

Pastor Troy E. Medlin
Creation in Christ Sunday
Grace, River Forest
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Futures Trading

I really wanted it. Two years ago around my birthday I saw an ad online that a particular place was offering a limited edition ice cream flavor that sounded amazing. Off I went. I told them I had seen this online and how excited I was for it only to be told they were no longer serving that. The offer was gone. I said, “no, it's right here, see, it says it's available.” Not anymore. We live in a world that teaches us that “want it, get it, have it” should be our driving dogma (do what we can to achieve it) - but we know the limits of that line. Often it's out of our hands. It takes a lifetime to learn that lesson.

The headline reads “That was fun; as LA burned online gamblers bet on how much the fire would destroy.” The article continues “More than \$1.2 million was wagered on the Eaton and Palisades fires last year, with bets tied to how much destruction they would cause. Experts say the possibility of making money on disasters can create dangerous incentives.”

It's called *futures trading*. You place bets on upcoming events. This can include sports, politics, and the weather. We all live with casinos in our pockets and have made the whole landscape into a means to our own ends. As a way to get what we want, when we want it-- if we have the resources. Others live with the consequences.

In our sin and selfishness we have turned creation itself into a commodity to be used as if there are endless profits to extract. Living for ourselves while the next generation suffers. All the while we hurdle further inward betting on our ability to stave off our own fragility. We want our customized life no matter the cost. However this “want it, get it, have it” creed has shaped us it always makes us smaller in the end. We leave a mess. Everyone loses.

With this swirling around us we are here to celebrate Creation in Christ Sunday. A feast. It might seem like the last thing we should do at a time of ecological devastation when the earth is crying out for mercy and we have squandered so much. Yet- I wonder if this is not exactly what we need. In the midst of the mess that we have made we are encountered by the God who created all things out of sheer joy and still calls it all very good from the smallest insect to the vast galaxies. And molded you in God's own image. You are a picture of God. This God delights in you. In God we live and move and have our being. Just like this God always does, when we crash out and are at the end of our rope, this God always comes down to us. For in the beginning was the word and the word was with God, the word was God, and the word became *flesh* and dwells among us. Talk about having a personal stake in what they have made.

From your beginning and beyond every end God is the one who always hears the cry from every person and place and will never turn away from you or this world. This is the God who is so invested in this creation that God has forever taken on materiality. And is found deep in all its vulnerable places. In the crooked, broken, and fragile geographies within and without, their God remains. Here God gives God's own life to you by joining God's word to water and oil, bread and wine, and in the mutual consolation and forgiveness shared between human bodies. All by grace. Not a commodity to be used but a gift to be received all spread across this sacramental landscape.

In the cross and empty tomb God even meets us in our forsakenness. In the mystery of this ever-creating, always moving God, the cross has become a tree of life for us. Death leads to resurrection. A sign of resistance and resilience that still stands amid it all.

At the end of John's gospel the risen Jesus meets the disciples in their locked rooms of fear and breathes on them, gives them peace, and sends them out on mission as a way of saying I know what has happened in the past and I know what you have done but I am not done with you yet. God is not done with them yet. For them, so for you.

It's called futures trading. In Christ God takes our failure, losses, fruitless and flailing attempts to save ourselves, and death itself in a thousand ways, and gives us God's own life to live in ours. So that our breath is God's breath. There is no competing for space or anything else here. God is not finished with you. God is the one who never gives up on anything God has made. To belong to this God is to always have a future beyond every grave. As our new bishop in the Metro Chicago Synod says, "*God is the one who breathes new life into people and places left for dead.*" This is God's identity. Who God is.

The native plant fireweed begins restoring land after a fire through spreading, fast-growing rhizomes and via seeds across the landscape. The rhizomes have been waiting patiently, even for decades, in the soil of a mature forest for the next fire so they can grow unbidden. Fireweed can begin blossoming 20-30 days after a fire.

We carry this with us as we imagine what the world could look like as we practice resurrection. Like holy fools sent from tomorrow we renounce "want it, get it, have it" as the empty vessel it is and say yes to walking together— loving all this creation, you and me included, into abundant life. How might we invite others into this abundant life So we all can rest on this spacious sacramental landscape together? In Christ we have everything-- life that will never run out, love that will not expire, and a place in a community that is always being made new like fireweed rising from the ashes.

It can seem like an impossible call. Yet we are people of the cross and empty tomb. So, marked with the cross this is my word for you: there is no advocacy, word spoken, act of love, or seed sown in passed over soil that is too small or insignificant in the face of things that seem so unmovable. Nothing is wasted in the economy of grace. The stone is rolled away and we walk forward. Against all odds. Foolishly, like fireweed, we bet on it. It's called futures trading.