Name for Every Thing,” a co-host asks Richard Rohr, Franciscan author and priest, “What does the phrase ‘Christ-soaked world’ mean to you, and what can we learn from that imagery?” If you’re familiar with Richard Rohr, maybe you can already hear him responding to this question—slowly, carefully, intentionally, in his deep, warm voice.

“What I believe,” Rohr begins after a pause, “and I believe the scriptures say, but we just aren’t told to look for it, is that reality was christened...from the very beginning, from its inception.” Let me read that again: “reality was christened...from the very beginning, from its inception.”

Finding ourselves today on the fourth Sunday of Easter, we are no strangers to talking about the impact of Jesus—the Christ, the Messiah, literally “the anointed one” in Greek—on his world, which continues to be our world. We are no strangers, indeed, to talking about God’s divinity: ancient, mysterious, never-changing, ever-present, ageless.

“So, we see this mounting recognition,” Rohr says, “of presence...That reality is already soaked with [God’s] presence, and we sought a metaphor like anointing, to remind us of what was already there.” As Rohr argues, anointing something by

human hands or declaring it holy by human mouths does not create sacredness; rather, by anointing and declaring, we recognize the divine presence that has lived there all along.

Rohr's phrase, "Christ-soaked world," is a type of shorthand for creation spirituality. The triune God's presence has been with us for all time, from Genesis to Revelation, from the big bang to the daffodils blooming in your neighborhood this week. For Rohr, Romans 8 exemplifies creation spirituality: "In Romans 8, [Christ] sees [the world] in terms of nature, too, 'All nature is longing to reveal the [children] of God,' that even the natural world....as [St.] Francis says, his brother sun, sister moon, it's all in the family of Christ-soaked-ness."

Nature has longed to reveal us for thousands and thousands of years. Yet, we find ourselves in the same position as Abraham and Moses, as the prophets and as Christ. We resist Creation. We say we love our planet, our home, our neighbors, but how do we actually respond to God's call to be caretakers of Creation and each other? Scripture venerates God's Creation. Scripture honors God's people. Scripture defends the poor in spirit and resources, the defenseless, the meek, the oppressed, the trampled-upon. "We just weren't trained to see [the world] that way," Rohr states. "And now we've thought we could torture animals, pollute the Earth, kill people who are not Christ-soaked because we thought it was up to us to decide." When the world trains us to be individualistic, competitive agents of convenience

and consumption, what are we to do? How can we ground ourselves with God's ancient presence and transform powerlessness and hopelessness into strength and action?

Perhaps, we return to the idea of anointing. All good things come from God, and God has made everything good. Though we may already know God's Creation is good, how do we live into this statement, into a practice of creation spirituality? I believe practice starts with recognition. We recognize that God has already made our lands, waters, and air sacred. We recognize that God has already made us sacred—that divinity lives inside us. We recognize that God has made all living things sacred, even if we have a really hard time accepting the sacredness of a mosquito.

Jacob poured oil and said, "this is the gate of heaven" (Gen. 28:18). Mary of Bethany "took a pound of costly perfume..., anointed Jesus's feet, and wiped them with her hair" (John 12:3). Could we, too, recognize God's presence in the Creation and the people (who are also Creation) around us, and take time to seal them with the love and reverence of anointing? I'm not saying you need to stock up on holy oil and start dabbing trees and squirrels in the Fells, and, please, don't pour any in our water supply. But, perhaps, you could find a way to regularly show gratitude and respect for part of Creation in your midst? Could you anoint Creation by committing yourself to reducing plastic waste, occasionally buying humanely-grown and humanely-produced foods, eating vegetarian or vegan one day of the week,

composting, being mindful of your consumerism and consumption, serving a community or mission that is meaningful to you, being content with what you have (not clamoring for what you think you need), or writing your representatives about keeping our Creation healthy and holding companies and corporations accountable? Do any of these ways bring you closer to anointing the Christ-soaked world? Is there anything I've missed that you'd like to take on?

Folks at home, I invite you to leave a comment in the chat with how you'd like to anoint Creation. Folks in the Sanctuary, I can't wait to hear your responses after the service.

It is a gift and a miracle that God has given us the goodness of water, land, and air. It is a gift and a miracle that we have these resources at our fingertips, and it is unfair and contrary to God's kingdom that we have access to them and our neighbors don't. By responding to God's call to be caretakers of Creation, perhaps we, as a people, will be emboldened enough to put aside our own needs and find solutions to bridge inequity. As 1 Peter reads, "13 Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. 14 Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. 15 Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct, 16 for it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'" (1 Peter 1:13-16).

Friends, may we anoint Creation not to win God's favor, but rather to give God gratitude for the gifts and mercies we have already received. May we embrace this Christ-soaked world not with fear, but with hope. May God wring out the truth inside us waiting to be found. May our spirituality extend beyond ourselves, ready to dwell in all of Creation. Amen.