**Sermon – consequences: economic value – vs – biotic/human value**

**February 25, 2018**

**Kate Miller**

**God said, “Let us make humankind in our image.. and let them have dominion over the fish or 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 that creeps upon the earth.” Fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over …**

Good morning! I am Kate Miller. The day after the President’s State of the Union speech, I co-hosted a livestream about fossil fuels, put on by 350.org. A couple of parishioners came to that event and as a result Mark asked me to give a message concerning the environment. I am happy to be here. Preserving the earth is a passion of mine and I have become an activist. Today you will hear a little of what I know is happening before our eyes, under our feet, in the sky, in our communities… all around, and then what small steps we can take to help work toward a cleaner, healthier planet.

So, here goes! Science and Religion!

There are two urgencies to my message. 1) Our earth is turning into an “S”hole of a planet. 2) If that doesn’t kill us, racism will. “Have dominion and subdue.” In the Call to Worship, we are called to praise all of creation. Think about that! We are to praise every living thing that God has created. Do you like mosquitoes? Like me, you probably want to wipe them out. But! Wipe them out and there’s no food for birds! Ticks? The chemicals that kill ticks, even though they say they are pet and people friendly, kill honey bees! Yikes!

TRIVIA:

**BEE SPECIES (1)**

Bees are pollinators for about 1/3 of the plants that we eat.

In the last five years 30% of the national bee population has disappeared.

Bees are vulnerable to “sub-lethal stressors”. Factors that don’t necessarily kill them, but hamper their behavior: “sub-lethal stressors” such as: diesel fumes, pesticides and climate change.

**CHECK OUT THE PLIGHT OF MONARCH BUTTERFLIES (2)**

When we were little, I made my brothers turn off the lights when they were leaving a room. “Why?” they would ask. In my little mind intuitively I knew it wasted energy of some kind. So when the lights were left on in an empty room, something in my gut would draw me to turn off the lights. I couldn’t explain the feeling.

Driving home from college, the gov’t had just raised the highway speed limit to 65. But gas prices had gone up. Many of us car pooled and we kept driving the old 55 mph speed limit!

The faster you drive, you use more gas, more fossil fuel. The more fossil fuel we use the more we blow holes in the Ozone layer! With the decrease of the Ozone layer, our planet gets hotter and hotter! Everything on this earth is connected.

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We are to be “just, and loving stewards of all creation.” One of our responsibilities as stewards is to advocate for laws that better protect the environment. One approach is to lobby our Senators. After emailing a Senator for 3 ½ years, finally, last winter, a group of us were invited to talk with her.

I hired a secretary to help with research and make sure our facts were right. We decided to focus on Pipeline 5, which runs under the Mackinac Bridge, focus on Flint, and on renewable energy. Our priority was Pipeline 5, too old, needs repair, Enbridge has not been forthright in any of its installation, or in the repairs. According to her, the pipeline is fine, at only 65 years old. We approached her about Flint. As to Flint, she assured us that the governor is drinking Flint water as he said he would. One of us pointed out to her, that he has been traveling since he made that commitment to drink Flint water. Concerning renewable energy, when the topic of Wind mill farms came up – her “not in my backyard!” mentality showed we were not making progress. But she knows that people are concerned. And the more of us who talk to those in power, the more they will listen. And YOU know that, with Pipeline 5, all the Great Lakes are connected, yes? HOMES – say them with me, please! Thank you! If there is a leak – the oil will follow the currents and it will affect ALL the Great Lakes. Not only that, but on the east, they flow into the St. Lawrence Seaway which flows into the Atlantic. On the southern end they flow into the Mississippi River which runs into the Caribbean.

Enbridge is the same company that had the oil spill in the Kalamazoo River in 2010. That spill was the second worst oil spill in the US!, worst inland soil spill in US history. But Enbridge covered it up so quickly that it was merely a blip on the news. BP oil disaster in the Gulf was the worst.

**ENBRIDGE SPILL (3)**

Into the Kalamazoo River in Calhoun County in July 26, 2010, spilled approximately 1 million gallons in about 25-35 miles due to a 6 ½ tear in line 6B. In 2016, the EPA released the “all clean” report on the executed cleaning jobs by Enbridge. “All clean”.

Talk to any biologist and you will hear that the clean up does not reveal damages under the sediment. It is not cleaned up. And it’s only in the future that we will learn the long lasting effects of oil spills in the ground, in the water.

Scientists now say that pipeline leaks are inevitable. It is no longer – “IF they will spill … the question is WHEN are they going to spill” **(4)**

An oil spill in the Great Lakes – we are talking about fresh water, friends! Drinking water. Of the 100% water covering the earth, only 3% is fresh water. Drinking water. The Great Lakes is a large percentage of that fresh water!

Rachel Carson, in her book, “Silent Spring”, talks about the preciousness of water … “In an age when man has forgotten his origins and is blind even to his most essential needs for survival, water along with other resources has become victim of his indifference.” (p 39)

Does oil have anything to do with climate change? YES. Do Carbon dioxide and the Ozone layer have anything in common? YES.

Why do we keep drilling and fracking for oil?

**have dominion over … and subdue …**

Aldo Leopold, “It seems that to have value our environment has to show economic value more even that biotic value.” (Aldo Leopold, Sand County Almanac, p 147)

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The Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

According to a Harvard University Research Study (by Geoffrey Supran and Naomi Oreskes), Exxon oil has been aware of climate change for 77 years. And has spent millions promoting climate denial!

