



Leura Uniting Church  
19 September 2021

*Sky Sunday ( 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in the Season of Creation)*  
Rev Myung Hwa Park

**Welcome**

*We worship this Sunday with the skies. We celebrate with the clouds, the winds, the dusk and the dawn. We listen to the sounds of sky proclaiming God's presence. We stand in awe before the vast reaches of space above us and thank God for the fragile piece of stardust we call Earth.*



**Acknowledgment of country**

**Dhinawan 'Emu' in the sky with Ben Flick**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzFYFutiwoA>

**Call to Worship**

Leader In the name of the Creator, who colours the sky,  
the name of Christ, who died under dark skies,  
and the name of the Spirit, the wind in the sky. Amen.

People **Holy! Holy! Holy!**  
**Sky is filled with God's presence.**

L Christ, we come to into your presence today,  
to worship in this sanctuary called Earth,

P **Holy! Holy! Holy!**  
**Earth is filled with your presence.**

**Hymn 'Song of Sky'** ( In the tune of Abbots Leigh, TiS 446 )

1. Lord of suns and star exploding  
Galaxies and swirling skies,  
Where you chose to show your glory  
Took the heavens by surprise.  
Lord of solar winds and wisdom,  
Super stars that blow our mind,  
Choosing such a fragile planet  
Hardly seems a grand design.
2. On this piece of stardust swirling,  
On this spinning spot in space,  
Life itself was born like music,  
When you showed your hidden face.  
What an honour to be chosen,  
Silent planet blue and green,  
Filled with glory, grace and gardens,  
Where the breath of God is seen.
3. What is even more amazing  
We have poisoned Earth like fools.  
Help us change our way of living,  
Love the Earth and love her rules.  
Help us stem the tide of traders  
Leaving Earth an empty store;  
Join us now Creator Spirit,  
Come renew your Earth once more.

Words: © Norman Habel 1999

***Prayer of Confession***

**Confession**

Leader : For the beauty of the Earth  
desecrated by pollution, extinguished by forest fires, choked by plastic waste  
**People : Christ, our God, forgive us for systemic greed.**

L: For the urgency of this hour  
ignored by apathy or procrastination  
wasted by ineffective decisions and denied by economic interests

**P: Christ, our God and Saviour,  
forgive us for selfish short-term behaviour.**

L: For the joy of human love  
fractured by forced migration, crushed by bereavement  
lost to typhoons, floods and starvation.

**P: Christ, our God, bringer of justice, forgive us for this climate crisis.**  
(Source: Wendy Lloyd, Church of Scotland)

***Absolution***

L Christ, who was deeply grieved in Gethsemane,  
shares your tears and knows your sorrow.

**P Christ, teach us compassion  
for the life that suffers around us.**

L. God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins  
against them. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:

**P Shalom! Shalom!**

## Scripture reading

### James 3: 13- 18

<sup>13</sup> Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. <sup>15</sup> Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. <sup>16</sup> For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

<sup>17</sup> But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. <sup>18</sup> Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

### Mark 9: 30-37( New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised)

<sup>30</sup> They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; <sup>31</sup> for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, ‘The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.’ <sup>32</sup> But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

<sup>33</sup> Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, ‘What were you arguing about on the way?’ <sup>34</sup> But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. <sup>35</sup> He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, ‘Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.’ <sup>36</sup> Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, <sup>37</sup> ‘Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.’

### Psalm 19 ( Sons of Korah. Psalm 19)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJNnPbKu6tw>

( start from 0. 13 sec)

## Reflection

Today we celebrate Sky Sunday, as we continue to rejoice in God’s creation in the season of creation.

I struggled a bit more this Sunday than the previous Sunday, to connect the readings set in our lectionary to the theme of Sky Sunday. So I have added Psalm 19, sung by Sons of Korah, to give us a biblical reference for our reflections on Sky Sunday.

The Psalmist proclaims that ‘The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the Sky proclaims his handiwork’.

Indeed, the Psalmist saw the Sky as the means of communication between one day and the next, visualizing light communicating with light and darkness with darkness.

The Psalmist goes a step further and declares that the Sky communicates with the Creator just as the trees sing, fields rejoice, and the rest of creation praises God.

In Korean the word 'sky' is the same word as for heaven, "Ha Nul", and it is also closely associated with the deity who resides in heaven so-called "Ha Nu (I here is silent) Nim". Christians call God Ha Nu Nim too.

Whether you are believers of institutional religion or not, Ha Nu Nim is in the Korean psyche as the one who is watching over you, looking after you and even punishing you.

