

## The Bruised Goalie: Matt's Message for Thanksgiving 2025

Thanksgiving is here again.

For a few years now I've had mixed feelings about Thanksgiving...

It seems to me that we're thanking the Creator for our great wealth while continuing to ignore, re-arrange, and destroy His Creation.

How does that make sense?

That's like saying we love Michelangelo while ignoring, re-arranging, or destroying Michelangelo's art. If you're a big fan of Michelangelo, wouldn't you desperately want to *conserve* his precious art? If you're a big fan of God, wouldn't you want to *conserve* His precious art, ie, Creation? You can go ahead and ignore Michelangelo's art, but don't say you love the guy at the same time.

You can enjoy your capitalist, consumer, industrial, technological society that separates humanity from Creation, but...don't say you love the Creator while you're doing it. That would be dishonest.

And yet here we are.

The God of the Bible is SO connected to Creation. The whole big book starts with Creation and ends with Re-creation.

The Bible is very clear on this point. Nature is God's. It's His idea. It's the physical image of His mind. Every human being, every tree, every skunk proceeds straight from the Divine Artist's mind and hand. Every racoon that gets hit on the highway was carefully and lovingly created (according to every Christian) by God Himself. How can we keep running over these images of the Divine Mind with the images of *our* mind?

There are two ways to see God's mind directly. Looking at Christ in the Bible and looking at Creation. We know what we did to Christ. Now, what are we doing to Creation?

I'm boring you. I know. It really seems to me like environmentalism is losing steam. So, I'm going to try something different.

I'm going to try to get people to realize what industrial society is doing to nature by offering you an image. I think it's the image we need. It's a hockey image. Come with me into the world of old school, original six hockey for a while. The start of this article has been quite preachy, but the rest of it is fun. You'll learn something about Canadian culture and maybe something about Creation as well.



Terry Sawchuk got them there.

It was all Terry Sawchuk's doing.

Terry was the goalie who led the Toronto Maple Leafs past the Montreal Canadiens in the 1967 Stanley Cup Final.

Don't tell me about George Armstrong, Tim Horton, or Frank Mahovlich, or the other legendary 1967 Leafs. I simply won't listen.

It was one thing: it was the dark, disturbing determination of Terry Sawchuk that won the Leafs the Cup.

But what he did for the Leafs *before* the final series was even more important, getting them past the Chicago Blackhawks. In the final game of the first round of the playoffs, he lifted the Leafs onto his back and carried them past Bobby

Hull and the Blackhawks' high-octane offence. That game has sometimes been called the greatest game a hockey goalie has ever played. Chicago was the better team. Chicago was at home playing in front of a packed stadium of loud and loyal fans. Chicago was younger and faster and stronger. All the Leafs had was an aging, grumpy goalie. BUT in his youth, he had been the greatest hockey goalie to ever strap on the pads.

He went into Chicago stadium and broke Chicago's heart. The fans simply couldn't believe what was happening. The big shooters of the Hawks were coming at the Leafs' net in waves and Terry kept turning them aside. Even after being injured by a devastating Bobby Hull slapshot to the shoulder in the second period, Terry slowly peeled himself off the ice and played as well as a goalie has ever played, shutting the door again and again and again... At one point, Sawchuk actually (how do I even describe this??) jumped onto the net so his stomach was on the crossbar, his upper body was behind the net, and his legs were dangling in the air in front of the net. He did this to swing his stick at the Chicago player who had the puck behind the net! NO ONE HAD EVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE. He was behaving like a madman. And it was working. In fact, his abnormal behaviour was the only way forward.

You know a player is truly great when they have their own personal poet. Sawchuk actually has one. Randall Maggs is a professor at Memorial University who has written an entire book of poems about Terry Sawchuk: "Night Work – The Sawchuk Poems." Maggs's eight-page epic poem about this 1967 Chicago-Leafs game is a great moment in Canadian literature.

As the Hawks kept attacking in the 2nd and 3rd periods, Maggs the poet says:

Words like 'game' and 'players'  
Hardly fit what's happening here.

It was a moment when sports became like life. And the Blackhawks fans were "cursing both teams."

It hurt Terry a lot to perform these heroics in the net: physically and mentally. Sawchuk battled demons all his career. Depression, anxiety, anger, alcohol...he battled it all for a long time. Those were the days when goalie equipment was from the pre-slapshot era...but, the slapshot had arrived! Guys were shooting

pucks VERY hard and goalies were wearing thin equipment from an earlier time. Even after Sawchuk started wearing a mask, it was a terrifying way to make a living. He quit in the middle of one season due to a nervous breakdown. He once threw a skate at a reporter. He once climbed over the boards to attack a heckler. His wife said that Terry would often wake up in the middle of the night, sweating, and shouting the names of his defencemen. He drank to kill the anxiety. He played 971 games and got 103 shutouts and won 4 Stanley Cups. To put it simply: he HATED being scored on.

By 1967, Sawchuk was in his late thirties and there were a lot of people doubting that he could bring back his glory days again. But he did. And the Leafs won their last (ever?) Cup.

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But what I want to mention here is what happened after that game against Chicago that ended the first round. Back in the dressing room, the Leafs celebrated and rested for a few minutes then began taking their equipment off. As things quieted down, one of the players was heard saying, "Oh my God, Terry!"

