

Olivet Christian Church Worship
Sunday, April 19, 2020
Creation Care Sunday

Call to Worship

God created the world, the stars and the sky;
And God saw that it was good.
God created all plants and life that grows;
And God declared it good.
God created all living creatures in the world;
And God said, "It is good."
We were created in the image of God;
And God called us to care for the world.
Let us celebrate God, our Creator;
May we live into the image of God, and care for
all of creation as God cares for us.

Scripture: *Genesis 1:24—2:4a*

²⁴ God said, "Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife." And that's what happened. ²⁵ God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was. ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth."

²⁷ God created humanity in God's own image,
in the divine image God created them,
male and female God created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground." ²⁹ Then God said, "I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose

fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food. ³⁰ To all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—I give all the green grasses for food." And that's what happened. ³¹ God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good.

There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.

2 The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed. ² On the sixth day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. ³ God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation. ⁴ This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Prayer

God of unchangeable power, when you fashioned the world, the morning stars sang together and the whole of heaven shouted for joy. Open our souls to the wonders of creation and teach us to manage faithfully the riches of this good earth, from the tiniest insect to the great whales in the ocean, and all that lives in between. Make us mindful of our responsibility to all living beings; and keep us aware of what we can do to create justice for our sisters and brothers in having health, safety, clean air to breathe and water to drink. Keep us awake. Make us faithful stewards. Through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Message

Rev. Coletta Eichenberger

This morning, I will begin by bringing our focus and attention to the gift of sound, of vibration. I have become aware of the reality that we live in a sea of sound. The vibration of sound waves that find their way into our ears, and through the gift and power of hearing, the mechanism of outer ear, middle ear, and the spirals and bones of the inner ear, also called a labyrinth, and are responsible for both hearing and equilibrium. Much of the time, we receive this through spoken words. Many times, depending on our personal patterns, we receive this vibration through music. I am keenly attuned to the language in both Genesis and the Gospel of John, that in the beginning --- God said, and through vibration, through a spoken word, created. In the beginning was the Word, and all that was made was made through the Word. So, vibration, this sea of sound has catapulted us into being. And carries us across dimensions. When we listen to music that resonates within our bodies, and deeper into our spirit, we are lifted to a different place, a place outside of the envelope of our skin, and muscle and bone. We are transported by songs of justice; songs of peace; instrumentation of cello or piano or organ; or the body instrument of a genius like Bobby McFerrin, who creates tones and levels that come from deep within, and somewhere beyond here and now. The sound of the voice of a loved one, the voice of a child, the babble of a baby, the resonance of a poem, or amazing piece of prose. Vibration carries us, transports us, connects us across barriers and boundaries. We were created with a word; and we live in a sea of sound. The first act of Creation is vibration. And God said, "That's Good!"

Tone the bowls for a minute or two. And God said, "That's Good!"

This Care of Creation Sunday, this coronavirus virtual reality Sunday, this second Sunday in Easter, we need many reminders of what it is like to be in community. We need reminders of what we so love about being in a body, what we love about being THE BODY of Christ, what we celebrate as Resurrection People who were created from dust, created with breath, created with a Word, created for Love, created for relationship. We come through these airwaves to receive, and remember whose we are and who we are as God's people, created in God's image. And our scriptures remind us that we are here as stewards of the tangible manifestations of this vibrational created order. And with each act of creation, first with a Word, and then with a physical manifestation, God declares all as Good!

I have been conscious of a heightened sense of both hearing and seeing, as I take walks with Bob and our dog, Lobo. On a trail near our house, I saw redbud trees, the colors brilliant. I saw the hollowed out trunk of a tree long dead, and was aware of the shape, size, and absence of bark of the huge body along the trail; then a fallen tree, that stretched across a path, and made an arc, through which I could see the creek, and hear the water, and it was bright and clear. Perhaps you have your stories too of things you've seen and heard these recent weeks that made you aware that in the stillness and lessened activity, something else has come into sharper relief, and you are noticing in a new way. And God said, "This is good!"

