

Blessing of the Animals
Job 12: 7-10
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The Rev. Dr. Don Dempsey
First Presbyterian Church
Lake Forest, IL

“Blessing of the Animals”

"If you can start your day without caffeine,
If you can be cheerful, ignoring aches and pains,
If you can resist complaining and boring people with your troubles,
If you can understand when loved ones are too busy to give you time,
If you can overlook it when people take things out on you, when, through no fault
of yours, something goes wrong,

If you can face the world without lies and deceit,
If you can eat the same food, day-after-day, and be grateful for it,
If you can conquer tension without medical help,
If you can relax without alcohol,
If you can sleep without the aid of drugs...

If you can do ALL these things, then, you are probably the FAMILY DOG.”

I don't know who it was who wrote this, but, whoever it was, they wrote it because they had stumbled upon a profound truth. The profound truth is that, in many ways, animals are superior to people.

What kind of arrogance is it, that makes us human beings think that we are superior to the other animals that populate this earth? We are NOT!!! We are most certainly DIFFERENT from the other animals that populate this earth, but we should not kid ourselves, we should not flatter ourselves, into thinking that we are superior to them.

Yes, I am well-aware of the fact that scripture informs us that humankind was made "in the image of God." That means, that we humans, unlike the other responsive creatures that God has made, have the unique ability to CONSCIOUSLY relate to God. Essentially, that means that we humans have the ability to pray. It means that we humans have the ability to talk to God, and have a conscious and personal relationship with our Maker.

I do not believe that my cats have the ability to CONSCIOUSLY communicate with their Maker. But, that does not mean that my cats cannot experience an UN-

conscious relationship with God, of which I am not aware of, a relationship which enables them to live in harmony with God. And, in fact, the evidence suggests exactly that!!!

My cats, Snickers and Alonzo, consistently display an inner harmony and contentment that I, all-too-often, do not have. This suggests to me that, in a unique un-conscious way Snickers and Alonzo live in harmony with God. As a human being, I DO have the ability to CONSCIOUSLY relate to God, but all-too-often I do NOT live in harmony with God. I am painfully reminded of that fact, when Alonzo or Snickers jump-up on my lap and lay there, purring with an inner-peace and contentment that I envy so much.

Friends, we are gathered here this morning to ask God to bless the animals that He has given us to be our friends and companions. By doing so, we are honoring them. We are acknowledging that they, too, are part of God's creation, and that they have just as much right to be here as we have.

When the Bible says that we humans have been given:

"dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth,"

It means that God has given us humans a very special task. It means that God has given us humans the task of being the STEWARDS of His creation. As the stewards of God's creation, it is our God-given responsibility to care for the other living creatures that God has made.

Job has something to say about animals. His so called friends talk on at length about the world. Their view of everything is so neat and tidy and so human centered. They even presume to know how God will act and what God thinks about everything.

Job answers them facetiously: "Surely wisdom itself will die with you ... [But if you really are interested in learning something] go ask the animals and they will teach you."

Animals are some of our finest teachers: They have much to teach us about love, about the value AND peril of curiosity; they even teach us about matters of the spirit.

Once a man was visiting a certain saintly man and when the visitor arrived he found the man in prayer. He sat so still that not even a hair on his head moved. When the holy man had finished his prayer his visitor asked where he had learned to sit so still for so long:

"From my cat., he replied."

We are here on this "Blessing of the Animals" Sunday to acknowledge, celebrate, and bless our individual animals – our "pets." We are here acknowledging, affirming, and celebrating God and recognizing that God is Lord and creator of all.

We are all inter-related in creation and we all share a common responsibility for the well-being of one another. Our animals bring us *comfort, communicate God's love, and teach us many lessons.*

It is fitting that we have and enjoy this opportunity to bring our animal companions to church for a special blessing, to give thanks this day for the love and companionship that we share.

So today we bring our animals to be blessed saying:

*"Blessed are you, Lord God, maker of all living creatures. You called forth fish in the sea, birds in the air and animals on the land. We ask you to bless our pets. By the power of your love, enable our pets to live according to your plan. May we always praise you for the beauty of your creation. Blessed are you, Lord our God, as we experience your love in all your creatures! **Amen.**"*