



[All Creatures Great and Small]

Protecting Animals, Caring for Creation



Dear Pastors and Worship Leaders,

We hope you will find plenty of resources to aid in the discipleship of your congregation. Below you will find scripture references, quotes, reflections and more to help inspire your teaching.

Scripture References:

All links are to the New Revised Standard Version

During the month of October, the **Revised Common Lectionary** provides us with an opportunity to explore the significant differences between creation care and creation worship. For the Sunday of October 12, the story of Aaron and the golden calf in [Exodus 32: 1-14](#) reminds us that worshipping anyone or anything other than the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is idolatry. With that distinction in mind, we are *nonetheless* called to celebrate God's creation and honor the role we've been given as stewards of it. The celebration of St. Francis of Assisi on October 4 reminds us of this calling to care for God's creatures and to celebrate the bounty of God's goodness to us, manifested in the essential goodness of creation.

[Genesis 1](#) "And God saw that it was good"

Genesis 1 is the Biblical source for Cecil F. Alexander's 1848 hymn, *All Things Bright and Beautiful*.

[Bible's teaching on protecting God and nature](#)

Hymn:

[All Things Bright and Beautiful](#)

Reflection:

The Christmas Animals

By Pastor Glenn Pease

[Luke 2:1-20](#)

In His birth our Lord Jesus identified with the animal kingdom. He was born in a stable meant for the shelter of animals. He was laid in a manger meant for the feeding of animals. The first sounds baby Jesus heard could have been the sound of animals. He was first announced to the shepherds whose whole life revolved around the care, feeding, and protection of animals. The wise men, who represented the Gentile world, made their journey to worship Him on animals. They were likely camels, although horses were not impossible. Mary likely made it to Bethlehem riding on a donkey. Later in His life, Jesus was in a context where He related both to the angels and animals. Mark 1:13 says, "He was with the wild animals, and angels attended Him." This was during His forty days in the wilderness. Angels and animals have this in common, they are both servants of God and man. They are both a part of the Christmas story.

Quotes:

Note: [Click here for statements on animal protection according to denomination](#)

“If you have men who will exclude any of God's creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men.”

-St. Francis of Assisi

“They too, are created by the same loving hand of God which Created us...It is our duty to Protect them and to promote their well-being.”

-Mother Teresa.

“Animals possess a soul and men must love and feel solidarity with our smaller brethren...the fruit of the creative action of the Holy Spirit and merit respect...as near to God as men are.” He reminded people that all living beings came into being because of the “breath” of God. He spoke of St. Francis’s love for animals declaring, “We, too, are called to a similar attitude.”

-His Holiness Pope John Paul II.

“Mankind's true moral test, its fundamental test (which lies deeply buried from view), consists of its attitude towards those who are at its mercy: animals. And in this respect mankind has suffered a fundamental debacle, a debacle so fundamental that all others stem from it.”

-Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*

“Animals are God's creatures, not human property, nor utilities, nor resources, nor commodities, but precious beings in God's sight...Christians whose eyes are fixed on the awfulness of crucifixion are in a special position to understand the awfulness of innocent suffering. The Cross of Christ is God's absolute identification with the weak, the powerless, and the vulnerable, but most of all with unprotected, undefended, innocent suffering.”

-Reverend Andrew Linzey

“Animals have done us no harm and they have no power of resistance....There is something so very dreadful...in tormenting those who have never harmed us, who cannot defend themselves, who are utterly in our power.”

-Cardinal John Henry Newman

“It is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer and die needlessly.”

-Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraph 2418

“Animals, as part of God’s creation, have rights which must be respected. It behooves us always to be sensitive to their needs and to the reality of their pain.”

-Dr. Donald Coggan, former Archbishop of Canterbury

“Personally, I would not give a fig for any man's religion whose horse, cat and dog do not feel its benefits. Life in any form is our perpetual responsibility.”

-S. Parkes Cadman

"We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals."

-Immanuel Kant

“Every creature is a word of God”

-Meister Eckhart (German theologian, philosopher and mystic)

“The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated”

-Mahatma Gandhi

Factory Farming: Battery Cages

This year, the *All Creatures Great and Small* Campaign focuses on the cruel and inhumane system of [battery cages](#).

While many of us picture an idyllic Old MacDonald's farm when we think about where our eggs come from, nothing could be further from the truth. Most eggs produced in the United States come from industrialized factory farms confining hundreds of thousands—if not millions—of laying hens in overcrowded battery cages.

Arguably the most abused animals in all agribusiness, nearly 280 million laying hens in the United States are confined in barren, wire battery cages so restrictive the birds can't even spread their wings. With no opportunity to engage in many of their natural behaviors, including nesting, dust bathing, perching, and foraging, these birds endure lives wrought with suffering.

Because of animal welfare concerns, countries such as Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, and Austria have banned battery cages. The entire European Union is phasing out conventional cages by 2012.

This October, we're asking families, small groups, churches, and institutions, to switch to cage-free eggs. This is a simple commitment that can make a big difference. Please encourage your congregation/worship center to take the online pledge!

