



Leura Uniting Church
5 September 2021
Rev Myung Hwa Park

1st Sunday of Season of Creation, Planet Earth Sunday

Acknowledgement of country

We acknowledge the sovereign First Peoples of these lands and waters where we meet, the Gundungurra and Darug Peoples.

We honour their deep connection with the planet earth through sacred stories and dreamings. Together, may we walk into the future, recognising the sacred footsteps that continue to lead us to the promise of Heaven.

Welcome & Introduction

We worship this Sunday with planet Earth. We rejoice with Earth. We sing with Earth, our planet home spinning through space. We celebrate Earth as a sacred place, a sanctuary filled with God's presence.

Call to worship

Leader : In the name of God, who creates planets, the name of Jesus Christ, born on planet Earth, and the name of the Spirit who envelopes our planet. Amen.

P : Holy! Holy! Holy! Earth 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.

L : Let us worship God !

TiS 156 Morning has broken

1. Morning has broken like the first morning;
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird.
Praise for the singing,
Praise for the morning
Praise for them, springing fresh from the word.
2. Sweet the rain's new fall sunlit from heaven,
Like the first dewfall on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,
Sprung from completeness where his feet pass.
3. Mine is the sunlight; mine is the morning
Born of the one light Eden saw play.
Praise with elation, praise every morning,
God's recreation of the new day.

Eleanor Farjeon
1881-1965

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Prayer of Confession

L : Let us confess that we have become alienated from Earth and viewed this planet as disposable, a source of endless resources, a mere stopping place en route to heaven.

Spirit of Creation Words by Craig Mitchell , Music by Leigh Newton
<https://vimeo.com/showcase/8190244/video/517722828>

Word of assurance

L: Christ hears your confession and forgives your sins against Earth.

P : *Christ, teach us to love Earth as our home and the planet as a precious sanctuary.*

L: I speak for Christ: I invite you to celebrate Earth as your home and to revere this planet as God's sanctuary.

P: *Shalom! Shalom! Earth is our home!*

Scripture reading

Psalms 125

Mark 7: 24- 37

Reflection “ Open up”

Happy Spring day!

I often get mixed up with the seasons in relation to the calendar months as I came from the Northern Hemisphere. I was a spring baby, born in April when yellow Forsythia and pink Azalea covered the mountains in Korea. Although the calendar month still confuses me for identifying the season, I am not mistaken in saying "Happy Spring to you" today as I have seen yellow daffodils, white apple blossom and purple Magnolia decorating our streets and gardens.



In 2000, the Lutheran Church in South Australia celebrated Creation. And the following year, the Synod of Victoria of the Uniting Church commissioned Norman Habel, the Lutheran church theologian, to develop the Season of Creation. And for the last 20 years, this "very Australian product" became a much-celebrated season acknowledged widely by many churches worldwide.

Pope Francis remarked on the Season of Creation as the season for 'letting our prayer be inspired anew by closeness to nature... to reflect on our lifestyles ... for undertaking prophetic actions,... directing the planet towards life, not death.'

On this, the first Sunday in the Season of Creation, we celebrate Planet Earth. And I hope that this Sunday could be an opportunity for us to take time to reflect on our relationship with the earth, this beautiful globe called Planet Earth.



The Hebrew scriptures include many references to nature: mountains, rivers, trees, birds, flowers, even wildflowers.

And today's psalm isn't an exception.

Psalm 125 that we read this morning is part of the songs classified as the Songs of Ascent, a song for the pilgrims going up to the Holy City, to the temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the festivals of Passover, Weeks and Tabernacles.

We note the image of mountain in Psalm 125 as a significant reference to the faithful trust that Jews put in God.

"Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever." In the Hebrew scripture, mountains are often used to symbolise security: solid and unshakable like the ultimate shelter that the Lord is for the oppressed and the refugees in times of trouble.

Furthermore, the Psalmist reminds us of God's steadfast and secure relationship with his people in this vivid image of the mountains surrounding Jerusalem. 'As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people both now and forever.'

Since the lockdown began, I have been going out for a bushwalk more regularly, and in the mountains I've experienced a deep sense of immersion with nature; trees, birds, rocks and water. No matter how the pandemic limits my movement, changes my working pattern, and lifestyle as well as affecting the community and the world around us, I feel a strong sense of the stability of God especially when I am in the mountains and looking at the silhouette of the magnificent mountains.

Today's gospel story tells of a challenging situation that Jesus encountered.

Jesus was in the city of Tyre, outside his territory. He went into a house and have a time with no interruption. But a gentile woman from the region of Phoenicia in Syria heard about Jesus came and begged him to help her daughter possessed by an impure spirit.

Here, Jesus responded to her in a matter of principle way.

"Let us first feed the children. It isn't right to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."

We don't have to go to deeply into the story to figure out why Jesus changed his stand.

Because the woman's persistence, even being prepared to make herself level with the dog, for the sake of her daughter made Jesus declare, "*Because of that answer, go back home, where you will find that the demon has gone out of your daughter.*"

Interesting enough, in the story which follows this in the gospel, Jesus does not even question but cured another Gentile man, deaf and mute, who was brought to him by the village people.

The pandemic has affected our lives and many aspects of our world, the economy, education, politics and even religion.

For a critical time like this, we need to redefine and develop new perspectives to stabilise and strengthen our relationship with one another and with God.



