

Sacred Earth: Sacred Work

Week 1 – September 12

Creation as Blessing

~Gathering~

Acknowledgement Video

Welcome and Announcements

Good morning everyone and welcome to the worship of God with us today. No matter who you are... where you are... or when you are sharing in this time of worship...we are blessed to have you with us.

Today we begin a new season in our church year. This is the season of creation... a celebration of the awesomeness of creation and a time to be intentional about remembering and reflecting on our role within it all. Our theme for the next few weeks is “Sacred Earth: Sacred Work”. Together we will explore six essential ideas found in Creation Spirituality.. a way of living within the community of earth that deepens our reverence for life, participates in the creativity of the cosmos, and develops our passion for justice and human transformation.

Debra and I are looking forward to this journey with you.

And I have a few announcements to share with you today...

As I mentioned last week, we will begin livestreaming our worship services on Sunday, Sept 26th at 10am. We are very excited... and a little nervous... to begin worshipping in real time once again with all of you. And we would love more than anything to swing our doors wide open and welcome every to be here in person... but we are going to need to wait on that for a little bit yet. It is our plan at the moment, however, to extend an invitation to the residents of McClure Place to join us in person. McClure Place residents are already living together in the building and sharing in a few activities. We feel quite comfortable inviting them to be part of this learning time as we figure out the livestreaming equipment.

And for the rest of you... you will continue to receive an email on Sunday morning with the link to watch worship. Just click that link anytime after 9:30am and before 10am to go to YouTube where you will watch the live broadcast. When you arrive there will be a couple of hosts in the chat room waiting to welcome you. So if you'd like to come early and visit with each other using the chat feature... please do. If you just would like to join us for the worship time, be there by 10am (although I know a few of you will come at 10:05 – just like when we were all in person together). I should just note that in the chat you will not actually be speaking to each other... it's a type and chat thing. Not perfect.. but a way to connect nonetheless. The service

will also be recorded and posted later on YouTube and Facebook so those of you unable to participate live will still be able to share in worship at another time. Livestreaming will continue even after we are able to all worship in person for those who are unable or not ready to be there.

Last week I put out a plea for an iPad and 2 hours later we received a donation of a new iPad from one of our families. This community never ceases to amaze me with your generosity and kindness. We are blessed and when we share those blessings among and around us – we are doubly blessed. So thank you.

I wanted to also give our families with children and youth a heads up... youth group will begin our weekly gatherings in person or on Zoom also on Sept 26th at 11am. I'm hoping we can be in person but we will just wait and see what happens Covid-wise over the next couple of weeks. The youth will be divided into two groups again this year – grades 6-8 led by Mark Anderson and grades 9-12 led by me. This will help to keep the groups small enough that we can easily space ourselves out. So stay tuned for more information about that.

And children... 3 years to grade 5 or 6... we will be waiting to gather in person until the congregation gathers in person and we don't know at this point when that will be. Eden will once again be providing leadership for our awesome kids and we will be checking with families again about interest in a Zoom gathering on Sunday mornings... likely beginning Sept 26 as well.

And I have one announcement and a couple of reminders...

Today... anytime between 11 and noon... you are invited to bring your furry household family member to the church parking lot for a blessing. This Sunday is traditionally our Pet Blessing Sunday so we wanted to do something to honour that. So stop by with your pet... or pets... and receive a blessing from either Debra or myself.

A reminder that the outreach committee would like you to save all your cans and bottles in support of Cosmo Industries and bring them on over to the church parking lot on Friday, September 24th between 10am and 2pm.

Also a reminder to let me know if you are interested in joining our email book club... it's a great group... great email based discussions on the books we are reading. And you can join anytime... just let me know.

Our weekly online Bible Study will also be starting up again this Wednesday from 1-2pm. These discussions are open to everyone throughout Saskatchewan and are led by various church leaders from across the province. You can check out your email, our website and facebook page for the Zoom link to connect. I hope you will join. This study is a really great opportunity to meet and chat with others who are curious about the Bible and interested in an open-minded conversation. We meet as a whole group to hear the bible selection for the day and then break off into small groups of 3 or 4 to chat about it. Give it a go... I think you'll really enjoy it.

and I believe that is all I have for today so let's move now into our time of worship.

Intro to Theme

In this first week of our series on creation spirituality, we focus on the idea of "original blessing." The universe, and all life within it, is fundamentally a blessing, fundamentally good, and created to flourish—including us. This doesn't prevent hardship and difficulties, but it does strengthen us as we go through tough times. It allows us to deepen in faith and spirituality without fear. Life in all its joys and struggles is a blessing—which means, it is something worth sharing. How might moving through our days with an eye for recognizing goodness and blessing transform our experience of life?

Candle Lighting

We light this candle remembering that our God is a creative God, a God who loves us and who declared us to be good. Who promises to be our strength and our guide.

Call to Worship: "Come all You People" MV 2

Opening Prayer

Creating God, You who spun the galaxies and breathed into us the breath of life, open us to an awareness of the life coursing through us that is connected to all creation so that we might become more attuned to you, feeling more vitality in our lives, and more loving towards all. We praise you as the One in whom we have life and being. And all God's people say, Amen.