In the Old Testament 'heavens' can be translated as 'sky' or 'skies'. In other words, texts that we often associate with heaven as the abode of God, refer to that part of creation we call Sky.

But let us be clear that we are not talking here about Sky as the residence for the people who had gone before us, in the same way as the earth is their address while they were here.

As technology advances, we learn more about Sky and understand that the Sky is more than the roof of the earth, in which the sun, moon and stars are attached.

Also we don't apply the Creation story in Genesis as a textbook for a scientific explanation for how the universe began. However, it still gives us a critical insight into the inseparable relationship between waters and Sky as we understand life in relation to the one who is the giver of life.

In Genesis, we read 'On Day Two of creation God divides the primal waters and constructs a 'dome' to separate the waters above from those below. God called the dome Sky.

And on Day Four, God places lights in this sky/dome—sun, moon and stars for signs and season and days and years". (Gen. 1.14-18)

Whether people are believers or not, isn't it a common human experience for our hearts to leap when we see a clear blue sky, or a star filled sky on a dark night?

William Wordsworth, in his poem, expressed this instinctive reaction, "My heart leaps up when I behold a rainbow in the Sky; so was it when my life began!"

Sky proclaims the glory of creation and brings good news to the gazer!

In the past, people used to look at the Sky and tell about the weather, the time and even to read signs which predicted a risky or a good harvest. My father, who was a farmer, looking at the Sky, expected whether he would get a good harvest or not, while my mother looked at the moon and would say "The anniversary of your grandfather is near".

Sadly, modern-day life has moved away from Sky as a significant part of creation seeing it as a mere background. Especially for the people who live in the cities with high rising buildings, even seeing the Sky through the building forest can be difficult. To make things worse, the Sky became an invisible dumping place with carbon emissions and all kinds of pollution created by human greed and waste. And when the Sky of this planet, the dome, is filled with carbon emissions, the earth is inevitably faced with global warming. It is not rocket science to see what is happening.



(from google image Greta Thunberg, newyorker.com )

Greta Thunberg, a young Swedish girl, in 2018, at the age of 15, started a solo campaign, calling the Swedish Parliament to take more decisive action on climate change. Her

courageous and prophetic action has now become a world-wide school climate strike movement. Surely this young woman sees the interconnectedness of the life whilst the politicians and many adults did not give much thoughts and response to the changes.

The Korean poet Seo Jung Joo saw the Sky as a moral mirror.

죽는 날까지 하늘을 우러러 한 점 부끄럼이 없기를,  
앞새에 이는 바람에도 나는 괴로워했다.

별을 노래하는 마음으로 모든 죽어가는 것을 사랑해야지

*Let me have no shame toward heaven until the day I die,*

*I shall love all things that are dying as I sang for the stars.*

Today I like to invite you to share in a breakout room two questions to reflect on your experience on Sky

### **Breakout room ( for 8 minutes )**

#### **Question 1.**

*Share examples of when you had a sense of the good news from Sky that the Psalmist proclaims here. What do you think are the main messages of that good news?*

#### **Question 2.**

*Contrast the good news from Sky celebrated in this Psalm with the sympathy for Sky that arises when we pollute our atmosphere.*

*What should be our response to the Sky?*

...Sharing ....

In today's gospel Jesus speaks about his fate, arrest, trial, crucifixion and resurrection. But the disciples argued with one another about who was the greatest.

We tend to focus on qualities which allow us to classify things according to power, status, wealth, number or influence. For nations, cities, educational institutions, hospitals and even churches, we ascribe them with greatness when they have power and influence.

But here Jesus said, *'Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'*

**Jesus gives a radical interpretation of the quality of greatness** which is determined by weakness and vulnerability. Serving others, welcoming the ones who are otherwise ignored, despised or forgotten, like a child would have been among Jesus' contemporaries, is indeed the most desired ones in God's eyes.

And Jesus calls his disciples to embrace the servanthood that he showed, and promised the most excellent assurance of the value that God places on those who serve out of love.

May we strive for the wisdom and love that comes from God in heaven.

Let the Sky reminds us of the wisdom of God from above.

(Break out group sharing during the reflection for 7 minutes)

**TiS 668 Touch the earth lightly, ( vs 1, 3 and 4 )**

1. Touch the earth lightly, use the earth gently,  
nourish the life of the world in our care:  
gift of great wonder, ours to surrender,  
trust for the children tomorrow will bear
2. Let there be greening, birth from the burning,  
water that blesses and air that is sweet,  
healthy in God's garden, hope in God's children,  
regeneration that peace will complete.
3. God of all living, God of all loving,  
God of the seedling, the snow and the sun,  
teach us, deflect us, Christ re-connect us,  
using us gently and making us one.