On this Planet Earth Sunday we give thanks to God, the creator of our Planet Earth, a home for every living creatures. We hear the good news from the Psalmist who reminds us the steadfast love of God, which surrounds us like the mountains surround Jerusalem.

And in our new routine, with all its challenges, we are also encouraged to break barriers and overcome the differences in values, practices and be open to new challenges that God holds for us.



Amen.

TiS 690 Beauty for brokenness (Verses 1, 3, 4)

1. Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair,
Lord, in the suffering,
This is our prayer,
Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace,
Sunrise to sunset
Your kingdom increase.

*God of the poor,
Friend of the weak,
Give us compassion we pray;
Melt our cold hearts,
Let tears fall like rain.
Come change our love from a spark to
flame*

*Friend of the weak,
Give us compassion we pray;
Melt our cold hearts,
Let tears fall like rain.
Come change our love from a spark to
flame*

3. refuge from cruel wars, havens from fear,
cities for sanctuary, freedoms to share,
Peace to the killing-fields.
Scorched earth to green
Christ for the bitterness,
His cross for the pain.

God of the poor,

4. Rest for the ravaged earth,
Oceans and streams,
Plundered and poisoned,
Our future, our dreams.
Lord, end our madness, carelessness, greed;
Make us content with
The things that we need.

*God of the poor,
Friend of the weak,
Give us compassion we pray;
Melt our cold hearts,
Let tears fall like rain.
Come change our love from a spark to
flame*

CCLI Song # 1236690

Graham Kendrick

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Prayer for offering

Announcements

Prayer for others

TiS 474 Here in this place (verses 1, 3) before Communion

**1. Here in this place new light is streaming,
now is the darkness vanished away,
see in this space, our fears and our dreamings,
brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken; gather us in, the blind and the lame;
call to us and we shall awaken, we shall arise at the sound of our name.**

**2. Here we will take of the wine and the water,
here we will take the bread of new birth,
here you shall call your sons and your daughters
call us a new to be salt of the earth.
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken; gather us in, the blind and the lame;
call to us and we shall awaken, we shall arise at the sound of our name.**

Marty Haugen 1950-

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Holy communion

L: In obedience to the Lord Jesus, our congregation will share today in Holy Communion, as Christians have done throughout the ages. Even today in these strange days when we cannot gather as we normally do, the mystery of Christ's love, found in this bread and this wine, stretch out their bonds of hope and strengthen us in faith.

So let us lift our hearts to the Lord, offer our prayer of thanksgiving

L The Creator be with you and all creation.

P *And also with you.*

L Open your hearts.

P *We open them to our Creator.*

L Let us give thanks to the Maker of heaven and earth.

P *It is right to join creation in thanking God.*

L It is right to give you thanks, loving Creator.

Your word is the impulse for all things to be,
for space, stars and stardust to appear,
for Earth to emerge from the deep,
for life to be born of Earth and
for humans to be born of Earth and the Spirit.
Your Spirit is the life impulse in all things,
renewing the barren and healing the wounded,
groaning in anticipation of a new creation,
stirring a new life born of water and the Spirit.
You chose to be born a human being,
to become a part of Earth,
to suffer, die and rise from death
to redeem humankind, restore creation,
and affirm all born of Earth and the Spirit.

Your presence is the living impulse in all things,
the Christ deep among us,
filling Earth—land, sea and air—
filling every element and place,
filling the grain and the grape
we share with you this day.
Therefore with angels and archangels,
ancient voices in the forest,
high voices from the sky,
deep voices from the sea
and the whole company of creation,
we proclaim your presence among us.

P *Holy, holy, holy, God of all life,
Earth and sea and sky
are full of your presence
and glorify your name. Amen.*

L: Living God, we thank you that you feed us in these holy mysteries with the spiritual body and blood of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. We thank you for this assurance of your goodness and love, and that we are living members of his body and heirs of his eternal kingdom.
May the Holy Spirit be upon us now, that as we receive this bread and wine we may know the presence and power of Christ our Lord. Amen.

So let us pray together the Lord's Prayer (you might like to lift your hands in 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.***

Invitation

L: Come, for all things are now ready.
Come to the table with all your kin
and share with all in need:
the gift of healing for those in pain,
the gift of forgiveness for those in sin,
the gift of assurance for those in doubt,
and the gift of hope for those in tears.

L: Christ is the bread of resurrection
P: (Holding the bread say) *New life for all*

L: Christ is the cup of salvation
P: (Holding the cup say) *Wounded for our healing*

May we who share these gifts share Christ with one another and all our kin.

(When you are ready, eat and drink with thanksgiving in your hearts)

Prayer after communion

L We thank you Lord, for the meal we have celebrated with you, and we pray that through your body and blood we may be healed and become agents of healing for Earth.

We are no longer alone

P We belong to God and we belong to one another

L Will you care for creation?

***P We will care for creation!
We will celebrate life!***

Hymn TiS 658 I the Lord of sea and sky

1. I the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin my hand will save.
I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.
*Here I am, Lord; is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night;
I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.*

2. I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people pain;
I have wept for love of then, They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to then. Whom shall I send?
*Here I am, Lord; is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night;
I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.*

3. I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame;
I will set a feast for then. My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide till their hearts are satisfied.
I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send?
*Here I am, Lord; is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night;
I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.*

Daniel L. Schutte 1947-

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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 Earth
and the impulse of Christ within you.

Go in peace,
serving Christ and loving Earth!

**P : We go in peace,
serving Christ
and tending Earth!**