

1.

There is a season called *Gyeongchip* in Korea, which is tomorrow. It is said that when *Gyeongchip* comes, it will be warm enough for frogs to wake up from their winter sleep. When I was young, I would go to the valleys in the mountains to catch salamander eggs in late February or early March. As the snow on the mountain melted, water flowed, and creatures such as frogs and salamanders who are startled by the flowing water would wake up from their winter sleep. Of course, Minnesota is colder than Korea, but nothing can stop spring from arriving. At the same time, I worry that spring may arrive too soon. Warm winter is not always welcome, as it is evidence that the Earth is suffering. The rhythm of the Earth has changed. This causes stress to many plants and animals. What happens if apple blossoms that should bloom at the end of April bloom instead at the end of March? If flowers suddenly bloom early, the bees that move around and pollinate the flowers cannot do their job properly because bees aren't used to that rhythm. In the novel *The Bee's Prophecy* by Bernard Werber, a man sets out on an adventure to find a book of prophecy written in the old Middle Ages. The main character goes to the future and meets his future self, and in that future world, he sees humanity suffering due to the extinction of bees. The extinction of bees is a very serious matter. Children, imagine for a moment. What will happen if the bees disappear? By moving around the flowers, bees help with pollination. If the pollen in the flower is male, the bee helps spread the pollen on the female part at the bottom of the flower. When the stamens and pistils of a flower meet like this, pollination is completed and the flower turns into a fruit. Bees are needed to help with this pollination, but what changes will happen without bees? You won't be able to eat fruits and grains. If bees disappear, fruits and grains will decrease and humanity will experience serious chaos. However, bees are actually disappearing from the Earth. Wild flower fields that bees feed on are disappearing due to development. Additionally, the number of bees has been decreasing due to the use of pesticides since the 1960s. In California, hundreds of millions of bees are brought in from other places to harvest almond fruits and released when almond flowers bloom. The bees produce almond nuts, where they die. It's not just bees. The Earth is currently experiencing a major ecological crisis, including the climate crisis.

Imagine, several people climb a tree, sit on its branches, and they begin to saw at the branches. As they sit on the tree branches while sawing the tree they are sitting on, they hear the sound of the branches splitting. They look at each other in surprise, but continue sawing. I'll leave it to your imagination as to what happens to the people sitting on the branches of that tree. Even though the Earth is sick and suffering from climate crises everywhere, people are unwilling to change their attitude toward life. We just look at each other's surprised faces and then continue to live the same way. Even though something is going wrong, we are not stopping.

2.

What does it mean for someone to have good and deep faith? Are people who work hard at church people with good faith? A person with truly good faith is one who understands and sympathizes with God's heart. They are a person who truly understands the heart and will of God. If you want to be a good child, you just need to know your parents' hearts and minds and obey them. A person who does not understand the feelings of his parents and does not understand their parents' wishes and acts as he pleases is called an awful child. The same goes for faith in God. A person who truly understands God's heart, recognizes His will, and obeys it is a person of good faith.

Then, what kind of God is God? When you read the Bible, it speaks of God as three people: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God, who exists together as three persons, is called the Trinity. All three are God, but they exist as different persons. It is difficult to understand this with human knowledge and wisdom. However, the Bible clearly explains how these three exist. Trinity God's way of being is unity created in love and joy. Jesus is the Son of God the Father. When Jesus, the son, was baptized by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit came down from heaven and rested on Jesus. And the words of God the Father began to be heard from heaven. "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." So, when Jesus was baptized, Trinity God showed us that they loved each other and became one. Trinity God became one in love and joy, and rejoiced in serving one another. It means that we exist in a way that we are a gift to each other and bring joy to each other. Because you give yourself as a gift, there is bound to be love and joy. The three persons of God continued to love, give thanks to each other, and served each other. Why is this way of God's existence

important? This is because God's way of existence is the way of existence of people who were created in the image of God.

3.

Trinity God created all things in the universe with words. As Evolutionists say, the Earth was not created by chance. Genesis 1:26 says: "God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.'" The plural form of the subject 'us' is used. 'Us' likely refers to the Trinity God, who is God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They created mankind in their own image. Creating mankind in their own image means that mankind should reflect the Trinity God's way of existence. They created mankind as relational beings. In love and joy, they created mankind to be a gift to one another. Being created in the image of God has many meanings, but the core message is that our existence cannot help but be relational. Because the Trinity God are connected and love each other, human beings, created in the image of God, cannot help but be relational. This applies not only to relationships between people, but also to all creatures created by God. What the word relational means is that we are living beings thanks to the existence of others. All living things on this planet are interconnected with each other. If any one of them is missing, a serious crisis arises. I told you earlier what happens when there are no bees, right?

