

Worship at Home
April 18, 2021
Third Sunday of Easter



<https://instituteofbiblereading.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/BibleWaterFeatured.jpg>

God calls us to worship

The Lord is risen!

Hallelujah! He is risen indeed!

Hymn #249 “The day of resurrection”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KfIEXuymgo>

We bring our praise and confession¹

God our Maker, we come before you this day,
giving thanks for all the wonder in your creation:

For the detailed perfection revealed in a baby’s tiny fingers,
in pussy willows unzipping their jackets to greet the spring,
in each rock face worn by wind and water,
witnessing to your ancient design like wrinkles around an aging smile.
These details lift our hearts to praise you.

So let the details of the story of the Risen Christ lift our hearts this day,
that we may greet a new week
as an occasion to discover him in our midst,
making all things new with the springtime of your Spirit.

God our Redeemer,
in raising Jesus from the dead, you showed us your power
to defeat all that brings fear and sorrow to our lives.
In his resurrection, Jesus promised to be with us always.
Yet we confess we are sometimes uncertain about your presence,
unsure if we can trust the promise of resurrection for ourselves.
Forgive us when we struggle to trust your goodness for us.
Forgive us when we miss the signs of your love in our midst.

¹ From worship resource for April 18, 2021 available at <https://presbyterian.ca/worship>

God assures us of his forgiveness²

Scripture tells us that there is a time for every matter under heaven.
A time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance.
In confessing our sins to God, we have offered God our tears of regret.
Now is the time to rejoice in God's mercy:
In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.
In Jesus Christ, we have time to make a new start. Thanks be to God.

We confess our faith and offer our lives and resources

I believe in God,
the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried,
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

*If you are a member or adherent of either of the Moore Presbyterian congregations,
please remember to submit your offering to the appropriate treasurer. For contact
information, speak with Rev. Ian.*

² Ibid.

God speaks to us through his Word

READ Genesis 1:1-2:3

John 20:19-23

1. The second law of thermodynamics tells us that, in the absence of any external force, the entropy of a system – that is, the degree of molecular disorder – always increases. In other words, left to itself, any system tends toward chaos.

Interestingly, chaos is an English synonym of the two Hebrew words that describe the state of affairs before God intervened: *to-hu wa-bohu*.

“the earth was a *formless void*...” Confusion and emptiness. Chaos.

Thus begins the creation story of Genesis 1.

Over the darkness, the troubled waters, the formless void, the chaos, the Living God swept. To the entropy, this God spoke and categories were created:

Light was well as Darkness – Day and Night.

The Sky dividing the ‘above’ from the ‘below.’

The Earth and the Sea.

Then He began to place the elements in their appropriate category:

Vegetation growing out of the earth.

Lights in the sky: sun in the day, moon and stars in the night.

Fish in the waters, birds in the sky, cattle on the earth.

Then, to represent the invisible God in these visible categories, to tend and steward this ordered system, God appointed humankind, *Adam*.

And finally, with the physical systems brought into order, God ordered time itself into a predictable rhythm: “So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.”

Notice: there is no ending to the seventh day. There is no, “And there was evening and there was morning, the seventh day.” Here we see God, together with humanity and all of creation co-existing in eternal harmony. Everything working together decently and in order. And, it is very good. This is the way God intends life to be.

2. Of course, this ideal is not the way life is. So, of what value are stories of creation? Stories of beginnings? Stories of origin?

Many faith traditions have them and, in the Jewish and Christian traditions, we have two. The first, as we just read, is this well-ordered liturgical poem. This song of praise to the Creator which is well suited for call-and-response by a congregation at worship:

Leader: "God said..."

People: "There was evening and there was morning, the first day."

Leader: "God said..."

People: "There was evening and there was morning, the second day."

And so on. ...

We'll look at the second story next week. And, for the rest of the Easter season, we'll look at the remainder of the first 5 chapters of our origin story, our Genesis, as we seek to read the Beginnings with Resurrection lenses.

Thanks to several thousand years of curiosity, scientific inquiry, archeological discoveries, literary criticism, and observant experience, we know that these stories don't describe the way things are, nor do they describe the historical and physical events that have resulted in the world as we know it today. Nevertheless, these stories continue to be essential.

Why?

When we read Genesis 1, we encounter a God who delights in order, rhythm, and the co-operation of complementary groups (light-dark, earth-sea-sky, fish-birds-animals of the earth, man-woman, humanity-divinity.) This system is very good.

We also encounter humanity, male and female, who are visible likenesses, representatives of this invisible God. We are made in God's image. The Greek translation of verse 27 used a word which comes to us in English as *icon*. An icon is a visible representation of something else. The icons on your computer screen are small pictures that represent a vast array of files, images, sounds, and data. When you click on the icon you are exposed to all of this information. Human beings are the icons of God. Our purpose is to so represent our heavenly Father that when people "click" on us, talk with us, watch us, get to know us; when they see us interacting with others, when they see us interacting with animals and vegetation, lakes and seas, they get to know God!