Music: It's a Song of Praise to the Maker – The Coulthard Family

~Engaging~

Scripture: *The Story of Creation from The Spark Story Bible*

On the first day of creation, the wind of God blew. WHISH! WOOSH! SWOOSH! God said, "Let there be light!" CRACKLE! BOOM! BANG! There was light. God saw that the light was good. Then, SPLLLLLLLITT! God divided the light and the darkness into day and night. On the second day, God said, "Let there be a sky!" PILLOW! BILLOW! PUFF! There was a sky. God saw that the sky was good.

On the third day, God said, "Let there be water and dry land!" DRIP! DROP! KERPLUNK! There was water. CRACKLE! CRUNCH! SNAP! There was dry land. God saw that the water and land were good. The God said, "Let there be plants and trees!" RUMBLE! RUSTLE! POP! There were plants and trees. God saw that the plants and trees were good.

On the fourth day, God said, "Let there be a sun and a moon and stars!" GLIMMER! SHIMMER! SHINE! There was a sun and a moon and thousands of stars. God saw that the sun and the moon and stars were good.

On the fifth day, God said, "Let there be sea animals that swim and birds that fly!" WIGGLE! SPLISH! SPLASH! There were sea animals. FLUTTER! PUTTER! TWEET! There were birds. God saw that the sea animals and birds were good.

On the sixth day, God said, "Let there be animals of every kind on the earth!" GROWL! PROWL! SNORT! There were animals with fur. SKITTER! SKATTER! CREEP! There were bugs. SLITHER! SLINK! HOP! There were reptiles.

God saw that the animals and bugs and reptiles were good. Then God said, "Let there be people on the earth!" BLINK! WINK! HICCUP! There were people on the earth. God saw that the people were very good. On the seventh day, God said, "It is time to rest!" WHEW! PSHEW! AHHHH! God and all of creation rested.

Reflection

I want to begin today with a story.

3 years ago I was about to begin my 500 mile walking pilgrimage through Spain. I had been planning and planning and now the time had come to move out of planning and into doing. Jordan and I had spent some time together in the Taize community in France and she now was heading home and I was heading off... on my own.

Here's photo I took just after I left Jordan at the airport in Paris. (*show photo*) I wasn't really pretending. That expression pretty much matches how I was feeling.

Jordan is my navigator... she is also one of my primary sources of strength and courage (God is the primary source and she is the – just behind God – secondary source) I had to now make my way through Paris, on my own, to the train station where I would catch a train to take me to the start of my pilgrimage..

I remember feeling excited and nervous and proud and terrified... and very very small in amongst the masses of people in France.

Jump ahead 2 days and here's another photo. (*photo of mountain top*) This one was taken at a moment of deep and profound awe. It was another moment of feeling small... but not small as in insignificant... small as in awestruck as I looked out to the vastness of this mountain range. I remember standing there – calf muscles aching, quads on fire – and feeling totally and completely blessed. It felt, in some ways, like this was the first time I seeing creation. I felt like what I think a child feels the first time they see a butterfly... or a rainbow. It was beautiful... it was mysterious... it was sacred. A sacred moment of reawakening.

And at the same time that I was feeling this overwhelming sense of being blessed by what I was seeing, I was also really aware of my own blessedness. God had created this... God had created me... and all of this and all of me were intrinsically connected. And that connection extended beyond me and my own little world... it reached out to all of the other pilgrims – none of whom I knew but most of whom I felt connected to on this pilgrimage.

I remember thinking with awe: "I am part of this... not just observing it all... but actually a part of it"

We do not need to travel to Spain to encounter and be in God's blessings – these blessings of creation. Those blessings are right here – in Saskatoon – there are wherever you are. In your yard, on your deck, on the golf course, at the lake, right there in front of your computer or tv screen.

We know when we are experiencing a blessing... maybe our breath catches or our heart races a bit... or there's a settling feeling in our stomach... or our shoulders relax or we find ourselves smiling. I felt it this summer every time I hopped on my paddle board.

I experienced many blessings this summer floating around on a body of water.

I wonder if the key to feeling that blessed feeling is to stop thinking... to let go of ideas, and should haves and what ifs... and to simply experience what is right there... what is right here - in front of us... experiencing what is within us....

it truly doesn't get any better than that.

Celebrating creation.. which is always in the act of creating.

It truly never stops.

And we... all of us... are a part of that.

We are part of creating this blessing – creating this goodness of God...

of taking in – of becoming – of living the goodness of God.

We are blessed now and we were blessed in the beginning.

I hope that you all have heard the term “original blessing”. I hadn't heard of it until I started minister school and learning about it was a profound learning for me... it shifted the way I thought about so many things.

Most of us will have heard the term “original sin”. I don't really want to go into any big explanation of the theology of original sin because I.... well, I'm not a big fan. I don't like it... and I disagree with it... and I think it is a concept that has caused great harm to many people. If you really want to learn more about it, I encourage you to look it up... and if you do, tell me what you think.

