

What do you eat for breakfast? I eat the same thing every morning. Some kind of cereal, with some kind of fruit, floating in a generous amount of milk. It's my favourite meal of the day. I love the sweetness from the cereal or granola, the tartness of the berries, when we have berries on hand, and the creaminess of the milk. A small delight to look forward to each morning.

In the selections from Genesis 1 that we heard this morning, we heard snippets of the first creation story in the Bible. Although the words "creation story" might prompt reflections on existential matters or cosmic questions, the passage has a great deal of concern for food.

If we were to read the passage in full, we would see that day 1, 2, and part of day 3, really speed along. God said "let there be light", so then there was light, God saw it was good, named it, end of day. Same for day 2 when God separated the water and the sky.

On day 3, things really slow down once dry land has been created. The earth puts forth vegetation, the plants seed seed and the fruit trees fruit fruit. Dr. Ellen Davis translates verses 11-12 like this:

"Let the earth sprout-out sprouts, plants seeding seed, fruit trees making fruit, each of its own kind – with their seed in them – on the earth," and it was so. And the earth brought forth sprouts and the plants seeding seed each of its own kind, and trees making fruit with its seed in it, each of its own kind. (Genesis 1:11-12, translated by Ellen Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*, 2009).

The passage really waxes poetic about the vegetation and its fruitfulness, marked literally by its fruit! Yet this fruitfulness is not concerned with productivity or efficiency. It is the activity of other beings. God invites the earth to participate in the act of creation, and so it does. The earth brings forth vegetation, the plants bring forth seed, and the trees bring forth fruit. The story is not strictly one of God creating things, but one of God creating beings who participate in the world, even collaborating in the creation of the world.

The concern for food is taken up again when humans come along later in the passage. In verses 29-30, God tells the first humans that every plant seeding seed and every fruit tree with seed in its fruit are for food. And for every other living creature, all green plants are promised for food. The vegetation that is offered to all creatures, human and non-human, is the very vegetation that just a few verses earlier was described as participating in the creation of the world. These vegetable and fruit-beings share their lives with other beings. Humans, along with our animal neighbours (etc.), share in their lives every time we eat. God cares about all of creation, from the oats and berries in the cereal bowl, the cow who gives the milk, and the human who eats it, and sees all of these beings as good. The story or poem describes humans as part of this created network of life that is characterized by God's care and God's delight.

This story of the creation of the world treats food as more than calories or nutritional inputs. Theologian Norman Wirzba describes food as "God's love made nutritious and delicious, given for the good of each other" (Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating, 2019: xii). As Wirzba says, food didn't have to be delicious, but God made it delicious. In the context of Genesis 1, God's care and delight for creation includes care and delight in food. When we eat, we can participate in this care and delight. Wirzba writes that "To grow food and eat in a way that is mindful of God is to collaborate with God's own primordial sharing of life in the sharing of food with each other. It is to participate in forms of life and frameworks of meaning that have their root and orientation in God's caring ways with creation" (Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating, 2019: xiii). Eating as a primordial sharing of life suggests that we are not only collaborating with God when we care

for creation through our eating, but that we are also collaborating with the very beings in creation that are fruitful for our nourishment.

In Genesis 1, vegetation not only feeds other beings, it also models a way of being in the world. When we think of Genesis 1 and the human vocation, many of us probably think of questions around the language of subduing the earth and having dominion or ruling over all living creatures. Those are important concerns, and concerns that much ink has been spilled over, especially in the last 60 years, in relation to environmental concerns. But there's another instruction that God gives to humans: be fruitful and multiply.

This isn't the first time this instruction has been given in the chapter. Earlier, this same instruction was given to the fish and the birds in 1:20-21. God's blessing and instruction to them is to be fruitful and multiply. The instruction to humans, fish, and birds echoes the earlier instruction to fruit trees to make fruit. Vegetation shows us what it looks like to be fruitful. Plants and seeds and fruit and trees model for us a way of being that works for the good of another, sharing our lives as we collaborate with the rest of creation and with God. With vegetables and fruit as our teachers, we can encounter the world not as full of consumers and commodities, but instead full of manifestations of the love, the grace, and the delight of God.