**have dominion over … and subdue …**

We need to shine a light on Environmental Racism.

A little earlier I mentioned the “Not in my backyard!” mentality. ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM is a sermon in itself, but let’s at least begin the conversation. My knowledge may sound elementary to some of you so bear with me, please. And teach us more, please!

**White privilege and Environmental racism. What do these words mean?**

I lived in Chicago for 5 years. I wondered why some neighborhoods had dangerous places where children were playing. These children were playing in places very near medical waste sites! **(5)**  Why were these medical waste sites in their neighborhoods! Why?? Because people like you and me can loudly say, “NOT IN MY BACKYARD!” White privilege. We have a voice and we are heard. These citizens in neighborhoods where the medical waste sites are located, and other unhealthy waste sites, in Kalamazoo, have no voice. Environmental racism means that those without a voice lose out. (Our church used to belong to a group called “Just Faith” which helped people in Kalamazoo by empowering them, and coaching them! These citizens gained a voice and shared their needs and the city commission listened!) “Just Faith” still exists – the Methodist Church in Kalamazoo.

The Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it.” Have dominion over … subdue …

**NUCLEAR WASTE “NOT IN MY BACKYARD!”**

Native American Navajo, Native American Shoshone, have nuclear waste sites on their reservations. Storing nuclear waste near living spaces is dangerous to one’s health because the radioactivity does leak … and as one Shoshone said:

“It’s not about the amount of radioactivity that would permeate the groundwater. The environmental racism lies in the very notion that it would be okay to put any radioactive material there at all.” **(6)**

Environmental racism lies in the very notion that it would be okay to have a medical waste site in a neighborhood.

White Privilege says “NOT IN MY BACKYARD!”

**ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM**

Keystone XL Pipeline, owned by Trans Canada, is threatening to run through sacred Native American Lakota land! With the President’s blessing! I know you have seen or heard or read about the Lakota tribe trying to stop the Pipeline. 350.org is helping them. **(7)** Here again, the pipeline WILL leak.

How can there even be a notion to have a pipeline going across sacred land?

The Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

Jack Wellman, “God commands us to keep and care for the earth but God’s edict to have dominion over the earth doesn’t mean to have complete domination and exploitation of it, but sadly, this is what has happened; we continue to rape the land, denude the forests, strip-mine the hills, burn through the resources, and gut the earth. This is the only place that we have and if we choose to abuse it, it will be a choice we will live to regret.” **Article by Jack Wellman (8)**

PC(USA) We are, at the most basic level, called to be just, loving stewards of all creation, serving and preserving the earth. (Gen 2:15). Our commitment must be to the sustainability that God has willed for God’s creation, which means ensuring that all people and all of creation experience sufficiency in the resources they need to thrive, not only now, but for generations to come.

**WHAT CAN WE DO?**

We MUST pay attention! We HAVE to be observant! We MUST do OUR PART! For our children! Our grandchildren! Generations from now! What will we say when our grandchildren say, “Why didn’t you do something??” So, in small ways we can curb our footprint. In larger ways we can persuade companies to divest of fossil fuels, in other words, keep fossil fuels in the ground! Don’t “gut the earth!”.

One huge thing we can do is divest of fossil fuels. Many of our mutual funds, pension funds are invested partly in fossil fuels TIAA. The Rockefeller family, that is the founding family of Standard Oil, now EXXON, has divested of fossil fuels. They made a statement that they now realize that the removal of fossil fuels is killing our earth. NYC pension funds have divested of fossil fuels. This is radical! Universities are divesting their endowments of fossil fuels! More has to be done!

If you need extra incentive, watch the movie, “Do the Math,” by Bill McKibben, the founder of 350.org. YouTube!

What else can we do? We are in LENT! What a good time to start something new or to give up something! You have in your bulletins a list of environmentally friendly things you/I personally can do to shrink our footprint. This list is not exhaustive – please keep adding to it and share your ideas! There is also a pamphlet of information to help the earth, put together by my secretary.

Brush your teeth using a cup with water rather than running the water while you brush. Take a turbo shower, also known as a military shower. Or shower with a friend! Car pool. If you are able, take the stairs instead of the elevator – free exercise! Use cold water for doing laundry.

If you want to be more gutsy, campaign to put environmental education in schools. For the upcoming election, host a politician who is health minded and earth friendly.

**Food for thought! Think of solar power capacity, possible on US big box stores – on their roofs, as shaded parking (9)**

**Solar**

Windmills kill birds. The old vertical wind turbines are making a comeback! Google vertical wind turbines.

**Geothermal - hydrothermal**

The state of California is way ahead of us, as I’m sure you are aware. There are gov’t grants for retraining to gain different skills of one that was previously involved in drilling, fracking, etc.

Renewables. It is possible for this world to function totally on renewables! This is Lent! Think about the earth, meditate on the planet and people, and please, please, do something!

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**Not only now, but for generations to come. Amen.**

Aldo Leopold, Sand County Almanac, p 147, Ballantine Books, New York, 1966.

Carson, Rachel, Silent Spring, Boston, p 39 Mariner Books, 1962, 1990

EXXON (according to Greenpeace, Exxon has spent $30 million promoting climate denial. That is a TON of money and that is a LOT of control over the gov’t! Furthermore, Exxon’s lies prevented countries like the US, China and India from signing the Kyoto protocol in 1998). **EXXON OIL (4)**