

Let us pray,

Lord, help us to see that you are the only one who is managing the gate. That you are the good shepherd, the one opening the doors for all.

Amen.

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Do birds pay rent?

I was looking outside my window at my home office and was looking at the birds that were in my tree.

It got me to thinking, Do birds pay rent?

Who says that they are allowed to be in my tree on my property?

Who gave them permission to exist on this land of mine?

What about the squirrels, the voles, the insects, the cats, and all the other animals that live on my land.

Do they pay rent?

No!

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This sounds absurd, of course animals don't pay rent.

But for some reason, we require people, who are just as much animals as all the other creatures on this planet, to pay rent.

Even if we quote on quote, “own”, our homes, we still pay rent to the government in the form of taxes.

Because if you don't pay taxes, the government will kick you out of your own home.

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So I ask again, do birds pay rent?

Do birds pay rent?

When we think about heaven and what God's heavenly home looks like, do we think that God will require rent?

Will God kick us out of heaven if we don't pay up?

It is a funny thing, this ownership idea that we have as humans.

We live in a world where someone owns our food, our land, our right to water, our right to shelter, our right to travel, our right to medicine.

And because someone else owns it, we have to give something up in order to obtain it.

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In modern day, that's money, previously it was trading goods for other goods.

This brings up this mistake that we make as humans in thinking that God acts and operates the same way that we act and operate.

Sometimes we think that God is as possessive and transactional as we are.

God can't possibly be this generous could God?

God needs something in return for God's love and generosity.

Right?

Right?

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But my question to us all is, Do birds pay rent?

Do non-human animals have this underlying need to prove to God that they can possibly provide something in return for God's gift of existence and salvation?

Do other animals feel this need to justify their actions and their reason for existence?

Do other animals think that some animals deserve shelter and others don't?

Or do they just exist in the creation that was given to them?

Do they use the bounty of God's earth to provide for their necessities?

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Do birds pay rent?

I don't know, im not a bird.

Maybe they do.

But I highly doubt there is a class of landlord birds out there requiring sticks and food for the opportunity to make a nest in a certain tree.

Require a background check to make sure they don't have a criminal past, didn't get into fights with other birds.

make sure their berry account is full enough to pay rent, and require a security deposit of at least a few berries, just in case they are a little too rambunctious.

It sounds ridiculous when we say that birds gatekeep space on trees to other birds, but for some reason, we are perfectly ok with doing that as humans.

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The idea of ownership, in the framework of God is a strange one. We believe that God gifted all of creation, this bounty we call earth, and yet some have claimed this free gift as their own, and sold that which is free for profit.

Tithing is one of I think the most misunderstood aspects of the christian lifestyle.

It really has less to do about giving to the church and more about a spiritual recognition that we are not the true owners of the things that we possess.

We are not giving to God what is ours, we are Giving back to God, that which God has given us.

Its a shift in mindset, when we can change the narrative, to stewards rather than owners,

When we do that, we start to see that generosity is not an option, but a requirement.

Because what is ours was never ours to begin with.

Birds don't pay rent to God, they just exist in the free gift of creation.

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Jesus talks about in our Gospel today that those who try to climb the gate by other ways other than Jesus, are thieves and bandits.

What I think he means by this, is that when we try to make ourselves into our own gods, our own saviors, we are robbing Jesus and God, from their true position of creator and ultimate owner of this creation, which includes our own souls.

The biggest lie that I think we tell ourselves as humans, is that we are better than other animals.

That we are somehow capable of being gods ourselves.

Distributors of creation.

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We are not able to create outside of that which has already been created.

We cannot create something out of nothing.

We are called to be co-creators with God.

We are made in God's image.

We are set apart from other forms of creation.

But that doesn't make us better.

No matter how hard we try or how much we try to convince ourselves, we are not God.

We are created, not the creator.

Control, does not belong to us, it belongs to God.

And when we can learn to stop trying to control everything, to allow God to be God.

To stop trying to climb the heavenly fence by ourselves, when the door to heaven has been opened for us by Jesus.

We can finally find peace.

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We are called to realize that though this life is not perfect, we may find joy and God's goodness nestled in with the imperfections.

We can find light in the darkness, guiding us to what awaits in the life after this one.

Glimpses of true surrender to the will and gift of God our creator.

The truth is, Life sucks.

But its also amazing and beautiful, and joyous.

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There are so many reasons to be sad and upset, but let us not forget that there are also many reasons to be joyous and glad. And when we can hold those two realities in tandem, give up control, and realize that we are not the owners of the the gifts we have or the trajectory of what happens to our lives, we can walk and trust that the heavenly gate has been opened for us, and that we do not need to climb over the gate, but simply walk through it.

Because birds don't pay rent, thanks be to God. Amen.