



**VILLAGE  
CHURCH**

Presbyterian (USA)

# You Name It, You Take Care of It.

SCRIPTURE:  
Genesis 2:4-19

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April 16, 2023 – Sermon by Rev. Dr. Rodger Nishioka

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**T**he story is wondrous to behold. There are two creation stories in Genesis. The first creation story is in Genesis chapter one when God's voice brings all of creation into being. God said, "Let there be light and there was light!" God is grand and all powerful and somewhat distant.

In the second creation story in Genesis chapter two, we encounter a different God. This is an intimate and personal God. The first thing God creates in this story is the human. God forms the first human, from the dust of the earth. This is where we get the phrase that we say on Ash Wednesday, "from dust you have come and to dust you will return." From the dust of the earth God forms the human but there is no life in this figure, so God puts God's mouth to the human and breathes God's breath and the first human comes to life. Isn't that fantastic?

So, take a deep breath in and let it out slowly. The breath you are breathing now is God's breath given to the first human at creation. Take a deep breath in. Let it out slowly. That breath in you right now, in Hebrew, is the word "ruah." Take a deep breath in. Let it out slowly. Did you know when you breath like this, slowly, deliberately, you lower your blood pressure and lessen your heart rate. Breathe in the ruah of God. Let it out slowly. You lessen anxiety. When you are anxious, worried, just breathe in God's breath. Let it out slowly. The word "ruah," the word for breath, is the same word in Hebrew for "wind" and for "spirit." In the first creation story, it says "while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters." That "wind?" Yes! Ruah. Breath, spirit, wind. Breathe in God's spirit. Breathe out God's spirit to the whole world. The next time you step outside and you feel the "ruah," remember "breath" and "spirit" and "wind."

God breathes God's own breath into the first human and gives us life. Then God grows a garden and

places the human there. Then God creates a river that divides into four branches. The Pishon, Gihon, the Tigris and the Euphrates. This is why Bible scholars have long posited that this garden, the garden of Eden, is in southern Iraq where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers flow. We do not know what happened to the Pishon river. We do not know what happened to the Gihon river. But we know where the Tigris and the Euphrates are. In the Hebrew scriptures, rivers are always a source of life.

Then God says, "It is not good that the man should be alone." And God makes every animal of the field and every bird of the air. And then God does a curious thing. God brings all of these animals and birds to the human to see what the human shall name them and whatever the human called every living creature, that was its name.

Ponder that with me. Whatever the human called the animal. That was its name.

Jon is a good friend of mine and a pastor serving at the Old Bergen Church in Jersey City, New Jersey. He is the father of Analise and Matthias. When they were children, they begged their Dad for a dog. Wary of the added responsibility of having a dog, Jon sought to impress upon his two children that getting a dog is a lot of work. You have to take care of the dog and walk it and feed it and clean up after it. They both earnestly promised they would do all those things.

So, at Christmas time, while the two of them were at school, Jon went out and got a black Labrador puppy. Analise and especially Matthias were thrilled and delighted when they came home. As they were playing with their new puppy, Analise turned to Jon and said, "Papa, what shall we name him?" And Jon said seriously, "Now listen, when you name him, you have to take care of it. Once you give him a name, you have to take care of him." They swore they would take good care of him. They named him Bailey.

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You name it. You take care of it. I think that's why God gave to the first human the responsibility of naming because God was teaching us: You name it, you take care of it.

Names are powerful. Last Sunday, Easter Sunday, our pastor Tom preached on the passage from the Gospel of John where Mary visits the empty tomb and Jesus stands right next to her, but she does not recognize him until he says her name. When Jesus says, "Mary!" she recognizes him. Just as with Analise and Matthias and Bailey, just as with the second creation story: You name it, you take care of it.

It is in the first creation story that God gives humankind "dominion" over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing. For many years we interpreted that "dominion" to mean domination—that we can use the earth however we desire. Now, thankfully, the Holy Spirit has led us to realize that dominion is not about domination but rather about stewardship. About relationship. About belonging.

You name it. You take care of it. It means we are in relationship with all of creation. We belong to the creation and the creation belongs to us. It is not about using the earth for our selfish purposes. It is about being good stewards of that which God has entrusted to our care.

This Saturday is Earth Day around the whole globe

and Dr. Patricia Tull is coming to tell us in Friendship Hall that every day is earth day because God has entrusted this planet to our care. We are to take care of it because we are in relationship with it. Because God has charged us to be stewards of God's good creation.

You already know the bad news. Creation is in peril and it's our responsibility because God has entrusted God's good creation to our care. Climate change is happening. We are the cause of the severity of storms and disasters that are afflicting every continent.

Here's the good news. We are not too late. Every action matters. From recycling, using cloth bags, to driving hybrid and electric vehicles, to installing solar panels on our homes and businesses, to using reusable water bottles, to eating less meat in our diet and reducing food waste. Every action matters.

As part of our 75th anniversary celebration next year, we are committed to reducing our carbon footprint as a church. We must do it because once you name it, you have to take care of it.

And it's all of our collective responsibility because caring for the planet is how we show God our gratitude for the gift of God's earth and being good stewards is how we praise God. That's how we are able to sing, "For the beauty of the earth... Lord of all to thee we raise, this our hymn of grateful praise."

Remember: You name it. You take care of it.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.