The whole team and all the reporters turned and looked at Terry. He was taking off his upper body equipment. Everyone stared in stunned silence: his arms and chest and stomach were *completely* black and purple from the bruising. It was a horrible sight. Then there was the shoulder that Hull's heavy slapshot had hit. The whole thing was one big bruise. They couldn't even look at that. The Leafs' players were shocked at how much punishment Sawchuk had endured to get them that win. Even those battle-hardened, scarred old hockey players were amazed and disturbed at the sight.

As Randall Maggs describes it:

"These were guys who'd paid their dues  
Who'd seen it all. But this was a moment that got their attention,  
Seeing what they'd asked of him that night."

The intensity of the goalie's suffering was invisible and unknown until that powerful moment.

That's the image I'd like you to remember.

The 1967 Leafs are modern industrial humanity.

Sawchuk is the earth.

Bruised and exhausted and taken for granted, the earth gives and gives and gives absolutely everything, standing in there and taking all the punishment that gets thrown its way. Just like Sawchuk, the earth can always be relied on, but maybe its career is almost over.

More and more people are asking tough questions about our industrial society.

A few years ago, I learned a lot about the Industrial Age by listening to a course of lectures by Peter Stearns, called *A Brief History of the World*. It was great! He actually covered *all world history* in one course! It was amazing hearing about the sweep of history and in particular I was shocked at how the Industrial Age has played out.

Usually, different historical ages are treated in separate books or courses. You rarely read about how they all fit together. But in these lectures, Stearns was showing how the different time periods related to each other. What I found very interesting was how our own age – the Industrial Age – was related to previous non-Industrial times.

The Industrial Age has been going on for quite some time now, since the late 1700s. But in terms of historical or geological timeframes, it's been quite short. In the space of a couple of centuries, we have used coal, oil, hydro and nuclear energy to change human life – and the face of our planet – completely. Think about that. The earth was the way it was for countless centuries until just recently. Human life was mostly natural, earth-centered; now it's technological. That's a big change. In the time of two or three human life spans, human life on planet earth has become entirely different!

As Peter Stearns pointed out, from the days of earliest humanity up until 1800, there really wasn't that much change. Whether they were farmers or hunter/gatherers, humanity lived in and with nature. There were some big cities, but you can't hunt or farm in the city. The huge majority of people lived in rural areas, which means they were a part of nature. For thousands and thousands of years, that's how it was, and...now? In two centuries, we have created a whole different planet. For some groups of people, technology has produced unimaginable wealth, while, for most people, life has stayed the same or got worse during the Industrial Age.

The technological/industrial human has become almost completely separated from nature. And being separated from nature, we haven't noticed that we have been wrecking it.

Animal species have been disappearing as their habitats are being destroyed. Entire forests (which create the air we breathe) are vanishing. The Industrial Age has been driven by fossil fuels which produce carbon dioxide. NASA's website says: *Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere warms the planet, causing climate change. Human activities have raised the atmosphere's carbon dioxide content by 50% in less than 200 years.* (There's that 200 year figure again!) So we're actually changing the earth's atmosphere. For the sake of motorized vehicles, highways have carved up the landscape; countless animals (and many people) are killed on them every day. Even when you look at the stars at night way back in the woods or fields, you end up getting distracted by satellites. The human now spends a huge percentage of their day looking into bright electronic screens. Yes the planet has become completely different in the last 200 years and the planet is suffering.

My question is: will we ever have a moment like those 1967 Toronto Maple Leafs? Those Leafs had a moment of real thanks-giving. Will we ever have a moment when the noise of celebration dies down and we see – not the suffering of the goalie – but the suffering of the earth? Imagine we are enjoying our wealth and our success, when suddenly we see – not a goalie covered in bruises – but a planet covered in bruises. Just like Terry Sawchuk did for those Leafs, the earth has carried us this far.

The world-famous North American capitalist-consumer lifestyle was built on an earth that simply can't take it much longer.

You know all these things, I think. People are talking about them a lot. But nothing's really changing. No new real wisdom is emerging.

One thing that might help is to remember how close God is to His Creation. That's not just a tree over there. That's not just the sun up there. That's not just a hill. That's not just a river. Those are God's ideas. They give us glimpses of His mind. Nature is not just a soup of random molecules banging around for us to re-arrange at our pleasure. Nature is the image of Divinity. Every human is an image of God. Nature is an image of God's Wisdom.

Remembering this closeness between God and Nature, maybe that would help us want to conserve more species, since those species are God's.

When we look at  
Michelangelo's  
sculpture of David,  
we are seeing the  
artist's mind.



When we look  
at Creation,  
we are seeing  
the Divine mind.

I've heard Christians say they worry they'll become pantheists if they like Creation too much. But honestly, I don't think there's much danger of that. If we can just stop disrespecting and destroying Creation, we'll be doing really well. By deciding not to litter, you're not becoming a pantheist. We're not really in danger of worshiping the earth. We're more in danger of making the earth unliveable.

What if there could be a moment...? A moment of insight? A moment of sight? A moment when the veil fell away from our eyes? A moment when we could see the pain? A moment when the celebration had to stop? A moment when we suddenly understood how much we owe.

I'm sorry that I'm comparing something unimportant (a hockey game) to something important (the earth), but...what if there could be a quiet moment during our Thanksgiving celebrations when we suddenly pause and notice how much we owe to the Goalie?