By paying attention to food in Genesis 1, what we find is a network of relationships and connections between all of creation. This network of relations extends also to God. But staying with the relations within creation, what it suggests is a deep reliance on one another and even a shared responsibility to one another.

I recently came across one of the Spanish terms used to speak about stewardship of creation: *Corresponsabilidad*. The other term is *Mayordomos*, and upon conferring with Jacqui, both mean the same thing: stewardship. Despite being synonyms in the Spanish language, seeing the word *Corresponsabilidad* sparked my imagination. To be clear, I'm not trying to offer any commentary on what the word does or does not mean in Spanish. Rather, I'm sharing the imaginative spark that my poor Spanish reading skills prompted for me: the idea of co-responsibility in English evokes the kind of network of relationships we've seen in this chapter. The question this prompts is whether co-responsibility in Genesis 1 concerns humans sharing responsibility for the health of creation, or whether this shared responsibility stretches to include how creation shares responsibility for one another and for us.

The network of relations that Genesis 1 presents is one where creation is responsible to and for one another. The vegetation shares its life as food, the sun and moon govern day and night, humans exercise a form of "mastery among" creation (as Davis puts it). While we have responsibilities as humans, we are not the only ones with responsibilities nor are we the only ones with knowledge to teach. We share responsibility with the more-than-human world. It is when we assume responsibility and assume we hold all the power and all the knowledge, when we don't share the load, or don't consider that we might need to ask for help and learn from other parts of the community of creation, that we get into trouble.

Thinking with Norman Wirzba again here, he talks about eating as a form of catechesis or teaching. Eating is a way of learning that we don't hold all the power, but that we are dependent on other living beings. He writes: "In the daily act of eating, people have the opportunity to appreciate and explore their creaturely condition as beings dependent on each other and upon

God. In the work of food's production and consumption, people have the chance to learn where and who they are by becoming tillers and keepers of God's edible garden" (xiii).

This summer's sermon theme is the Peace Table. Thinking about **eating** at the peace table suggests that the very food we consume at the table can teach us about walking the way of peace, seeing ourselves as responsible to one another, both human and more-than-human. Eating at the **peace** table invites us to consider whether our ways in the world honour this interconnection and co-responsibility.

This applies to the obvious things, like where our food comes from and the complexities of our modern food system which is premised on a small segment of the population engaged in the work of providing food for the rest of us. But it also extends to evaluating the less obvious things, the things we do that seem unrelated to food.

I am from Manitoba, and grew up on a farm about an hour south of Winnipeg. Growing up, we didn't drive into Winnipeg often. Now, when I visit, I regularly make the drive from Winnipeg to Grunthal or vice versa. The drive is, as you'd expect, a rural one, with lots of fields on either side of the highway. About fifteen minutes south of Winnipeg is the community of Ile-des-Chenes. Recently, the land around Ile-des-Chenes became a hot topic in Manitoba, because of a massive data centre that was proposed to be built in a field next to the community. The arguments from the public against it are as you'd expect, largely based on concerns of noise, light and air pollution. Thinking about these concerns or about the water usage, or the usage of natural gas to meet the data centres massive energy demands, are all important concerns. When thinking of this situation in conversation with the relations of responsibility between all of creation in Genesis 1, another important concern rises to the surface: AI and the pursuit of AGI (artificial general intelligence that broadly matches or exceeds human capabilities) is premised on a view of land and the more-than-human world that sees it as objects not as fellow creatures.

The land that the large-scale data centre in Ile-des-Chenes was to be built on is or was agricultural land. Food was grown there. The company (Jet AI) trying to build the centre describes their work and the location as follows: "Developing the land that powers AI. Jet AI secures and develops shovel-ready data center sites across North America. From raw land to powered campuses..." (quote from the Jet AI website).

