

**Sunday 14 October 2018, Cashmere Presbyterian Church - Rev Silvia Purdie**

Theme: Pet Blessing Service, Noah's Ark

Q. On the Ark, Noah got milk from the cows. What did he get from the ducks?

A. Quackers.

Q. Which animal on Noah's Ark had the highest level of intelligence?

A. The giraffe.

Q: What animal could Noah not trust?

A: The Cheetah.

Q: What kind of lights were on the ark?

A: Floodlights.

Q: How do we know that they played cards in the ark?

A: Because Noah sat on the deck.

Q: Who was the greatest financier in the Bible?

A: Noah - he was floating his stock while everyone else was in liquidation.

There are lots of things to be said about the story of Noah's ark. The thing I want to pick up on this morning is the value of diversity. One of the wonderful things about this ancient story is that it values all the animals, and ensures the survival of all the species and types of animals. We might slap at a mosquito or squash a spider and wonder why God bothered to save them, but God created a natural world full of all different types of creatures. All the animals got on the ark.

Care for all the animals, God instructed Noah.

Not just the pretty ones. Not just the useful ones. Not just the easy-to-look after ones. All the animals.

In our world today we have not been doing a very good job of looking after all the animals. Some animals we look after because we love them, like our own pets. Some animals we look after because we need the food they give us. But many of the animals in the world are under threat of extinction because we humans have been ripping out their homes, or polluting their homes.

We know the terrible truth about how much people are damaging the world, destroying habitat. We like to think of ourselves in New Zealand as clean and green and caring for our land, but since humans have come to New Zealand we've killed off a third of bird species and another third are under threat. Here in Canterbury there are many delicate unique types of plants, and little creatures, that you'd hardly notice at all, that are special to this place, and they easily get destroyed without us hardly noticing.

Why? mostly, it's for our own human self interest. And mostly that comes down to money. Which gets us to our gospel reading today.

Two things about Jesus – one you probably already knew and one you probably didn't, I'm guessing.

Did you know that Jesus talked quite a lot about money?

He was tough on rich people. He was tough on people who would do anything to get more money, and who did not want to share their money. Jesus, like in our story today, told

everyone that life is not about getting more money and keeping it and saving it. Gifts are given for sharing. Your worth is not measured by your bank balance.

I am very sure that if he was around today he would be telling people to care for the environment rather than making money from damaging God's world. Because we also know that Jesus loved creatures and often told stories about them, about sparrows and ... and even a camel.

Which gets me to the 2<sup>nd</sup> thing about Jesus, the thing you probably don't know about him. I am very sure that Jesus was very, very funny. Unfortunately the writers of the gospels were trying to be serious and they don't tell us how much people laughed when Jesus was around, and how much Jesus himself laughed. But I am sure that they did, and he did. Take today's joke, for example. Can a camel go through the eye of a needle? Of course not! That's just silly. It's a joke.

Jesus made people laugh and while they were laughing he powered on through the laughter with a very serious message. Jesus said that it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to get into heaven. What?? That's ridiculous, of course rich people can go to heaven. Or can they? Gets you thinking doesn't it.

If we make ourselves rich at the expense of the poor, that's not getting close to heaven. If we make ourselves rich at the expense of the environment, at the cost of the lives of the animals who share this earth with us, that's not getting close to heaven.

Ouch. Thanks Jesus. That's not a comfortable joke at all.

Well, there we are, two stories today.

Jesus telling nasty jokes at our expense, and Noah's ark.

The story of Noah and the ark teaches us that all creatures are important to God, no matter how we feel about them.

And it teaches us that it's our job to care for the world, for all God's creatures, big and small.

Thank you all for how you care for the earth, and other living things.

And thank you, God, for all that animals can teach us

This next song looks to the animals, especially those mentioned in the Bible, and is a prayer, that we might learn from them about how to trust in God and love God, who is like a great lion and like a little lamb, both at the same time.