

Listen to the world's groaning (Romans 8:12–25)

Christians have long lived in denial of our deep creaturely connections.

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Creation groans, but not everybody senses its groaning.

Many of us do, of course, see the crisis the planet faces. We are in a struggle for the survival of our living ecosystem and its biodiversity. The crisis itself, however, is a massive symptom of our inability to sense creation's groaning.

Paul sees in the redeeming work of God a hope not simply for human bodies but for all creaturely bodies, a rescue from decay and the power of death not simply for us but for all of creation. He sees that we are part of creation's hope for the full realization of its life as joined to God's own life forever. In becoming flesh, God touched the dirt, water, and air and joined all living reality to the divine life. What will become of it and us waits for the finality of our redemption.

Yet this is first a matter not of time but of space, not of the future but of the present—a present sensing and a present knowing. We need to sense now our deep connection to the earth, animals, plants, and sky. We need to lean into the manners, moods, and rhythms of all creaturely life in order to sense the density of our reality of redemption.

Since the beginning of the colonial moment, Christians have lived in denial of our deep creaturely connections. We have turned the earth and animals into what they are not: inert dirt and resources for our extraction and exploitation. We have

imagined silence where the world is speaking, lifelessness where the world is living, and nothing more than our projections of meaning onto places where the world invites us into a living reciprocity—a reciprocity necessary for our survival and flourishing.

Far too many Christians look out on the world and see only the possibilities of development or the questions of possession. Who owns this land, what are its boundaries, and what is its cost? Such questions perform the distortion of our planet and signal the absence of a real doctrine of creation.

The world is animate, and communicative. We have to understand this before we can sense the world's groaning—which in turn is key to sensing our shared hope with the world itself.

And this hope should inform our present actions, guiding us to resist the continuous commodification of the planet, to resist people's desperate attempts to believe that our consumptive practices are inevitable and need only to be slowly and carefully modified. To sense the groaning of the world is to know that this will never be enough, because it maintains a vision of the world as only what we make of it.

Christian faith tells us differently. We have been joined to a God who cares deeply about the creaturely body, both ours and the body of the world—because God's own body is now and forever joined to the world.