

2023 04 23 – For the Love of Creation

Scripture: Luke 24:13-35 (The Inclusive Bible)

It was Sunday afternoon, that very first Easter Sunday, and two of Jesus disciples were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus. No doubt there were others on the road also returning home from the Passover Festival. It was a walk of about ten kilometres; but the time was going quickly because the two disciples had much to talk about. It had been a very eventful Passover that year!

When was the last time you walked over 10 kilometres in one day? Do you remember why you walked that far? Why do most of us walk any distance these days? (wait for answers: for recreation, experience nature, get exercise, good for our health, get some fresh air). Many of us walk because it gets us out of our houses and into nature. We walk because we need the exercise, because the rest of lives are so sedentary.

This time of year, I rarely go for a walk without taking my binoculars along because I'm always looking for the migratory birds that have come home to nest or that are moving through our area. This spring many of us went for walks along the creek here in Swift Current to see the rising water and the power of a fast-flowing stream. It is during these walks in nature that we are able to see and connect with God's creation.

Yesterday was Earth Day, a day in which we celebrate the planet on which we live. According to the Earth Day website, this day "is widely recognized as the

largest secular observance in the world, marked by more than a billion people every year as a day of action to change human behavior and create global, national and local policy changes.” Earth Day was created back in 1970 because people here in North America were becoming aware of the great harm that humankind was inflicting on the Earth. <https://www.earthday.org/history/>

Since then, we have become much more aware of the impact of our actions on God’s creation. Now we understand how climate change is forcing every inhabitant of this earth (human and otherwise) to adapt to different temperatures, changing levels of precipitation and an increase in dangerous weather events. Our Moderator Carmen Lansdowne in [a recent blog](#), wrote, “the climate emergency is not just a big problem; it’s the end of the world as we know it.”

How is it that we, those of us who live in the wealthiest nations of this world, have allowed our planet to reach this crisis situation? (greed, sense of power, individualism, capitalism) I believe that one of the reasons is a fundamental lack of respect for God’s creation. We just didn’t, and maybe still don’t, understand the sacred nature of the earth and the deep connection that we all have with the land, the sea and the sky. Like the disciples who were walking on the road to Emmaus, we have struggled to recognize the presence of the Risen Christ, the sacred in our world.

In today’s story Jesus approaches the disciples and begins to walk along with them, but they are unable to recognize him. He talks to them, teaches them, even explains his own death and resurrection, but they are unable to recognize

their own rabbi. They are unable to see the presence of the Risen Christ in this stranger on the road.

How many times have we made that same mistake? How many times have we treated other people, other creatures, and the earth itself with a disregard for their place in God's creation? Take, for example, our penchant for throwing things away, and using the earth as place to dump our trash.

As a child, one my favourite trips was to get in the truck with my dad and drive to the dump. In those days, in rural Ontario, most people composted or fed their food scraps to their animals, they burned paper and other combustible items in the wood furnace or in a barrel in the garden. So the local dump was filled with cans and bottles and larger pieces of garbage like furniture, tools, and appliances. My father had a habit of finding treasures amongst the trash and never going home with an empty truck.

But today, I cringe every time I make a trip to the local landfill. Even though many of the cans and bottles that filled the dump of my youth are now being recycled, so many of the other items we buy are being produced with a planned obsolescence. If 17,000 people in Swift Current can fill our city dump, just imagine the garbage created by cities the likes of Toronto, New York or Tokyo. We've all heard horror stories of barges of Canadian garbage being sent illegally overseas to developing countries. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/fifth-estate-recycling-1.6410657>

Would we be so quick to exploit our poorer neighbours and to use our earth in this way if we truly recognized the sacredness of all creation? It was only when Jesus sat down with his disciples, took the bread, broke it and gave it to them that they finally realized who he was. It wasn't through talking or teaching but rather through action, through the breaking of bread that the presence was of the sacred was fully known.

The Risen Christ, the sacred, the Holy Mystery is here with us too. It is within us, it is within those around us here in this church, in this community and in this world. It is within the animals and the plants, the earth and the water and the air. We live in God's creation and God's creation lives in us. It is for the love of God, for the love of God's creation that we are called to respect and to care for the earth.

I know, it feels like there is little that we can do. How can we make a difference in a problem that is so large and so complex? I want to share another excerpt from our Moderator's blog. She wrote:

The truth is – the climate emergency is death by a thousand paper cuts. Responding to it reminds me of something someone told my family more than 20 years ago after my older brother died: Nothing helps, and everything helps.

It's true, if you think about it phone calls, casseroles and muffins may not take away our grief, but they do make a difference.

Even if can't, individually, fix this climate crisis, we can each do something. We can change how we treat the earth. We can spread the word to our family, our friends, and our neighbours. We can influence our law makers so even larger changes can happen. We can find some small way to help, some small way to show our love and our respect for God's creation.

I'm going to end today with an Earth Day prayer by Steve Garnaas-Holmes:

Dear Mother Earth, gift of God, we thank you,
for you are our life, our breath and our blood.
You bear us in your arms and receive us at our death,
and will never refuse us.
The rolling sea in our heart, the mountains in our bones,
the wind in our lungs, the flowing rivers in our blood,
the many-splendored creatures living within us
all sing praise to God and remind us we are of you.

Dear Mother Earth, we confess:
though the forest and desert are our own flesh
we have wounded you,
we have treated you selfishly, as "the least of these."
We have betrayed our oneness
with the grasses and the hawk, the beetle and the whale.
Even as we use you, we repent;
even as we torture you you forgive us.

Dear Mother of Life,
as you renew the earth in spring, restore our mercy;
return us to our place in the great circle of life;
give us the generosity of your fields,
the humility and wisdom of your small creatures.

Dear Mother God, hear our praise and our confession,
and renew in us the beauty of the earth,
for the sake of all life. Amen.

<https://unfoldinglight.net/>