As people have sent greetings across the Marco Polo site, I've noticed what is shared – videos of children playing, of new buds and new flowers, and gardens being tended to, of playful, affectionate pets, of lambs being born, of baking cakes or bread, and savoring tastes and savoring time together, un hurried, less pressure, less to buy, less to produce. Time. Space. Openness.

Be-ing. And I am aware that in times of great stress, in times of crisis, these things ground us, connect us to our emotional roots, and our physical roots, and offer us experiences of grace. “God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground, and God saw how good it was. And, we, we were created as part of this grand diversity; as part of the cacophony of vibration, sight and sound, and God saw everything God had made, and it was supremely good!!

And perhaps in the gaping space between us in this time of social distancing, we are painfully aware of what separates us, and what we so need and long for in connecting as the human family, as God’s children, as two-legged manifestations of this image of God. In this time when what comes across the airwaves are images and words to give us the latest death toll; the latest incidents of infection; the latest data that confirms what we have known somewhere in our brains and hearts before now, that those who are the most deeply affected are those who have the most to lose. We get confirmation that this deadly virus has disproportionately impacted women, men and children of color because our racial history and present insures that they will have the fewest resources. They will have little to no safety net, and the grief and death that comes from the great disparities in income, access to good health care, good food, and environmental degradation cry out to us in our comfort and privilege. And the Risen Christ reminds us that he died fighting the powers and principalities that create divisions such as these, and asks us to see, to hear, to open our hearts and minds, and commit to action on behalf of the ones whose voices are rarely heard. Our time is now.

In the distancing, in the transmission of this virus, in the global scale of this pandemic, not seen like anything in the past 100 years, we have had our

awareness heightened that indeed we are so intricately connected --- human to human, animal to human, we breathe the same air, we understand the impact of touch, and we are guided to take nothing for granted. May we who have voices that can be heard use them for those who are not seen or heard. May our speech, our hearts and souls vibrate from our personal conversations to the halls of power that all may be honored and valued.

Among the voices that reverberate across the centuries, decades, and years, I want to share these visions, dreams and warnings:

Chief Seattle, who set down in letters and speeches, the rights of Native Americans and the environmental responsibilities of the powers that be, offers us this wisdom:

Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.

Only when the last tree has died and the last river has been poisoned and the last fish has been caught, will we realize that we cannot eat money.

Martin Luther King, Jr. ***We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there “is” such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action.***

Barbara Brown Taylor, Episcopal priest, prolific author and preacher, in her book ***The Luminous Web*** writes: ***Where is God in this picture? God is all over the place. God is up there, down here, inside my skin and out. God is the web, the energy, the space, the light – not captured in***

them, as if those concepts were more real than what unites them – but revealed in that singular, vast net of relationship that animates everything there is.

Greta Thunberg, 17 year old Swedish environmental activist who spoke passionately at the United Nations Climate Summit: ***I shouldn't be here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet, you all come to us young people for hope. How dare you? You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. Yet, I am one of the lucky ones. People are suffering.***

In April, 2016, after many conversations, the Sustainable Living Group, and many members of Olivet, signed the Alverna Covenant, which reads thus:

Whereas:

*God has created the world with finite resources;
God has given to us the stewardship of the earth;
God has established order through many natural cycles;*

And it is evident that:

We are consuming resources at a rate that cannot be maintained; We are interrupting many natural cycles; We are irresponsibly modifying the environment through consumption and pollution;

As a member of the human family and a follower of Jesus Christ, I hereby covenant that:

I will change my lifestyle to reduce my contributions to pollution; I will support recycling efforts; I will search for sustainable lifestyles; I will work for public policies which lead to a just and sustainable society; and I will share these concerns with others and urge them to make this covenant.

And God heard your words, and this covenant you made and are making, and God declared, "That's good!"

May it be so. Amen.

Benediction

May the Spirit move us to protect the Very Good that God has made.

May our Creator show us the way to live more gently, and restore our home.

May we burn with compassionate love and justice for all creation, recognizing anew the world that is all one with us, as we hear God again say: "It is very good!"

And now may God bless you,
And bless you kindly. Amen.