Opinion
EarthBeat



The writer's dog, Monte (Griffin Cunningham)



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The sun peaked over the trees. Morning light baked the pavement, and last night's rainfall rose to the sky in sheets of vapor. My dog, Monte, licked the dew from each lawn we passed as I stepped over the sidewalk's shrinking puddles.

And then I saw the worm: motionless, stranded and drying on the concrete.

"Monte, stay!" I gave the worm a gentle prod with my foot, and it wriggled in response.

I crouched and, as dexterously as I could while keeping Monte at bay, plucked the worm up and deposited it onto the soil beneath the grass.

I tend to ruminate on the "head" aspects of living sustainably. No matter how many times I run the numbers, I still can't afford an electric car. And despite my mostly vegan diet (save the occasional egg), large-scale animal agriculture is still on the rise.

Data shows that human behavior isn't changing fast enough to avoid the major tipping points of climate change. If we were rational creatures, we would have already gone above and beyond the 2015 Paris Agreement goals to protect the world as we know it.

But we haven't. Why?

In fundraising, there's a common misconception that more statistics in your newsletter equals more donations for your cause. It doesn't. Because fundamentally, humans aren't rational. So ironically, when we approach climate change primarily "from the head," we run the risk of de-motivating ourselves from acting at all.

What's the alternative, then?

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In the mornings, I practice calling out to the Lord for mercy through the Jesus prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner*. When I let it (and

I can't overstate the importance of that part), this prayer pulls my awareness from its high perch in my head down into my heart. From there, it's disarmingly easy to feel the ceaseless flow of God's mercy. The prayer doesn't cajole God into loving me. What prayer could? Instead, it forces me to reopen myself to the infinite loving-kindness of God, which I seem to reject by default.

If God is ever present, God's mercy can't be limited to the warm consolations of prayer, nor the sacraments, nor what we call miracles. On the contrary, I think a nontrivial amount of God's impartial mercy is delivered through our actions in the world.

Most large-scale climate solutions are planned with the logical mind, and rightly so. But any deed for our planet, large or small, is only actionable from the merciful heart that has been transformed by the mercy of God.

Humans aren't rational creatures. The scale of what some are now calling the "meta-crisis" — the confluence of our self-imposed existential threats, including but not limited to climate change — is too great for our minds to comprehend.

But Jesus' unending mercy on the cross is somehow more accessible. By daring to plunge from our heads into our hearts, we can both experience and be conduits for God's all-pervasive mercy here on Earth. Because to the merciful heart — meta-crisis or not — all creation is worthy of care.

This story appears in the **Small Earth Stories** feature series. View the full series.