The land here is described in three ways. Needing to be developed. As a "shovel-ready" site. And as potentially transformed from "raw land to powered campuses." Land is an object and a commodity. This description of land rings of colonial perceptions of land, such as Locke's theory of homesteading that saw land as becoming property only once activities like cultivation began. That kind of logic is extended here, except suggesting that the 'raw land' is properly used not when cultivated, as Locke argued, but when built on to support the development of technology.

Brian Burkhardt, a Cherokee philosopher, argues that colonial perceptions of land are rooted in seeing land as an object, whereas Indigenous perceptions of land are rooted in seeing land as kin. He argues that this is not just about seeing humans and land as intertwining, but instead about seeing land as personal, familial, and creative (255). The framework underlying settler colonialism views land as an object, with humans "floating free from the land" (Burkhardt, "Thinking Through the Land: On the Nature of Land as a Framework," 2026: 253)

As Burkhardt makes clear, this is not only a view about land, but a view about people too. The framework underlying Indigenous relations to land understands the land as "a person and the

relational ground of kinship” and views humans as “part of the Earth that brings [humans] forth” (253).

[An aside for those of us who are non-Indigenous: I’m not proposing we appropriate this way of relating to land and place as our own. Being treaty people includes learning to live here in ways that respect and do not seek to dominate Indigenous peoples (I think for example, of the two row wampum between the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch). Respect and non-domination require a re-evaluation of colonial views of land. Burkhart (etc.) are teachers, and can teach those of us who are settlers to learn another way of understanding ourselves and the land, without positioning this knowledge as ours, which would further colonial dispossession and harm.]

Burkhart’s analysis also makes clear that the language describing the field in Ile-des-Chenes as ‘shovel ready’ only makes sense from a (settler) colonial perspective of land as object that humans exist apart from or float free from.

I’m currently reading a book called *Empire of AI*. In it, the journalist and author Karen Hao argues that the way that the development of AI and AGI are being pursued, and the massive economic and political power that AI companies and leaders have amassed in our society, is imperialistic. The leaders of these companies are forming empires. She argues it doesn’t have to be this way, none of this is inevitable. Leaving her broader argument aside, I want to share with you a quote she cites from OpenAI’s co-founder and former chief scientist Ilya Sutskever that speaks to land-relations. Sutskever says “I think that it’s fairly likely that it will not take too long of a time for the entire surface of the Earth to become covered with data centers and power stations. There would be a ‘tsunami of computing . . . almost like a natural phenomenon.” AGI (artificial general intelligence)-and thus the data centers needed to support them-would be “too useful to not exist”. (Hao, *Empire of AI*, 2025: 80)

This quote from one of the men directing the development of AI has a shock factor to it. Read alongside Genesis 1, it invites us to consider our own assumptions about humans and land. Who do we think (and act as if) humans are enmeshed with? Are we more closely enmeshed with machines than the natural world? Is land “empty” and ready for development, or is the land full of beings we share responsibility with and are responsible to? Our answers to these questions aren’t only theoretical, but have implications for what role for AI we pursue in our society and what ways we use it (or don’t) in our own lives.

The central ingredient in my morning granola is oats. That grain is grown on the prairies, could perhaps even be grown in the location of the data centre that was shut down by the province of Manitoba. If my breakfast is an opportunity for me to sit down at the peace table, the oats invite me into a relationship of co-responsibility. The oats, the plants, the land invite me to recognize my reliance on them, and the network we form together. Our lives grow together and we are responsible for one another. Together, we are part of the meshwork of creation, called to share our lives together with other creatures and beings in the more-than-human world, called to share responsibility for one another, and invited to learn at the peace table how to walk in a way that is in partnership with the rest of the created the world, the world that God called good.