

A long time ago, the philosopher Aristotle put forth a premise: Everything on this earth that moves was moved by something else. And, in fact, everything that is capable of moving something else must itself move to do so. So, for example, you got to church this morning by being moved by a car or truck. And that car or truck moved in order to move you here.

It's a premise that Aristotle probably considered merely philosophical, without any possible way of demonstrating it in reality. But modern physics has proven it to be basically accurate. Everything that moves does indeed have a mover.

Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. This world is one giant system of action and reaction. Of energy moving from one object to another. One atom to another. One subatomic particle to another.

But something else that Aristotle realized is that if everything that moves has a mover, then somewhere back in history there had to be a first mover. It can't be infinite. Someone or something had to get the ball rolling. Some entity had to, quite literally, set this world in motion.

This concept has been used by Christians for centuries as one of the basic proofs for the existence of God. God is the first mover. God is the one who is not moved, yet who set everything in motion simply by saying, "Let there be..." And there was.

And yet, think about that for a moment. God didn't just move one object. God set everything in motion. Every atom. Every rock. Every animal. Every breath of wind. Every star in the sky. Think about the amount of energy it took the last time you had to push a car a few feet. And now consider... God pushed the entire universe into motion.

It's no wonder, then, what Isaiah says in our Old Testament Lesson for today: *"Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Who is like me? Let him proclaim it.'"*

I am the first and the last. I was there before the beginning. I will be there after the end. I set everything into motion. I will bring everything to a stop. There are no other gods apart from me.

Over and over again, the Bible praises God for His creation. Honors and glorifies him for the power necessary to create all that is around us. *"For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols,"* David says in Psalm 96, *"But the Lord made the heavens... Say among the nations, 'The Lord reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved.'"*

But then, in that same psalm, David actually goes one step even beyond that. He doesn't just praise God for His creation. He also commands the creation itself to praise God. *"Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it!"*

Now how in the world is such a thing possible? I mean, I don't know about you, but I've never read a psalm and then looked up to see a giant smile appear in the sky. Or sang a song and heard the grass in my yard start singing with me. And for good reason, because that's not what David's talking about here.

You see, David is working with a very different definition of praise than we normally do. When we think of praising God, we think of songs. But when David thinks of praising God, he thinks of things doing exactly what they were meant to do.

Human beings were created to praise God using things like songs. But the sky was created to praise God by providing air to breathe and rain to fall and light to shine on the earth. The earth was created to praise God by growing things. By providing food and water and homes and raw materials.

That's what Paul means when he says in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10, "*Whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.*" That applies to humans, but it also applies to plants and animals and wind and rocks. When creation does its thing, it does it to the glory of God.

Except, of course, when we don't let it do its thing. Which is what our Epistle is all about. "*For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it.*" The reference to 'him' there is to Adam. When Adam sinned, the creation was subjected to futility. It was subjected to doing things that don't praise God.

Things that cause disease and suffering. Pandemics, AIDS, heart disease, cancer. Things that are destructive. Earthquakes, hurricanes, forest fires. Things that are polluting. Oil spills, smog, acid rain. Creation doesn't want to do these things. This earth was created good. Very good, in fact. It does not do these things willingly.

We caused them. It was the sin of Adam that cursed the ground. That cursed creation, bringing forth death and disease and suffering. And it is our continuing sin that causes so much of the evil we see around us every day.

And just as we are waiting for a day when all this suffering will end, all of creation is waiting as well. "*The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.*" It waits with hope that it "*will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*" It groans as in the pains of childbirth, waiting for that day when something new will be born from all its agony.

From the moment Adam sinned, creation sat in despair. Because humanity had been made the steward over it. And now we had shown ourselves to be rotten caretakers. Not just because of how we treated creation, but because of how we treated God. Defying His Law. Breaking His commandments. Rejecting all that is good for us.

Creation wanted to be part of that picture that David paints, praising God along side of us by giving us everything that we need. And instead, it could only wait in futility, while we subjected it to sin.

That is, until Christ was born. The Alpha and Omega. The first and the last. The beginning and the end. In Him was all the power of God. The power to create and destroy. The power to set this universe in motion. The power to love and the power to save.

And not just save humanity. The power to save everything. To release the whole world from its bondage to decay. And obtain freedom through His blood shed on the cross.

It's no wonder that the stars in the sky announced Christ's birth. That the waves held him up as he walked across the Sea of Galilee. That the wind obeyed when he commanded it to cease. That the stone rolled back from the tomb on Easter morning.

In their own star-like, water-like, wind-like, rock-like ways, they were just as excited to see Christ come to earth, live, die, and rise again from the dead as we are. That's how immense God's salvation was. Through Christ, He was redeeming everything.

Including us. We who ruined this good creation. Who subjected something created to praise God to the futility of sin. Christ redeemed all of creation. And He redeemed us, the stewards of creation.

And not just our souls. But our bodies too. They are a part of creation as well. And we join with creation in waiting for Christ to return and fulfill all that He has promised.

To bring us a new heaven and a new earth. As very good as the first one had ever been. As Paul says, *“we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”*

To look around and inwardly groan at the mess this world has become is not a sinful thing to do. It is, in fact, a fruit of the Spirit. To groan inwardly at the sinfulness and decay of this world and, more importantly, to groan inwardly at your own sinfulness and decay is a very good and righteous thing to do. Because it shows that the Spirit is at work in you.

Making you eager, not to see this world of death continue on and on for all eternity. But making you eager for the day when you see the fulfillment of God's promise to adopt you as his son or daughter. Making you eager for the day when you see the redemption of your body into something free from sin and decay.

Making you eager for the day when our patient waiting will be over. When our prayers will be answered. When the will of God will be done. And the first mover will move again to make all things new. Amen.