God wants to reveal His image through people. So what this means is that God wants people to act as representatives of creation. This means that humans must represent God and reveal who God is among all creation. So, God created the earth and sky, plants on them, fish, and animals, and then asked humans for a favor. "I hope that you, as the representative of creation, will take good care of and manage all creation." This does not mean that humans are better than other creatures, it just means that they are representative. God absolutely did not create all living things on this Earth for humans to use as they please. God created us to live well together.

4.

We must not forget that we survive thanks to others. We must not forget that all life on this Earth is connected. We are connected not only between people but also between people and nature. Since we have talked countless times about the relationships between people in the church, today we will focus on the relationships between us and other non-human beings on our planet Earth. No one will deny that the Earth is getting sick. Our planet is in dire straits. What does that have to do with us believing in God? Because God's heart and will are in the midst of all things in nature, caring for nature is a very important issue for God's children. Every time we gather, we confess our faith with the Apostles' Creed. What is the beginning of the Apostles' Creed? "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth." Are you just going to say that you believe in the Creator of heaven and earth? If we believe in God the Creator, there must be action and fruits of that faith in our lives. Believing in God as the Creator is a confession that there is nothing in the world that we can control as we please. There is nothing insignificant in this world. Everything is precious. There is nothing that is not precious, not even a single blade of grass, a single insect, or a single grain of rice. We need to value and care for all life forms as well as all resources on this planet. Even as we live thanks to them, we forget our gratitude and rather treat them carelessly and destroy them.

The word "ecology" has its roots in the Greek word 'Oikos'. Oikos means 'house of living'. This ecosystem means God's living community. God did not create people 'alone' but 'with each other'. The fact that God created us together, not alone, means that we created each other as beings that survive thanks to each other. It is said that 150 million microorganisms live in a spoonful of soil. A poet once sang that the universe is contained in a single grain of rice. If you knew that a single grain of rice contains heaven, earth, and people, how could you dare to eat it carelessly and throw it away carelessly? If a person understands that countless creatures live in the soil, how could he carelessly dig up the soil and spray pesticides into the ground? Being created in the image of God does not mean that we are superior to other creatures. When humans take care of, nurture, and save many lives, they finally become the image of God.

5.

In Franz Alt's book *Jesus the Ecologist*, the story says, "In outer space, our star Earth meets another star. The star asks the Earth. "How are you?" Our star answers: "I'm not well. I travel carrying *homo sapiens*." It is said that the unfamiliar star comforted the Earth like this. "Don't worry about it. They will soon disappear."

It is an eerie story about humans who will soon disappear from this Earth. Human beings seem to live without any sense of awareness as they cut off the branches of the tree they are climbing on. We are in the third week of Lent. Lent is a period of deep meditation on the path Jesus walked. Jesus reached out to the least fortunate of the world. He touched the lives of the least fortunate. And that He might set free the lives of the least fortunate, He bore the cross, and He was put to death. Jesus willingly accepted suffering to care for life and open a world of peace. He deliberately refused to take the easy path and chose the difficult path to save others. I think that perhaps the least fortunate people of this era are our small neighbors in the ecosystem. Thanks to them, we are now living a prosperous life on this planet of life. But those little creatures are groaning because of us. We cannot talk about the cross without standing in solidarity with our hurting neighbors. This damaged ecosystem is our neighbor with whom we humans will have to live for a long time.

The church must show that there is a different path from the world. The world pushes people to own more and consume more. In this society, consumption is a virtue and development is the method. This is because in order to satisfy the desires within people, they must have more, eat more, and consume more. But we have a duty to eat less, have less, share more, spend less, and show the world that there is a way to be happy even if it is uncomfortable. We need to think that we are living a life thanks to one another. Countless farmers have worked hard to make each bowl of rice on our table. Bees have been working diligently since spring to make one apple. It takes a lot of work from Colombian coffee farmers to make a cup of coffee. In order for a single chrysanthemum to bloom, the blackbird has been crying like that since spring. All creatures are interconnected and survive thanks to each other. We must recover the way we live by giving ourselves as a gift in the image of God. Using other beings for one's desires is bound to destroy peace. Everything we eat, drink, and enjoy is thanks to it. Therefore, we must live a life that cherishes, cares for, and cares for all living things around us. That is the proper attitude of those who believe in God the Creator.

<Sharing>

Believing in the Creator means living a life that cares for and cares for God's creatures, recognizing that we live together. Through what practices will you protect and care for God's created world? Share specific practical applications.