
Somebody to Love

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A sermon by the Very Reverend Sam Candler
Atlanta, Georgia
Observing the Feast of St. Francis

Genesis 2:18-24
Matthew 11:28-30

I don't know who said it first: God or Grace Slick.

Grace Slick was the lead singer for the old rock band, Jefferson Airplane.

God was the being who created the world. I hope you all remember the story. God said "Let there be light." There was light, and God said it was good. God said, "Let there be night and day," and there was. God said it was good. God said, "Let there be animals and living creatures," and there were. God said it was good.

There was so much that was pronounced "Good" back in that primal time. In fact, everything was pronounced "Good." As we observe the Feast of St. Francis today, part of our celebration of creation is remembering the sheer goodness of all of God's creation. Creation is good!

That was all in Genesis, chapter one. But in Genesis, chapter two, an odd thing is said. There is something mentioned that is "Not Good." Very specifically, God looked at the creation of the first human and said this, "It is not good." "It is not good." What was God talking about?

"It is not good," God said, ", for the human being to be alone." (Genesis 2:18)

It is not good for the human being to be alone. The man needs a companion. I think maybe God had already created Grace Slick, and she was singing that driving song of the 1960's, "Somebody to Love."

*When the truth is found, to be lies,
And all the joy within you dies,
Don't you want somebody to love?
Don't you need somebody to love?
Wouldn't you love somebody to love,
You better find somebody to love.*

Since then, all sorts of people have sung something like that, haven't they? Queen sings about somebody to love. Freddie Mercury needs somebody to love. Justin Bieber sings about needing somebody to love. Glee sings about somebody to love. We all sing about it. Wouldn't you love somebody to love? Yes, we would. Most of us would.

Because we were created for love. Companionship is designed and built into the human condition. God said, "It is not good for the human being to be alone." We were created for relationship. We were created for somebody to love.

As we bless these animals today, as we honor them by bringing them to church, one of the things we do is acknowledge that they are companions. They give us somebody to love. They give us relationship. And, indeed, we receive some sort of affection back. I believe they enjoy us. (Look at them! See how happy they look today!)

But there is another feature to our animal blessing today. We are not simply blessing animals individually. We are also acknowledging the right relationship that all of us are supposed to live in, here on this earth.

Francis of Assisi, the great saint, taught us these things. He seems to have been fully in relationship with God's creation, all of it. His life of humble service to all, and especially to the poor, was a dramatic example of being in right relationship with God and with God's creation.

This means that Francis was not simply a man who was nice to his dog, or who let a cat run free on the kitchen table. Francis created broad community, in relationship not simply with animals, but also with people, with the poor, and with the world itself. Francis loved even brother sun and sister moon. Francis loved even sister death.

A few years ago, Peter Brown and friends wrote a book titled, *Right Relationship: Building a Whole Earth Economy*. In that book, they developed the old Quaker term of "bearing witness." For Quakers, that term means living life in a way that reflects fundamental truth. Bearing witness means getting relationships right. That book expands the phrase "right relationship," however, so that it means right relationship with the entire earth. They urge us to live in right relationship, not just with other people, and not just with other people we love, but with the entire world, with all of God's creation.

It is a high and mighty calling! Today, we create a glimpse of what that calling could mean. There will be glitches today, maybe a few growls, and maybe a few frightened children-and adults!

But, if all goes well, we see something grand today. We see men and women, girls and boys, living in right relationship with animals. We see human beings living with other creatures that we might otherwise be tempted to fear, or to dominate, or even to abuse.

These dogs and other pets are upsetting our tidiness and comfort a bit today. They bark at inopportune times, and they pull us toward places we would rather not go. They change our schedules. We change our lives for them.

Well, that's what relationships do. They change us. In right relationships, we learn to bend and change. We learn to give up something of ourselves so that we can be something better. Indeed, we learn to give up something of ourselves so that the world can be a better place.

Today, we acknowledge that we were created for this. We were created for companionship, for relationship. We were created to love somebody. And we were created for somebody to love.

Somebody wants to love you today! Let them! Take their yoke upon you and learn from them. Yes, those words were the words of Jesus: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me." But they are the words of anyone who wants our love, too, and the words of anyone who wants to love us.

"Take their yoke upon you and learn from them." That is what relationship is. Ultimately, that yoke is easy, and that burden is light. These pets know that. Somebody wants to love you today! These animals want to love you. That person next to you wants to love you. The God who created all of us, the God who is here today, wants to love you!

Yes, that love will change us, for sure. You, and I, will be changed by the love of God. We will become part of God's continuing creation, a creation of right relationship.

AMEN.

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