Sermon Resources on Creation Care:

[Season of Creation](#)

[Web of Creation](#)

Recommended Reading:

Adams, Carol J.: [Prayers for Animals](#)

Hobgood-Oster, Laura: [Holy Dogs and Asses](#)

Hyland, J.R.: [God's Covenant with Animals](#)

Kowalski, Gary: [The Bible According to Noah](#)

Linzey, Andrew: [Animal Gospel, Animal Theology and others](#)

Phelps, Norm: [The Dominion of Love](#)

Scully, Matthew: [Dominion](#)

Waldau, Paul, ed., Patton, Kimberly, ed: [A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion Science and Ethics](#)

Webb, Stephen: [On God and Dogs & Good Eating](#)

Wennberg, Robert N.: [God, Humans and Animals: An Invitation to Enlarge our Moral Universe](#)

St. Francis of Assisi:

Thomas of Celano, [First and Second Lives of St. Francis](#):

Meanwhile, at a time when many were joining the brothers, most blessed father Francis was passing through the valley of Spoleto. He came to a certain place near Bevagna, in which a great many birds of various types had congregated, including doves, crows and some others commonly called daws. When he saw them Francis, that most blessed servant of God, being a man of great fervor and very sympathetic toward the lower, irrational creatures, quickly left his companions on the road and ran over to them. When he got there, he saw that they were waiting expectantly and saluted them. Surprised that the birds had not flown away as they normally do, he was filled with joy and humbly begged them to listen to the word of God. Among the things he told them, he said the following: "My brothers the birds, you should love your creator deeply and praise him always. He has given you feathers to wear, wings to fly with, and whatever else you need. He has made you noble among his creatures and given you a dwelling in the pure air. You neither sow nor reap, yet he nevertheless protects and governs you without any anxiety on your part."

Both Francis and his companions agree in reporting that, when he had spoken thus, the birds exulted marvelously in their own fashion, stretching their necks, extending their wings, opening their mouths, and gazing at him. Francis walked into their midst, touching their heads and bodies with his tunic. Finally he blessed them and, making the sign of the cross, gave them permission to fly off to some other place.

Rejoicing, the blessed father went off with his companions, giving thanks to God whom all creatures worship. Since he had now been made simple by grace and not by nature, he began to accuse himself of negligence for not having preached to the birds before, since they listened to the word of God with such reverence. And thus it came about that, from that day on, he exhorted all birds, all animals, all reptiles, and even nonexistent creatures to praise and love the creator, for every day, when the name of the savior was announced, he himself saw their obedience.

One day he came to a town called Alviano to preach the word of God. Ascending to where he could be seen by all, he asked for silence. The people became quiet and waited reverently, but a flock of swallows building nests in that place continued to chatter away, making it impossible for the people to hear. Francis spoke to them, "My sisters the swallows, it's my turn to speak now, because you've already said enough. Listen to the word of God. Stay still and be quiet until it's over." To the people's amazement, the little birds immediately stopped chattering and did not move until Francis had finished preaching. Those who witnessed this sign were filled with wonder and said, "truly this man is holy and a friend of the Most High." Praising and blessing God, they devoutly hurried at least to touch his clothing. And it is marvelous how those irrational creatures recognized his affection for them and sensed his love.

Once, when he was staying in the town of Greccio, a hare was caught in a trap and brought live to Francis by a brother. Seeing the hare, the blessed man was moved to pity and said, "Brother hare, come here. Why did you let yourself be fooled in this way?" As soon as the hare was released by the brother, he dashed over to Francis and, without being forced to do so, set tied into his lap as the safest place available. When he had rested there a while, the holy father, stroking him with maternal affection, let him go so that he could return to the wild. Each time he was placed on the ground, the hare ran back to Francis' lap. Finally Francis asked that the brothers carry him to a nearby forest. Something similar occurred with a rabbit, a very undomesticated creature, on an island in the lake of Perugia.

Francis was moved by similar pity toward fish. When they had been caught and he had the chance, he threw them back into the water warning them to be careful not to get caught again. Once, as he was sitting in a boat near a harbor on the lake of Rieti, a certain fisherman caught a big fish commonly called a tench and brought it to Francis. He received it joyfully and kindly, took to calling it "brother," and, having placed it in the water next to his boat, began to bless the name of the Lord. For some time, while Francis tended to his prayer, the fish played in the water near the boat, nor did he leave the area until the holy man of God, his prayer completed, gave him permission to go. For glorious father Francis, walking the path of obedience and donning perfectly the yoke of obedience, received from God the great honor of having creatures obey him. For even water was turned into wine for him when he was seriously ill at the hermitage of Saint Urban. When he tasted it he became well so quickly that all believed it to be a miracle, as indeed it was. And he whom creatures obey in this way, at whose nod the elements change themselves to other uses, is certainly a holy man.

During the time when, as we have seen, the venerable father Francis preached to the birds, he went about through cities and towns scattering the seeds of his blessing everywhere. Coming to the city of Ascoli, he preached the word of God fervently as usual. Through a change wrought by the right hand of the Most high, the people were filled with so much love and devotion that they trampled one another hurrying to see and hear him. And thirty men, clerics and laymen, received the habit at that time, recognized his affection for them and sensed his love.

Blessing of the Animals:

[Christian Service](#)

[Ecumenical Service](#)