

This Thanksgiving, All-Creatures Executive Director, Tams Nicholson, who is a professed 3rd Order Franciscan and vegan of seventeen years provides us with a reflection on the wonders of an ethical vegan lifestyle and its deep roots in the scriptures.

We invite you to join her for twelve minutes as she winds through the importance of (a) God's covenant with the creatures in Genesis, (b) how we are called in Matthew to bring forth a vegan world here on earth, (c) the vision of the vegan world in Isaiah, and how that is actually a blueprint for us today. From her own perspective as a 3rd Order Franciscan, she speaks of (d) Saint Francis of Assisi's understanding of our fellow creatures and (e) challenges us to consider how we show respect and love to our Creator through our own choices. She reminds us that (f) other faiths also expect respect for the animals and explains (g) how ethical veganism is a true witness to the Gospel's call to love one another, and then closes with a prayer and call to action. If you are not vegan – please join her to learn. If you are vegan - please be sure to join to take comfort if you feel isolated and have a few moments of renewal during this day of thanks so often filled with extreme cruelty to millions of animals.

Thanksgiving Reflection Transcript & Study Guide:

A Call to and Thanksgiving for Ethical Vegan Stewardship

by Tams Nicholson, Executive Director of All-Creatures.org, 3rd Order Franciscan, and vegan of 17 years.

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Brothers and sisters and all who identify in other pronouns, peace be with you on this beautiful Thanksgiving Day. Today is a time to pause and give thanks for the boundless gifts of our Creator. Today, as we gather in gratitude, let us reflect on the profound call to live in harmony with all God's creatures—a call rooted deeply in our faith and echoed in the sacred teachings of many traditions.

A Covenant with All Creation

Let's begin with Genesis, where we hear the voice of God speaking after the flood, declaring: ["Now behold, I am establishing My covenant \(binding agreement, solemn promise\) with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that is with you—the birds, the livestock, and the wild animals of the earth along with you, of everything that comes out of the ark—every living creature of the earth."](#) (Genesis 9:9-10, AMP)

This is no small promise. God's covenant is not solely with humanity but with all creation, a sacred bond that affirms the worth and dignity of every living being. On this day of Thanksgiving, let us remember that the same God who placed the rainbow in the sky as a

sign of this covenant also calls us to live as stewards, not exploiters, of the earth and its inhabitants.

On Earth as It Is in Heaven

In the prayer Jesus taught us, we plead, "[Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.](#)" ([Matthew 6:10, AMP](#)) What would this look like if we truly lived it?

Isaiah offers us a vision of God's peaceable kingdom: "[The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat... They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain.](#)" ([Isaiah 11:6-9, AMP](#))

This vision is not just a distant hope but a blueprint for how we are called to live here and now—a life of nonviolence, compassion, and care for every being, seeing in them a reflection of the Creator. Seeing them as beings made by the Creator – beings that deserve the same dignity respect as humanity shares.

The Heart of Franciscan Compassion

Saint Francis of Assisi, our humble brother, understood this deeply. He spoke of the sun, the moon, and the animals as our siblings, bound together in one family under God. For Francis, every creature was a mirror of divine love, worthy of respect and tenderness.

How, then, can we claim to love our Creator if we cause suffering to His creatures? As ethical vegans, many among us are choosing a path of thanksgiving that reflects this divine love—a thanksgiving that does not come at the expense of another life, a feast of compassion that aligns with the peaceable kingdom.

Thanksgiving for Compassionate Lives

We give thanks today for those who have chosen this path—who bear witness to the Gospel's call to love, not just in word but in deed. Ethical vegans show us a way of being that honors the creatures as God's beloved, living testimonies to [Proverbs 12:10: "A righteous man has kind regard for the life of his animal, But even the compassion of the wicked is cruel."](#)

Compassion Across Faiths

This call to compassion is not unique to Christianity. Here are three examples of many in other faiths.

1. [In Judaism, we find the concept of tsa'ar ba'alei chayim, the prohibition against causing unnecessary suffering to animals, a principle rooted in God's mercy and justice.](#)

2. [In Hinduism, the principle of ahimsa, nonviolence, extends to all living beings, recognizing the divine spark within all creation.](#)

3. [And in Buddhism, the teachings encourage metta, loving-kindness, towards all sentient beings, understanding that their suffering is interconnected with ours.](#)

These traditions join us in a symphony of compassion, reminding us that care for creation is a universal calling, transcending borders and beliefs.

A Thanksgiving Prayer

Let us pause now in prayer, giving thanks for the beauty of creation and the opportunity to live lives that reflect God's love:

"Creator of all life – the earth – and solar system, we thank You for the world that sustains us, for the creatures that teach us about Your gentle ways, and for the courage to walk the path of compassion. Help us to be instruments of Your peace, building a world where the wolf and the lamb may truly lie down together, and where every meal is a song of gratitude and love. Amen."

A Call to Action - Go Forth in Compassion

As we leave this table of reflection and thanksgiving, let us take to heart the words of Jesus: "[Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.](#)" (Matthew 5:7, AMP) May we extend mercy not just to our human neighbors but to all God's creatures, choosing lives of simplicity, kindness, and peace.

In doing so, we fulfill the greatest commandment: "[Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... and love your neighbor as yourself.](#)" (Matthew 22:37-39) Today, let us recognize that our neighbors include the sparrow, the lamb, and every being under heaven's care.

Go forth in peace and may your thanksgiving be a witness to God's eternal covenant of love with and for all creation.

~ Tams (tams@all-creatures.org)