

Home Service, June 14, 2020

Invitation to Worship

Make A Joyful Noise, All the Earth

[Linnea Good]

<https://youtu.be/H5hoeObqNGc>

Words Expressing Divine Presence

[Hildegard of Bingen]

I am the one whose praise echoes on high.
I adorn all the earth.
I am the breeze that nurtures all things green.
I encourage blossoms to flourish with ripening fruits.
I am led by the spirit to feed the purest stream.
I am the rain coming from the dew
That causes the grasses to laugh with the joy of life.
I am the yearning for good.

We Sing

Morning Has Broken [words Eleanor Farjeon music - sung by Orla Fallon]

<https://youtu.be/h5D3LEjGF8A>

Prayer

[John Philip Newell, Celtic Treasure]

Blessed are you, O God of justice 'Blessed are you, O God of beauty
Blessed are you, O God of gentleness. Blessed are you, O God of wild unbridled winds. We find you in all things. We find you in every creature. We find you in the depths of our ever-living souls. Praise be to you.

Reading:

Genesis 1:1- 2:3

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. But the earth became chaos and emptiness, and darkness came over the face of the deep- yet the Spirit of God was brooding over the surface of the water.

Then God said "Light be! "and light was. **God saw that light was good.** Then God separated light from darkness. God called the light "Day" and the darkness "Night". Evening came, and morning followed- the first day.

Then God said "Now, make an expanse between the waters! Separate water from water! "So it was. God made the expanse and separated the water above the expanse from the water below it. God called the expanse "Sky".

Evening came, and morning followed- the second day.

Then God said, "Waters under the sky- be gathered into one place! Dry ground, appear!" So it was. God called the dry ground "Earth" and the gathering of the waters "Sea". **And God saw that this was good.** Then God said, "Earth, produce vegetation- plants that scatter their own seeds, and fruit-bearing trees **of every kind.** "So it was. The earth brought forth seed-bearing plants **of every kind**, and fruit-bearing trees **of every kind.** **And God saw that this was good. Evening came and morning followed- the third day.**

Then God said, 'Now, let there be light in the expanse of the sky! Separate day from night! Let them mark the signs and seasons, days and years, and serve as luminaries in the sky, shedding light on the earth.'" So it was. God made the two great lights, the greater one to illumine the day, and a lesser to illumine the night. Then God made the stars as well, placing them in the expanse of the sky, to shed light on the earth, to govern both day and night, and separate light from darkness. **And God saw that this was good. Evening came and morning followed - the fourth day.**

Then God said, "Waters: swarm with an abundance of living beings! Birds: fly above the earth in the open expanse of the sky. "And so it was. God created great sea monsters and all sorts of swimming creatures of **every kind, with** which the waters are filled, and birds **of every kind.** **God saw that this was good,** and blessed them saying, Bear fruit, increase your numbers, and fill the waters of the seas! Birds abound on the earth! "Evening **came and morning followed, the fifth day.**

Then God said, "Earth, bring forth living souls **of every kind-** cattle, things that crawl, and wild animals **of every kind.** So it was. God made wild animals **of every kind,** and cattle, and everything that crawls on the ground. **And God saw that this was good.**

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, to be like us. Let them be stewards of the fish in the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, the wild animals, and everything that crawls on the ground.

Humankind was created as God's reflection: in the divine image God created them; female and male, God made them.

God blessed them and said, "Bear fruit, increase your numbers, and fill the earth- and be responsible for it! Watch over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things on the earth.: God then told them, "Look, I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the earth and every fruit-bearing tree; they will be your food. And to all the animals of the earth, and the birds of the air, and things that crawl on the ground- everything that has a living soul in it- I give the green plants for food." **So it was.** God looked at all of this creation and proclaimed that **this was good- very good. Evening came and morning followed- the sixth day.**

Thus, the heavens and the earth and all their array were completed. On the seventh day God had finished all the work of creation, and so, on that seventh day, God rested. God blessed the seventh day, and called it sacred, because on it God rested from all the work of creation.

Sacred Text in Song

Just to Be Is A Blessing

[Colleen Fulmer]

[Chorus by Rabbi Abraham Heschel, verses inspired by Hebrew and Christian scriptures]

<https://youtu.be/aaAWvshg6xw>

Reflection

Introduction. *Some one who is about to retire may be permitted to indulge themselves a little. And so I am. This is part 1 of a three part series: what are 3 things that have shaped my ministry- and will continue to shape whatever I do next? To my mind, these 3 things really matter- and I hope they might matter to you too as you continue to be the beloved community of Wesley and St James. And, by the way, the music I've picked goes with each weeks theme. This week all our music and all our prayers celebrate creation and original blessing - much of it from the Celtic tradition of Great Britain, some of it from a creation-centred mystical spirituality. Enough by way of introduction : now we're off and running!*

Thirty some years ago, two words set me free: Original Blessing. I found them in a book of that name by Matthew Fox .

