

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 2024

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

**FIFTH SUNDAY of EASTER**

**GATHERING**

**PRELUDE**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

- One: How majestic is God's name in all the earth!  
We see God's glory in the expanse of the heavens.
- All: All plants and animals are God's creation.  
All that God has made reflects God's goodness.**
- One: We are created in God's image, to relate to God.
- All: We receive great abundance and care from our Creator.  
God blesses us day by day with good things.**
- One: Gather to praise God and greet one another.  
Celebrate all the ways God is revealed to us.
- All: We worship the Creator and Sustainer of all things.**

**\*OPENING HYMN "For the Beauty of the Earth" GtG 14**

1. **For the beauty of the earth,  
for the glory of the skies,  
for the love which from our birth  
over and around us lies:  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
this our hymn of grateful praise.**
2. **For the wonder of each hour  
of the day and of the night,  
hill and vale, and tree and flower,  
sun and moon, and stars of light:  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
this our hymn of grateful praise.**
3. **For the joy of ear and eye,  
for the heart and mind's delight,  
for the mystic harmony  
linking sense to sound and sight:  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
this our hymn of grateful praise.**

*(continued...)*

4. For the joy of human love,  
 brother, sister, parent, child,  
 friends on earth, and friends above,  
 for all gentle thoughts and mild:  
 Lord of all, to thee we raise  
 this our hymn of grateful praise.
5. For thyself, best gift divine  
 to the world so freely given;  
 for that great, great love of thine,  
 peace on earth and joy in heaven:  
 Lord of all, to thee we raise  
 this our hymn of grateful praise.

Words: Folliott Sandford Pierpoint, 1864, alt.  
 Music: DIX, Conrad Kocher, 1838; abr. William Henry  
 Monk, 1861; harm. *The English Hymnal*, 1906  
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#### UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Dear God, you have blessed us with the beauty of this world and all the good gifts in it. But we do not take very good care of your gifts. And we are not very good at telling you, "Thank you." Forgive us, O Lord. Teach us how to care better for your creation. Help us to appreciate the true beauty of the world, that we might work to share that beauty with others. For it is in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

#### SILENT CONFESSION

#### ASSURANCE OF PARDON

- One: God knows us better than we know ourselves. God knows when we do wrong, and when we fail in the way God wants us to go.
- All: **But God is also patient and kind, loving us always.**
- One: So we seek God's grace with boldness because we trust in Jesus Christ, the One who loves us and laid down his life for us.
- All: **So we rejoice in the good news, that through Jesus Christ we can know forgiveness for our sins...and help in living better lives.**

#### THE PEACE

- One: The peace of Christ be with you.
- All: **And also with you.**

*(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)*

## THE WORD

### SCRIPTURE READINGS Genesis 2 (selected)

GENESIS 2 (selected) (Today's English Version/Good News Translation+)

*When the Lord God made the earth and sky, <sup>5</sup> there were no plants on the earth and no seeds had sprouted, because the Lord had not sent any rain, and there was no one to cultivate the land. ...*

*<sup>7</sup> Then the Lord God took some soil from the ground and formed a human out of it, breathing life-giving breath into its nostrils, and the human began to live.*

*<sup>8</sup> Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the East, and there put the human God had formed. ...*

*<sup>15</sup> Then the Lord God placed the human in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to take care of it.*

### PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON “Addendum...with a Twist” by Pastor Bill Vincent

Yes, you are to be forgiven for thinking you are experiencing *deja vu*.

Yes, much of the worship materials for today are exactly the same as for last week: the Prayer of Confession, the Assurance of Pardon, the scripture passage.

“Is Bill getting lazy?”

No. The repetition is very intentional.

It is an attempt to strike a balance.

Not to suggest that what was said last week was wrong, or skewed, or needed to be corrected.

Everything I said last week about caring for creation, I believe it to be very true, and biblical.

But maybe something was left out. Or overlooked. Or not highlighted.

So, today's message serves as an addendum.

Though not an addendum as simply an afterthought. Although I do confess it did actually come to me as an afterthought. But it's not intended to be an afterthought.

In fact, on further thought, it may be less addendum and more core. Central. Foundational. Or, at the very least, it may need to be the starting point.

Central to what we said last week was the affirmation of celebrating and cherishing God's gift to us of the creation.

This week's addendum – and a crucial one it is – is that we have to remember, and we have to claim, and then we have to live out the truth that part of that gift of creation that we are called to cherish and nurture is...you, me, us.