So no great depth but let's just say simply that the idea of original sin is founded on separation from God.

God is never ever ever separate from us.

Original blessing, however, is about connection with God.... it is based on the idea that God created us and all of creation as a blessing... and that God is in relationship with us – always and forever – no matter what.

We are originally blessed...

I mean think about the creation of a human being. The forming of the various parts and how they all just seem to know where to go and how to grow and what to do and how to cooperate with each other. That is amazing!

And even when things form or don't form in the way many of us think they should... or when various parts don't work the way we thought they would... it is all still so amazing. When various parts realize something is different and then figure out how to adjust to the difference – ... wow... that is pretty incredible.

Now I know its not as simple as all that... my point is that we have all been very blessed right from the get-go and when we let go of our over functioning thinking ability.... and come to our

senses – when we don't think about the blessings within and around us but just be with them... participate in them... it is amazing.

Now listen... I know we've all gone through some hard times – some more than others – we're in the midst of a pretty hard time right now... and these blessings do not nullify that... but all we need to do is walk through the trees, sit by a lake, watch a butterfly or a bird... look at a sunrise – or a sunset... breathe in the fresh air... do any of these – or whatever it is that helps you connect... and you WILL feel the blessings even in the midst of those hard times.

Do these things and... keep that thinking brain dulled for another moment... and hear these words whispered for you... “you are my beloved... my blessed... child. You are the one who brings me great pleasure just because you're you – just by being you.. a blessing!”

And here's the thing... you don't need to just do this for yourself... for your own sake. You need to do this for the sake of your community – your family, your friends, your church. When we understand ourselves as a blessing – it is much easier to offer ourselves as a blessing.

If you've convinced yourself you have nothing to offer... you probably don't. Not because you don't have the capacity but because you haven't opened yourself to the truth of who you are. You are a blessing.

WE do this for the people we love... and we do this for the rest of creation. Creation that is always offering its blessedness to us.

The world is not just out there for us to observe.. or even to take care of... the world is out there blessing us – offering its blessings. And so... it makes so much sense for us to take care of it because its offering is a blessing. We don't reject or abuse or let down something that is offering a blessing. That's just silly. We receive the blessing... we allow ourselves to be awed by it... and then we give it back.

You are a blessing among many blessings.

Please remember that truth.

~Responding~

Music: God of the Sparrow – Shirley Blackburn

Dedication of Offering/ and Prayers of the People

I invite you to make a fist with your hands and imagine in those clenched fists is all that you are holding tightly: fear, anxiety, worry, grief, loneliness, helplessness.

It may be a specific circumstance that has you tied in knots at the moment.

Now - I invite you to slowly open your fists and imagine a letting go into the loving presence of the Spirit who transforms all things. As we let go and open up, we

see that now our hands and hearts are more ready to hold, with love, the concerns of others and the pain of the world.

God we pray for all in this world for whom daily survival is a struggle.

We pray for all who cannot rest at night because of the sounds of bombs exploding and of guns firing.

We pray for all those who cannot attend school because of war, or because of their gender and who cannot play because of the possibility of stepping on land mines.

We pray for all who are hungry and for all who do not have clean water to drink..

We pray for all who work in unsafe conditions in order to make just a few dollars so that their families might have the necessities of life.

We pray for all in the world who have the power to make a difference that they might be moved to acts of justice and peace.

God we would pray for all in our community who are ill and facing difficult diagnosis.

We pray for all health care workers, care givers and families as they long for answers and the strength to help those who are ill through this difficult time.

We pray for all those who are lonely and afraid.

We pray for all who deal with addiction.

We pray for all families who are feeling the hurt and pain of separation and divorce.

We pray for all who feel the pangs of grief.

We pray for all in our community who have the ability to make a difference that they might be moved to acts of compassion and healing.

God we would pray for ourselves.

For all that is broken and in need of healing.

For all in us that is tired, cynical and critical.

For all in us that is frightened and vulnerable.

For all that we keep hidden for fear that others would disapprove.

We pray for ourselves that we might open ourselves to the grace, healing and peace that you offer us each moment of each day.

I invite you to place your hands now on your heart. In this silence we share all those things difficult to put into words, but felt in the depths of our hearts...

(pause for silence)

We pray as followers of Jesus the prayer he taught us as we sing.....

Lord's Prayer - (sung) (Shirley Blackburn)

Commissioning

You were born a blessing into a world full of blessings...

to be a blessing.
So as you leave this time of worship
may you be aware of God's blessings everywhere you go.
and may those blessings hold you strong
even in the hard times....
May you be inspired to receive these blessings...
Allow yourself to be awed by them...
And then... give them back.

Go in peace.
And may you feel God's peace go with you.
Amen.

Sung Blessing: "You Shall Go Out with Joy"
You shall go out with joy
And be led forth with peace.
The mountains and the hills will break forth before you.
There'll be shouts of joy
And the trees of the fields
will clap, will clap their hands.

And the trees of the fields will clap their hands,
the trees of the fields will clap their hands,
the trees of the fields will clap their hands,
While you go out with joy.