

**For the Beauty of the Earth**

# **Old Orchard Church**

February 13, 2011—10:15 to 11:50 a.m.

**Cover art:** Woodcut by Herman Fechenbach (1969)

We celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly—and in a circle, at the end of worship. A word of direction is given, and with this everyone stands and moves to the walls. The cup is passed in two forms: in a chalice and then in small individual cups. You are free to choose.

And as this is the Supper of the Lord Christ, please listen to the instructions we give as to what qualifies a visitor to participate. **But whether you intend to take communion or not, please join us in the circle.**

**Praise the LORD from the earth,  
you great sea creatures  
and all ocean depths....  
small creatures and flying birds....  
for his name alone is exalted.**

Psalm 148:7, 10b, 13b

## **Celebrating Jesus, Incarnate Son of God: Lord of All Nature**

**Who can take in the wonders and richness  
of this vast, complex, beauty-ridden world?**

**From the splendor of a snowflake  
to the awesome tumult of a storm,  
all nature shouts the praise of Him who made  
and orchestrates the world!**

**Yet we, made in the image of God, stand higher—stand,  
in fact, as the crown of creation, broken though we be.**

**Adam squandered our dominion-glory,  
But the New Adam, God the Son,  
came into the world as a man to restore it.**

**In submission once to creaturely decay,  
Jesus now tames the universe as Lord.  
All who own their guilt,  
and run to his cross of Mercy for cover,  
taste even now the Coming Reversal:  
when death shall give way to life,  
and all created things flourish  
under the sweet rule of the redeemed of the Lord.  
Blessed be his Name!**



### **Scripture Readings**

**Old Testament Lesson:** Jonah 1:11-17

**New Testament Lesson:** Mark 6:45-51

### **— Sermon —**

**“Living Sacrifices: Responding to Grace”**

Romans 12:1, 2

*Russ Tamm, seminary intern, preaching*

## **Christians and Nature**

So we have seen that a truly biblical Christianity has a real answer to the ecological crisis. It offers a balanced and healthy attitude to nature, arising from the truth of its creation by God; it offers the hope here and now of substantial healing in nature of some of the results of the Fall, arising from the truth of redemption in Christ. In each of the alienations arising from the Fall, the Christians, individually and corporately, should consciously in practice be a healing redemptive factor—in the separation of man from God, of man from himself, of man from man, of man from nature, and of nature from nature....

It usually takes longer to treat the land properly. And these are the two factors that lead to the destruction of our environment: money and time—or to say it another way, greed and haste. The question is, or seems to be, are we going to have an immediate profit and an immediate saving of time, or are we going to do what we really should do as God’s children?

Apply this to strip-mining. There is no reason in the world why strip-mining was compelled to leave western Pennsylvania or eastern Kentucky in its present condition. Strip-mines, as we have seen, do not have to be left this way: ...the soil can be bulldozed back. What we, the Christian community, have to do is to refuse men the right to ravish our land, just as we refuse them the right to ravish our women; to insist that somebody accepts a little less profit by not exploiting nature. And the first step is exhibiting the fact that as individual Christians and as Christian communities we ourselves do not ravish our fair sister [the land] for the sake of greed in one form or another....

Think...of the way we use our bulldozers across the Swiss mountains. *Almost always* the scars and the ugliness are the result of hurry. And whether it is hurry or greed, these things eat away at nature.

But as Christians we have to learn to say “Stop!” Because, after all, greed is destructive against nature at this point and there is a time to take one’s time....

We must confess that we missed our opportunity. We have spoken loudly against materialistic science, but we have done little to show that in practice we ourselves as Christians are not dominated by a technological orientation in regard either to man or nature. We should have been stressing and practicing for a long time that there is a basic reason why we should not do all we can do, but we have missed the opportunity to help man save his earth. Not only that, but in our generation we are losing an evangelistic opportunity, because when modern young people have a real sensitivity to nature, many of them turn to the hippie communities or mentality, where there is at least a genuine sense of nature (even if a wrong one), because they have seen that most Christians simply do not care about the beauty of nature, or nature as such.

So we have not only missed our opportunity to save the earth for man, but this also partly accounts for the fact that we have largely missed the opportunity of reaching the twentieth century. These are reasons why the Church seems irrelevant and helpless in our generation. We are living in, and practicing, a sub-Christianity.

—Francis Schaeffer in *Pollution and the Death of Man* (1970)