When we talk about celebrating and caring for creation, we cannot only look outside or beyond ourselves.

We also have to look in the mirror.

And the prime reason to add this note – this addendum – is because there is far too much evidence that we do not care for ourselves...or that we do it in the wrong way.

In our Confession we pray,

**Dear God, you have blessed us with the beauty of this world and all the good gifts in it.**

All the while we're thinking, "I don't have anything to offer. No gift here!"

**we do not take very good care of your gifts.**

And that's true: we neglect our own health, we abuse our own bodies.

**Help us to appreciate the true beauty of the world, that we might work to share that beauty with others.**

But we actually think to ourselves, "Nothing beautiful to share here."

Henri J.M. Nouwen speaks of our world as one

**filled with voices that shout: "You are no good, you are ugly; you are worthless, you are despicable, you are nobody – unless you can demonstrate the opposite."**

**... Over the years, I have come to realize that the greatest trap in our life is not success, popularity or power, but self-rejection. ... we...come to believe in the voices that call us worthless and unlovable, [and when we do, things like] success, popularity and power are easily perceived as attractive solutions.**

(from *Life of the Beloved*, 1992)

So we work to achieve success in the eyes of others, because we don't see any achievement in ourself.

We want to be affirmed by others, built up by others, because we're not confident in ourself, we don't see in ourselves anything of value to offer.

Last week, in our Prayer of Dedication,

**we recommit[ed] ourselves to caring for all [God has] created in love.**

Are we committed to caring for us?

Are you committed to caring for you?

Am I committed to caring for me?

We hear the call, the command, to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength and mind. And love your neighbor as yourself."

But there's that subtle aspect of those commands that we all too often overlook, or it doesn't even register.

How do I love my neighbor as I love myself...when I don't love myself?

If I love my neighbor as I do not love myself, then we're in a world of trouble.

And maybe we already are. When the anger I feel toward myself – I take that anger out on others. When I'm really disappointed in me, and I take it out on you.

We abuse others – emotionally, physically – because we don't care...about them, or about ourselves.

We seek control over something – for it seems we don't have any control over our 'stupid selves' – so we seek to dominate others and oppress whole segments of society.

In our Affirmation of Faith, we note,

**God commands us to care for the earth in ways that reflect God's loving care for us.**

(Question #19, *The Study Catechism: Full Version*, Copyright ©1998  
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But do we? Especially in regards to us.

Do we acknowledge God's loving care for us?

Will we claim God's loving care for us?

Will we live out – even for ourselves – God's loving care for us?

In other words, will we love ourselves? And that's a fairly basic, fundamental, core question.

Remember what we read in Genesis 2, where God breathes into the human – into us – the life-giving breath: God's own life-giving breath (the Spirit).

Then we go on to talk about caring for creation, the stewardship of creation.

Will we 'steward' God's breath in us?

Will we care for that breath, and nurture it and feed it and sustain it, so that life – so that we – might blossom and bloom and be fruitful?

I picture blowing on embers, or a spark, to get the fire going!

Will we care enough about God's breath in us – will we care enough about ourselves – to make every effort and take every care so that we will flourish as the children of God that we are?

And yes, that includes not just me as a child of God, but you, too...and every other 'you, too' in the world, so that

**We...honor God by showing love toward other human beings.** (*Study Catechism #18*)

The poster has a picture of a scruffy looking child making a somewhat defiant statement:

**“God don't make no junk!”**

They have obviously heard too many voices that said they were junk.

But they're right: “God don't make no junk!”

And that includes you.

So stop treating yourself like you are junk.

You're not.

You are a child of God.

You have the life-breath of God in you.

You are created in the image of God. And though that image has been tarnished – we call that sin – that doesn't mean you are discardable junk.

Broken? Maybe.

Discardable? No!

Now, I'm very aware that what I am trying to say can be heard wrong, and can be twisted toward ends that are contrary to the true intent.

This is not a message about selfish love: loving yourself selfishly to the detriment of others or the rest of the world; self-absorbed, and selfishly absorbed, in your life and your life only, and – pardon the expression – to hell with the rest of the world.

This is about loving yourself...appropriately. Because God loves you. And God cherishes you. And God cares for you. And who are you to disagree with God?

God loves you so much to give God's Son for you.

Will we deny that love? "No, doesn't mean me. I have nothing of worth to offer."

Will we reject that love? "Forget that! I don't care about me...or you!"

