



God created
humans in
God's own
image... God
blessed them
and said
"Take charge
of the fish
of the sea,
the birds
of the sky,
and everything
crawling on
the ground."

- Genesis 1:28-29

Ask The Beasts: Darwin And The God Of Love

With Elizabeth Johnson's book as our guide we will explore and deepen our understanding of God's love by looking to the beasts, birds, plants, and fish.

Chapter nine - Enter the Humans Marie Benner-Rhoades

Reading this week's chapter, I couldn't help but think back to a workshop I attended at an organic farming conference a few years ago- "Awakening the Dreamer" by the Pachamama Alliance (www.pachamama.org). The Pachamama Alliance is a nonprofit whose mission is to "to empower indigenous people of the Amazon rainforest to preserve their lands and culture *and, using insights gained from that work*, to educate and inspire individuals everywhere to bring forth a thriving, just and sustainable world."

In the workshop, they presented the image of an equilateral triangle. One corner represented "spiritually fulfilling." One "socially just." And the third, "environmentally sustainable." The idea is that every one of these needs to be balanced and taken seriously as we maintain a human presence on the planet. In my work, I've often used this image as a definition and goal of building peace- all three must be present and balanced.

Also while reading this chapter, I can't help but think of our fellow human neighbors that we've too often threatened with extinction in our words and deeds. It's been a heartbreaking week in Palestine and Israel, to mention only one place in the world facing violence. We don't talk about the destruction of people's lives and cultures as extinction. We have other names like atrocities and genocide (and when we're not at our best- collateral damage). It seems to me that the same things that allow us to treat the Earth with such little regard also allow us to do the same with neighbor, as Johnson reflects, "Social injustice and ecological degradation are two sides of the same coin, lack of respect for life" (256).

If we were able to find (and work) our way to environmental sustainability and social justice, then perhaps, too, we would find the blessing of spiritual fulfillment as we come face to face with our Creator God and the Incarnation of Christ in all the Earth.

May peace be with you. Shalom. Salaam.

Questions for Reflection:

- What places or situations in the world today cry out to you for prayer?
- When have you felt most spiritually fulfilled? How were both the environment's health and social justice a part of that experience?

