

Friday, December 19, 2014

The Rev. Dr. Angela Dienhart Hancock, Assistant Professor of Homiletics and Worship at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Scripture

Psalm 148

- 1 Praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise him in the heights!
- 2 Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his host!
- 3 Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars!
- 4 Praise him, you highest heavens,
and you waters above the heavens!
- 5 Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for he commanded and they were created.
- 6 He established them forever and ever;
he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.
- 7 Praise the Lord from the earth,
you sea monsters and all deeps,
- 8 fire and hail, snow and frost,
stormy wind fulfilling his command!
- 9 Mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars!
- 10 Wild animals and all cattle,
creeping things and flying birds!
- 11 Kings of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the earth!
- 12 Young men and women alike,
old and young together!
- 13 Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for his name alone is exalted;
his glory is above earth and heaven.
- 14 He has raised up a horn for his people,
praise for all his faithful,
for the people of Israel who are close to him.
Praise the Lord!

Devotional

There's a legend about Christmas Eve immortalized in Thomas Hardy's poem *The Oxen*. Go out to a stable or pasture or sheepfold at midnight on Christmas Eve, the legend says, and you will see the farm animals kneel in worship of God. A haunting idea: the descendants of the first witnesses to the incarnation bear witness still. Psalm 148 shares this vision—praise is the work of all creation, not just the humans. Sun, moon, stars, water, snow, mountains, wind, things with feathers, things with fur, things that crawl—even sea monsters have a part in creation's love song to the Lord of all. How would it change our relationship to the life all around us if we saw this menagerie as a congregation at worship, bearing witness to Jesus Christ, the firstborn of all creation?

Last month a new species of frog was discovered in Los Angeles, Calif. Los Angeles! Amazing. Surely there could be sea monsters out there somewhere, who knows? Wouldn't you love to hear them praise the Lord? And if someone invites you out to the barnyard to see the animals on their knees this Christmas Eve, go gladly into the gloom, hoping, with Hardy, that it might be so.

Prayer

Lord of all things, Thank you for planting us in the midst of the congregation that is creation. As we prepare our hearts for the coming of the Firstborn, may your Spirit open us to the song of praise all around us, that we might contribute a verse. In the strong name of Jesus we pray, Amen.