Will we abuse that love? "I'm the focus of the world. Mine, mine, mine! Gimme, gimme, gimme! And 'pfft' to everyone else!"

We have a love to affirm.

We have a balance to maintain.

So, No, I will not allow you (or anyone else) to run roughshod over God's gift of life in me. No, I will not allow you to recklessly strip mine the resources of who I am for your own selfish, outlandish desires."

But, Yes, I do have something to offer, and I am worthwhile.

God has decreed it! Loud and clear. In a cross, and in an empty tomb.

So how will I choose to care for God's creation of me – not carelessly or selfishly; not to my own detriment, or to yours – but to the flourishing of me, and you; and to the glory of God's will and God's work, and God's intent for life and good in all of creation?

For this care for me does not seek to diminish my commitment to caring for the rest of creation.

But to balance that commitment.

And possibly to motivate that commitment even further.

For we are connected. And caring for creation is an exercise in caring for self. And caring for self is (in many ways) the starting point for caring for creation, and one another.

God loves you.

Will you love you?

And will you share that love – and share you – with the world?

**\*HYMN “Sacred the Body” GtG 27**

1. **Sacred the body  
God has created,  
temple of Spirit that dwells deep inside.  
Cherish each person;  
nurture relation.  
Treat flesh as holy, that love may abide.**
  
2. **Bodies are varied,  
made in all sizes,  
pale, full of color; both fragile and strong.  
Holy the difference,  
gift of the Maker,  
so let us honor each story and song.**
  
3. **Love respects persons,  
bodies and boundaries.  
Love does not batter, neglect, or abuse.  
Love touches gently,  
never coercing.  
Love leaves the other with power to choose.**
  
4. **Holy of holies,  
God ever loving,  
make us your temples; indwell all we do.  
May we be careful,  
tender and caring,  
so may our bodies give honor to you.**

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**\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**One:** WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SAY THAT WE HUMAN BEINGS ARE CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD?

**All:** That God created us to live together in love and freedom -- with God, with one another, and with the world. ... We are created to be loving companions of others so that something of God's goodness may be reflected in our lives.

*(continued...)*

One: WHAT DOES OUR CREATION IN GOD'S IMAGE REFLECT ABOUT GOD'S LOVE FOR US?

**All: We are created to live wholeheartedly for God. When we honor our Creator as the source of all good things, we are like mirrors reflecting back the great beam of love that God shines on us. We are also created to honor God by showing love toward other human beings.**

One: AS CREATURES MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE, WHAT RESPONSIBILITY DO WE HAVE FOR THE EARTH?

**All: God commands us to care for the earth in ways that reflect God's loving care for us. We are responsible for ensuring that earth's gifts be used fairly and wisely, that no creature suffers from the abuse of what we are given, and that future generations may continue to enjoy the abundance and goodness of the earth in praise to God.**

(from *The Study Catechism: Full Version*, Copyright ©1998 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.))

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: God of all goodness and love...

**All: ...hear our prayer.**

## THE LORD'S PRAYER (Contemporary)

**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.**

## OFFERING

*Invitation*

*Reflection*

*\*Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**For all that you have given us,  
we thank you, gracious God.  
For day and night, evening and morning,  
for land and sea, for fish and birds,  
plants and animals, for humankind,  
and for your Son, who came among us  
with the gift of life abundant.  
Work through our offerings,  
that all may have joy and peace.  
And may the simple gifts of our lives  
be a sign of our unending gratitude  
for your undying love;  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

**SENDING**

**\*CLOSING HYMN “God, You Spin the Whirling Planets” GtG 23**

- 1. God, you spin the whirling planets,  
fill the seas and spread the plain,  
mold the mountains, fashion blossoms,  
call forth sunshine, wind, and rain.  
We, created in your image,  
would a true reflection be  
of your justice, grace, and mercy  
and the truth that makes us free.**
  
- 2. You have called us to be faithful  
in our life and ministry.  
We respond in grateful worship  
joined in one community.  
When we blur your gracious image,  
focus us and make us whole.  
Healed and strengthened as your people,  
we move onward toward your goal.**
  
- 3. God, your word is still creating,  
calling us to life made new.  
Now reveal to us fresh vistas  
where there's work to dare and do.**

*(continued...)*

**Keep us clear of all distortion.  
Polish us with loving care.  
Thus, new creatures in your image,  
we'll proclaim Christ everywhere.**

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**\*CHARGE AND BLESSING**

**One:** ...And let the gathered people of God say...

**All:** ...Amen.

**POSTLUDE**

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