

## **“God’s Creation and Our Stewardship”**

Genesis 1:26-31, Matthew 25:14-21

September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Rev. Dr. Jeong Park

Fair Oaks United Methodist Church

The church has left the building today! Honestly, there were some feelings of anxiety, such as weather, lawn chairs and especially sound system, but everything works perfectly together and we made it! Thanks Be to God! This morning, I hope that you will take an opportunity to think about the meaning of our Christian stewardship as part of God’s creation in this world.

When we planned this event a couple of months ago, Dave Glass, Kathy’s husband, suggested a theme event, “Under the Canopy of Heaven” and set up canopies and sound system! I am grateful to him for his contributions. Indeed, we are sitting under Heaven! River breezes touch our cheeks and we enjoy the fresh crispy air which makes us feel good and part of nature and God’s creation on this hill. This is our Father Creator’s world. As one of the hymns sings,

This is my Father’s world, and to my listening years all nature sings, and round me rings the music of the spheres!

This is my Father’s world; I rest me in the thought of rocks and trees, of skies and seas; his hand the wonders wrought.<sup>1</sup>

Let’s listen to this beautiful song which expresses our experience! (A hymn, “This is my Father’s World.” Runs.)

We often forget how marvelous our God, Creator is! He truly created the universe and this world, heaven and earth and He *allows* us to have privilege and honor to live here on earth! Yuri Gagarin was the first human to journey into outer space on April 12, 1961. When he looked at earth in space, he shared these words in awe, "The Earth is blue. How wonderful. It is amazing!" Carl Sagan, the author of a book, *Pale Blue Dot*, quoted Yuri Gagarin’s memorable description:

The sky is completely black... The earth has a very characteristic, very beautiful halo... There is a smooth color transition from tender blue, to blue, to dark blue and purple, and the completely black color of the sky. It is a very beautiful transition.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Methodist Hymnal no.144 “*This is My Father’s World*”

<sup>2</sup> Carl Sagan, *Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space*, ( Random House Publishing, 1994) an excerpt from cha.10 “Sacred Black”

Neil Armstrong, the first person to walk on the Moon has said, “The earth looked like a tiny pea, pretty and blue. I put up my thumb and shut one eye, and my thumb blotted out the planet Earth. I didn't feel like a giant. I felt very, very small.”<sup>3</sup>

We often take it for granted that we live on this beautiful place as if we claim all our privileges as ours. But nothing is ours in our lives. Just imagine who can claim this beautiful planet earth as theirs? This world belongs to God! Right? We are not the Creator but we are God’s humble creation and made to be stewards. Stewardship is the core understanding of our Christian faith. God has entrusted us to take care of God’s creation as *God’s good stewards!* The most powerful definition of Christian faith and spiritual relationship with God, our Creator is “stewardship”. John Wesley, our Methodism founder shared this spiritual wisdom, “When the Processor of heaven and earth brought you into being and placed you in this world, He placed you here not as a proprietor, But a steward...”<sup>4</sup>

Let’s talk historically about our church’s stewardship. In 1954, we moved from Fair Old Village to our present location. Our Church was officially chartered to California-Nevada Conference on June 6, 1954 with 78 chartered members and located here in this place at the same year. For 33 years, our church had remained as a federated church with the Presbyterians and they left our church, as you know, taking our church bell in 1952.<sup>5</sup> For the temporary time, our church office, Spencer building had been used for Sunday services until we consecrated this current sanctuary in June 1957. In 1959, a parsonage committed was appointed to plan and construct a new parsonage. The parsonage was completed almost entirely by layman’s volunteer labor in May 1960. In 1992, our congregation voted at its Church Conference to become a "Reconciling Congregation". About 50 members were present for the vote; 48 voted in favor with 2 abstaining. In March, 1993, the Sacramento Bee publishes an article on the decision, titled "All God's Children". The local Sunday Neighbors Newspaper reported on our church in 1995 as the 30<sup>th</sup> United Methodist congregation in the nation to publicly declare themselves as a reconciling congregation embracing LGBT community.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/n/neil\\_armstrong.html](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/n/neil_armstrong.html) Accessed Sept. 15, 2017

<sup>4</sup> John Wesley, 1760

<sup>5</sup> This is a side note: In April 21, 1954, our church chairman of the Board of Trustees sent a letter to Fair Oaks Presbyterian church with a request. The letter said, “when the present Presbyterian Church is dismantled, the bell will be returned to the Methodist group.” June 4, we received a letter from the Presbyterian Church saying that “we cannot comply with your request.”

I challenge you to think about our future stewardship of God's mission.  
*What does it mean to be the church in **our** time?*

This special event, "Under the Canopy of Heaven" is also first Sunday of our Stewardship Campaign. We are gathered here not to just enjoy God's nature, but also to remember that we are called for God's mission and to connect with our community.

Our second New Testament reading reminds us of our example of stewardship and mission. The highlight of the story is how two servants used their gifts and talents. One doubled his investment and the other just dug a hole and carefully buried his master's money. The whole point is how we express our gifts and talents in our stewardship. Your gifts and talents are pieces of puzzles to complete our church and contribute to our communities. The church can be compared to a big mosaic and each of your contributions are materials for building our sustainable faith community, not only financial giving, but also through your participation in worship, attendance, Bible study, singing in the choir and outreach ministries.

Claim your identity as God's stewards and see our church as a faithful and good servant to carry out God's mission and purpose. Use and share our gifts, talents and witness spiritual practices. God will be full of joy and will say to us, 'Well done, my good and faithful servants. Let's celebrate together!'  
Amen.