You see, I was much more familiar with Original Sin. I was brought up on the Anglican Book of Common Prayer . Don't get me wrong- there is some beautiful thoughtful writing in the book of Common Prayer- and in its time this book represented progress.

But this book tells us: to acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness which we from time to time most grievously have committed in thought word and deed against thy Divine Majesty; to understand communion as Jesus making a full perfect and sufficient sacrifice to atone for our sins; we are not worthy so much as to gather the crumbs up under Jesus table- and we need our sinful bodies may be washed clean by his body, our souls washed clean by his precious blood.

Sin of course is part of life- who hasn't sinned by what they've done or not done. But that's different from saying that we , even our bodies, are sinful by nature. Especially if someone grows up in a critical and judgmental, even abusive environment, this teaching can be damaging. Add in an emphasis on being perfect- do you remember the verse "Be ye perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect". But how could you be if you were by nature sinful? And if you can't do everything perfect and get everything right, that's one more thing to feel bad about. I've lived with perfectionism my whole life. I'm still on that journey. And I know I'm never going to make perfect, Who is?

Somehow, to save myself, I stopped going to church. I heard enough elsewhere about how bad, how unsatisfactory I was. I didn't need it at church.

Long story short- I got back into church and I started glimpsing a more compassionate faith. Maybe it was really Be ye compassionate as your Creator is compassionate. And, you know that second Love commandment- it's Love your neighbour as yourself. That might even mean- be kind to yourself just as you might be kind to others. Stop beating yourself up for not being perfect or not always pleasing other people.

And then along came that book by Matthew Fox. Forget original sin- forget the idea that you are born bad and sinful. Think about Original Blessing.

Which takes me back to our Genesis story. It's not science - it's not history. It's a story - alongside many other stories from other religions and cultures. Those are stories express what creation, what life, what God or Great Spirit meant to a people. Our Genesis story - the first of two- is not the only story. But it says some amazing things.

The Babylonian creation myth and many others included violence, even war. The writers of this creation story probably knew the Babylonian creation myth. The Hebrews had been in exile in Babylon. They had gone through a very confusing, turbulent time. They could have gone with a violent, conflicted story. But instead they gave us this one - a God who is creating out of the depth, out of the primordial soup, and making a beautiful world - in which fish and birds and animals and humans can live.

And it's all good- notice how often at the end of a day God says it is good- and at the end of the sixth day God looks at all God has made and says it is good, very good. And then on day seven God rests : a day of blessing, a day to savour the beauty and wonder of all that is. A sabbath.

Humans have by times messed up this beautiful world. But we need to keep coming back to this story- life is meant to be good, the world is meant to be good, and , if we are in the divine image, we are to name it good and treat it and each other as good.

That's not always easy- especially with other humans. Our relationships can be fraught. We do not always say or do good things. At times we have to protect ourselves if others are mistreating us or taking advantage of us.

But we stand a better chance of making life good if we start with original blessing, not original sin. If we see this world as blessed through and through.

And another piece- throughout this creation story, notice I highlighted "of every kind". I had never noticed till last week how often this phrase comes up. Creation isn't about everybody and everything being the same. Creation is diverse , from the get-go. There is not one right kind of tree or plant or fish or bird or animal or creepy-crawly creature -I can hear you ask- is there any right kind of black fly or mosquito or bacteria? And yet that insects and certain bacteria play a very significant role in the whole balance of nature- and when we mess with them we get into trouble. [But don't ask me about viruses.]

Diseases happen. Death happens. It's not a perfect world. Never was. But we make it better if we live with respect for this diverse, wondrous , complex world and universe. And if diversity is built into all other life-forms, why would we think there's only one way to be human? Original blessing is for those of all races, all cultures, all sexual orientations and gender identities.

This is why I've wanted our community to include all kinds of people- we still have a way to go ! This is why I want life to be as good for all kinds of people as it is for me. And so we need to serve those humans who are not treated as if they mattered. Just as in nature we need to care for endangered species and vulnerable parts of the ecosystem. That's why Black Lives matter- Indigenous Lives matter- Rainbow Lives matter.

Creation spirituality- Original Blessing - spirituality- runs deep in our faith. Mystics such as Hildegard of Bingen found God in creation- as did the Catholic poet Gerard Manly Hopkins "the world is shot through with the grandeur of God".

And long ago people of the land saw that divine presence all around them, in creatures, in nature, in their daily work.. That sense of divine presence in the world around us - you can find it in many religions. One Christian version is Celtic spirituality - as in today's prayers by John Philip Newell- who was once the Warden of Iona abbey. Every moment of every day we live in sacred space radiant with Divine Presence. We feel this especially in so-called thin places- such as those on water's edge, on nation's edge, on continent's edge.