The same order and complementary co-operation that brings delight to God, brings delight (and thus peace) to us. And, through the icons of God, to the world: human and animal alike.

To that end, our Father left us with two explicit and one implicit instruction which serve as a prelude for the story that unfolds in the rest of scripture.

The implicit instruction:

Partner with God and so represent Him as an icon represents the file that is behind it.

The explicit instructions:

Multiply and fill the earth,

Subdue and have dominion over all of creation.

We have done well with the multiply and fill the earth command!

However, by corrupting the command to subdue and have dominion in such a way that we use the resources of this planet to serve our own purposes – as though creation exists to serve our needs (which, is the nature of the non-Israelite gods who created humanity to serve them; Yahweh creates in order to share himself with us in partnership!) – we have failed to be the image-bearers of God.

The consequence: our personal lives and thus the societies in which we live are far from orderly, peaceful systems. Natural resources are devastated daily, wars continue, some people throw out food while others go hungry; even in the privacy of our hearts and minds there is little peace.

This is entropy.

3. In this story we encounter a God who also is not apathetic to the chaos. A God who understands and who is not content to let the chaos reign and so, applies the force needed to reduce the entropy. We encounter a God who breathes peace over the troubled waters.

This is a God I want to know!

This is a God to whom I want to submit my thoughts, my emotional reactions, and my physical actions!

This is a God about whom I want to read!

We are in the Easter season. The most decisive action God took in reducing the entropy was when he bore the full brunt of the chaos on that God-forsaken cross at Calvary.

When Jesus was resurrected from the dead, God began the work of reclaiming from the chaos and renewing all of creation. Jesus is the first fruit of the renewed creation. He is the renewed Adam. Jesus is the perfect icon of the invisible Father.

And in that locked room he appeared to his confused and anxious disciples and once again breathed over his creation and said: “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. ... Receive the Holy Spirit, and forgive.”

4. Another Easter season is here in which we are once again behind closed doors. Some of us are confused and anxious. Some of us are angry or sad.

When Jesus breathed over the troubled disciples; and, when he gives us his Spirit which we receive at baptism, we become a type of first fruit together with Christ, a type of Adam and a type of Eve.

And, Jesus sends us in the power of the Holy Spirit into our days – whether that’s behind our locked doors at home or behind our masks at work, Jesus sends us in the power of the Holy Spirit into our days as icons of the invisible God.

He sends us to show who He is by how we interact with our family members, our neighbours, and ourselves.

He sends us to show who He is by how we extend grace, mercy, and forgiveness in His name.

He sends us to show who He is by how we interact with animals, plants, water, and air – yet another Earth Day is soon upon us, let’s not continue to corrupt God’s command to have dominion over His creatures (more on that next week).

He even sends us to show who He is by how we treat time. How we use the hours of the day. How we use the days of the week. How we use the weeks of this pandemic year.

Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Amen.

Hymn #334 “God who gives to life its goodness”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAKV9ucJ2AY>

We respond with faith and service³

God our Maker,
Source of Easter power and hope,
You have walked with your faithful people through many generations,
people facing challenge and uncertainty,
people seeking your purpose and promise.
We still face challenges and uncertainty, even with Easter in our hearts.
Walk with us and with those for whom we pray for this day,
so that your resurrecting power may lead us in lives of faithfulness.
In the name of Christ our Risen Lord,
All: Hear our prayer.

We pray for children and young people
who must think about the future in uncertain times
facing threats new to this generation like the pandemic and climate change.
Give them hope rooted in the knowledge that their lives matter to you.
Show them how to make a difference in the world,
whatever threats they face as they grow.
In the name of Christ our Risen Lord,
All: Hear our prayer.

We pray for people for whom age or experience, illness or disability
create barriers to full participation in your world.
Surround each one in pain or despair with your comfort
and renew in each one a sense of dignity and purpose.
Show them how much they matter to you and to us.
In the name of Christ our Risen Lord,
All: Hear our prayer.

We pray for all those facing grief and loss in these difficult days
when it is still so hard to gather for support.
Stay with those who must rearrange their lives without their beloved.
Give them strength and comfort through your promise of resurrection.
We pray for communities challenged by forces beyond their control—
natural disaster, political strife and the economic consequence of the pandemic.
Give courage to those facing challenges, and wisdom to those who lead,
so that well-being may be restored soon
and hope for the future prevail.
In the name of Christ our Risen Lord,
All: Hear our prayer.

As Earth Day approaches this week,

³ Ibid.

we remember before you the struggles within your creation,
creatures losing habitat, unique species dying out, oceans filled with plastic,
the climate warming and the havoc that results for all of us.

Jesus, you are the firstborn of all creation;

Help us to honour you by caring for the earth and its fragile balances
in the ways we live and the priorities we set.

In these ways, too, we would be your disciples
and so we pray the words you taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

God sends us with His blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you,
the Lord be kind and gracious to you,
the Lord look upon you with favour,
and grant you peace.

Amen.