



Trinity Sunday 30 May 2021

Call to Worship

Welcome to worship on this Sunday which on the church calendar is called Trinity Sunday. I will not attempt to explain to you the Trinity but today we acknowledge again that God is mystery. We read Psalm 8 which is a psalm of praise to the mystery and wonder of God's holiness and love. The Psalm also speaks of the dignity and honour bestowed on human beings and with the psalm writer we are amazed at God's generosity in giving us responsibility to care for all God's creatures and tend the land, the sea and the very air we breathe. We receive with reverence the creative work of God's hands. *Take off your shoes, you are standing on holy ground. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. From the waters beneath to the heavens above. So take off your shoes, you are standing on holy ground.*

Hymn

Morning has broken

Opening Prayer

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and all that dwells therein. *We live in God's world, we are not alone. We share this life with the heavens and the earth, with the waters and the land, with trees and grasses, with fish, birds and animals, with creatures of every form, and with all our brothers and sisters....*Living God we praise you for the beauty of creation, we praise you for the rich variety of life, we praise you for your delight in us, your people, we praise you for giving us the care for all that lives. We praise you for your trust in us. We thank you for everything that points to your love and glory. Amen.

Scripture Reading

Psalm 8

Hymn (for worship outside)

This is God's wondrous world

Reflection

"O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth." What a wonderful opening statement this is of Psalm 8. Imagine the Psalm writer making such a massive claim: "in all the earth." There he is, living in a small corner of the world called Israel or Palestine. How can he say, "in all the earth?" Has he ever seen the dry deserts of Australia, the glistening icebergs floating around the poles, the majestic peaks of the Himalayas, the thick forests of the Amazon, the fjords of

Norway or the Victoria waterfalls on the Zambezi river? Has he ever seen penguins huddling together in the cold, alligators dozing in the sun or flamingos dancing and elephants trumpeting? No? So how can he say "in all the earth?" Well, he can say it just like we can say it, when we open our eyes to look around in awe and wonder, be it in our garden, in a park, on a mountain, at the seaside, in a forest.....all the places where we are reminded that "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it" You have this real sense of the majesty and power of God as reflected in the beauty of creation and the diversity of creatures around you.

"How majestic is your name...everywhere" While the Psalmist writes down these words the sun is setting and it grows dark, really dark, as it gets dark when there are no city lights to lighten the sky. Then the Psalm writer looks up and says "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers...." and he marvels at the moon and the stars, the vastness of the night sky.

When do you look at the heavens, at the moon and the stars? I often look at the moon, especially the full moon. But the stars....only when in the countryside, away from the city lights.

"When I look at the moon and stars that you have established, what are human beings that you are mindful of them?" When you look at the expanse of the sky above you, don't you sometimes feel small? Really small? Just look at the moon and the stars, what you can see with your bare eyes or through a telescope, and you know the universe around us is vast. And not only when we look up at the heavens but when the earth is viewed from space there is the same sense of how tiny we are. As expressed by Neil Armstrong: "It suddenly struck me that that tiny pea, pretty and blue, was the Earth. I put up my thumb and shut one eye, and my thumb blotted out the planet Earth. I didn't feel like a giant. I felt very, very small."

"When I look at the moon and the stars, what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?" What beauty, what wonder, and what a vastness of space above us! So what is our place, our role in the grand scheme of the universe as we are mere mortals, living on this tiny blue planet called earth? According to Psalm 8 we play a very important role, as we are minded and cared for by God, we have been made but a little lower than God and are crowned with glory and honour. And so we claim to be God's people, not because of who we are or what we have done, but because of who God is and what God has done. "You have given them dominion over the works of your hands" And here we get confused. What does it mean? Does it mean that we own the land, the sea, the sky and all that is in it? Does it mean that we can take, and take more, as much as we can from the land, the sea and the sky? The predominant view for a very long time has been that everything is for our benefit, for our use and for our disposal. However, eventually we have come to see that "dominion" means

that we are “stewards” of creation, entrusted with the care of the earth and all its people. The earth does not belong to us, but we have it “on loan.” But then Barbara Brown Taylor expresses the view that the idea of “stewards” is “awfully utilitarian” and she claims that when we are stewards we “act from duty, not love, which may not be enough for this warming world of ours.” Referring to the story of creation in Genesis she writes that as we are created in the image of God, who loved us into being, we have “to live in that image and the only dominion we can possibly exercise is the dominion of love” In other words, “we are here because God made us, and if God made us, we live by love. We are here to preside over the dominion of love in God’s name.” Made in God’s image, we are crowned with glory and honour. Now I know what you may think. We often do not live up to our image; we do not seem *but a little lower* than God in how we behave towards each other and how we use and abuse the earth. Perhaps we have lost the bigger picture that the Psalmist sensed when he looked up at the heavens and which astronauts refer to when they tell how they feel when gazing from space to the earth. Perhaps looking up to the moon and the stars, seeing the vastness of the universe, does not move us anymore and gives us the perspective we need? Perhaps we need the perspective of the earth from space to see that our tiny “home” that is the earth is really one world that we share in which *all* of life is interconnected and interdependent. And I quote the astronaut Edgar Mitchell: “You develop an instant global consciousness, a people orientation, an intense dissatisfaction with the state of the world, and a compulsion to do something about it.” Yes, we are able to do something about it because we are “crowned with glory and honour” and given the responsibility to love and care for the world...for *all* of creation. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Poem/Prayer

Psalm 8 Redux (Carla Grosh-Miller)

O God, how we have maligned and misinterpreted You – placing ourselves above all creation, commandeering the helm that we might control and use for our own comfort and convenience. Forgive us and restore us to our senses, that we might see and sense, and know and love all that is and all that can be. May our reverence for You be manifest in our reverence for all of life. May our wakeful listening penetrate the earth and reach towards the heavens. May our bold tenderness overcome our ignorance and enable wise action. For this life is a wonder. You have gifted us with all we need – beauty and bounty, word and wisdom, courage and companionship. May we enjoy and employ these gifts as befits those made in Your image. May all that we make mirror Your light and Your love. May Your Being be known and sung throughout the world with joy and thanksgiving.

Hymn

God in his love for us lent us this planet

Prayers & Lord's Prayer

For whom will we pray, O God? For what will we pray? You speak to the longing of our hearts for peace and justice. Arouse in us a deep and powerful love for all people and all you have created. Show us the places where you find a need for your love, that we may share with you in making this beautiful though hurting world a home for all. That we may help to make it a safe and healing place, a peaceful and kindly place where peace reigns and justice flows like a mighty river through the whole of life. We name before you the places and the people where and for whom your gift of healing and love, and our gift of love, is needed at this time.....

(Silent prayer)

Even as we pray to you, O God, we know that we are called to love and care with you for the people and places we have remembered before you. Give us all that we need in vision, commitment, courage and faithfulness to share with you in the creative, healing and renewing works of your hands. And this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ who taught us to pray....OUR FATHER

Dedication of Offering

We thank you, God, for your love and generosity to us. We thank you for our calling to witness to that love in our lives, in our service, in our ministry. Bless the gifts and may they be used to share your love as widely and generously as possible. Amen.

Hymn

I sing the almighty power of God

Blessing

Go out into the world in peace. Have courage. Hold on to what is good. Strengthen the faint-hearted. Support the weak. Help the suffering. Honour all people. Honour all creation. Love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. And may the blessing of God, creator, redeemer and spirit be with us all. **Amen.**