And in days to come- before we can use our accustomed sacred places of worship- remember this - this earth is named good and all that dwells within it, of all kinds- as are you , as are me. Sacred space dwells within you and all around you. You are Original blessing. You are surrounded by Original Blessing. Rest in the Spirit. Rest in wondrous love- and know that Love, Compassion, Spirit and Beauty rest in you and in all beloved ones. Amen.

Reflective Music

The Lone Wild Bird *sung by the Honey Whiskey Trio*
[McFadyen/Haugen. Tune from Walker's Southern Harmon]
<https://youtu.be/GJ5Ltn8sy7Y>

Minute for Mission White Privilege

Our gifts for Mission & Service work to create opportunities to understand what it means to be an intercultural church. Here is a story about one of those opportunities.

Beth Baskin, Program Coordinator, Social Analysis and Congregational Engagement, in the Church in Mission Unit of The United Church of Canada, reflects on White Privilege:

As someone who supported a delegation to the Global White Privilege Conference in May 2018 and supports the White Privilege Working Group, I spend a lot of time thinking about it.

White Privilege is the norm that allows me to go through my day without really having to think about what I do or say. The systems work pretty well for me. This is a problem.

The problem is that I (and lots of others) can go through life ignoring racism and the resulting oppression and exclusion. I will be a poorer person for the lack of diversity and understanding in my life and faith, but really, unless I go out of my way to be in relationships with those whom the systems exclude, I can live in my White bubble. This choice will give me occasional pangs of sadness for the oppressed but have no real consequences for my day-to-day living.

It is my job and the job of the White Privilege Working Group, among others, to ask the questions that lead us to understand others' cultures and experiences. We must find real, tangible ways to change our church to honour and incorporate ways of being, knowing, and deciding that are not the dominant church norm. If Mission & Service giving is already a regular part of your life, thank you so much! If you have not given, please join me in making Mission & Service giving a regular part of your life of faith. Loving our neighbour is at the heart of our Mission & Service. 16

Offertory *[Adapted from John Philip Newell, Celtic Treasures]*

You have shown us love, O Holy One. Show us also our true face and the true face of every human being. Show us the desire for love and the strength to give ourselves in love that are woven into the fabric of our being. For we are made in the image of love, your own image. And so we offer our gifts and ourselves in love, in service of others who are also made in your image, beings of all kinds, beings beloved as you so love. Amen.

Prayers of the People *[first part by John Philip Newell, from Praying with the Earth]*

For everything that emerges from the earth thanks be to you, O God,
Holy Root of being, Sacred Sap that rises, Full-bodied Fragrance of earth's unfolding form, may we know that we are of You; may we know that we are in You, may we know that we are one with You together one.
Guide us as nations to what is deepest. Open us as peoples to what is first
Lead us as a world to what is dearest that we may know the holiness of wholeness that we may learn the strength of humility that together we may live close to the earth and grow in grounded glory.
And in a moment of silence we hold in love and light those who need our prayers. knowing that we are held in the same love and light, as we gather our prayers into the community prayer known around the world and across the ages: Our Creator [or Father or Mother] who art in heaven....

Announcements, Joys and Concerns

Two changes:

- 1. Zoom coffee break moves to Thurs. 10 a.m. this week only.*
- 2. Summer Solstice Event Sat. June 20 [details to follow in Cooperator]*

We Sing

Be Thou My Vision

[5th century Irish to an Irish traditional melody] [Webb family music - violin and harp- we'll have to provide the words]

<https://youtu.be/AZfD5KrH5d8>

*Be thou my vision, O joy of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art--
thou my best thought by day or by night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.*

*Be thou my wisdom, my calm in all strife,
I ever with thee and thou in my life,
thou loving parent, thy child may I be,
thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.*

*Be thou my battle shield, sword for my fight;
be thou my dignity, thou my delight,
thou my soul's shelter, thou my high tow'r:
raise thou me heav'n-ward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.*

*Riches I heed not, nor vain empty praise,
thou mine inheritance, now and always:
thou and thou only, first in my heart,
Great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.*

*Great God of heaven, my victory won,
may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heav'n's sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.*

Words of Parting and Blessing

[John Philip Newell, Praying with the Earth]

On this day the blessings of heaven.
On this day the blessings of earth.
On this day the blessings of sea and of sky.
To open us to life ,to ground us in life
to fill us with life and with wonder.
On those we love this day and on every human family
the blessings of heaven, the blessings of earth, the blessings of sea and of sky.

Irish Blessing

Sung by a virtual international choir student choir of the. University of Jena, Germany
[they add [my translation'] With this song we want to give you all some hope and joy.“]

<https://youtu.be/BtmOAnti3Vo>