CLI Song # 1211141

Colin Gibson | Shirley Erena Murray

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***Offering Prayer***

- L God, our Creator, through your love you have given us these gifts to share. Accept our offerings as an expression of our deep thanks and our concern for those in need, including our fellow creatures on planet Earth.
- P. **With all creation, we bless our Creator.**

***Prayers of the People***

Loving God, you chose to come among us in weakness and in humility,  
Servant to those who are rejected and despised: hear our prayers for your world and your church.

God of the lowest and the least, we pray for the peoples of the world:

for all who suffer the effects of starvation, war or disease;

for all who are dispossessed, exploited or violated.

We give thanks for all who serve with relief and volunteer agencies, for all who work to bring justice and peace to your broken world. We remember Clair in the Red Cross.

In those who serve us and in those whom we serve.

Jesus, friend and servant of all, in your mercy,

***hear our prayer***

God of the saint and sinner, we pray your worldwide church:

for Sunday school teachers, youth workers, SRE teachers and school chaplains;  
for all welfare agencies of the church,  
for Open Table, Junction 142, Exodus Foundation, Wesley Mission, Parramatta  
Mission, Bidwill UC and Wayside Chapel.

We give thanks for deacons and for all whose ministry of love and service brings your gospel to a broken world.

In those who serve us and in those whom we serve.

Jesus, friend and servant of all, in your mercy,

***hear our prayer***

God of creation, we pray for your world:

for our polluted skies, water and land;  
for all the suffering fauna and flora in your world.

We give you thanks for those who serve to reduce pollution and damage to our vulnerable environment, and who give us a greater appreciation for your created world.

In those who serve us and in those whom we serve, Jesus, let us see your face.

Jesus, friend and servant of all, in your mercy,

***hear our prayer***

God of the poor and the outcast, we pray for the people of this community:

for all who are homeless, neglected or abused;  
for those trapped in lives of poverty, misery or violence.

We give you thanks for all whose daily work nurtures children or sustains the elderly and for all who bring dignity and hope to your people.

In those who serve us and in those we serve, Jesus, let us see your face.

Jesus, friend and servant of all, in your mercy,

***hear our prayer***

God of the sick and the sorrowing, we pray for all in trouble or distress:

for those whose hearts are sad or whose minds are confused;  
for those in fear of the future, for the sick and those close to death.

We give you thanks for medical and social workers,

For those who sit with the sick and for all who bring comfort and consolation to your people.

In those who serve us and in those we serve, Jesus, let us see your face.

Jesus, friend and servant of all, in your mercy,

***hear our prayer***

God of the living and the dead, we remember those who have died in your love.

We give you thanks and praise for your faithful servants of every age, those of this Congregation who have given their lives to your service and for all who have passed on the faith to the next generation.

Help us to follow the steps of your saints, that we too may serve you faithfully all our days, and, at our life's end, raise us up with all the saints to live with you in glory.

In those who serve us and in those we serve, Jesus, let us see your face.

Jesus, friend and servant of all, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer**

God of love, we remember those in our community, family and friends that are known to us.....

We remember Ron & June, Chrysanthe, Anne, Gabrielle, Anne and Bob, Iris, Betty, Rebecca, Kate, Amanda and Laurel.

In those who serve us and in those we serve, Jesus, let us see your face.

Jesus, friend and servant of all, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer**

**The Lord's Prayer**

***Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those  
who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power  
and the glory are yours now and forever.  
Amen.***

TiS 601 O Master, let me walk with thee ( vss 1 & 4 )

**O Master, let me walk with thee  
in lowly paths of service free;  
thy secret tell' help me to bear  
the strain of toil, the fret of care.**

**In hope that sends a shining ray  
far down the future's broadening way,  
in peace that only thou canst give,  
with thee, O Master, let me live.**

CCLI Song # 1758776

Dale Wood | H. Percy Smith | Washington Gladden

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**Blessing**

**L** May the Spirit of God, who is above all and in all and through all,  
fill you with the knowledge of God's presence in sky and Earth  
and the pulsing of Christ within you.

Go in peace!  
Serving Christ and loving Earth!

**P** **We go in peace,  
serving Christ and loving Earth.**