

Grounded in God's Creation Part 1 – Earth

Grounded in God's Creation.

Well, I have to admit that I struggled with writing the sermon this week. I thought I had it all in my head when I organized the order of service a week ago, but I guess I then got Covid brain, and everything became a blur!

On Friday I wrote, and I rewrote my reflection, and then I still felt that God was telling me to say something else!

So, yesterday morning when I woke up, and I was feeling much better – I felt a Spirit nudge telling me to go out into my garden, and to ground myself in God's earth. So, that's what I did!

I went out in my housecoat and slippers, and I stood on the grass in my bare feet (I don't know what the neighbors thought!) – and in that moment, I truly felt that I absorbed God's presence through the ground.

I experienced the sacredness of the earth!

We are standing on Holy Ground!

We don't need to be in a church building, or a sacred Gathering Space, because all earth is sacred. And at this Season of Creation, we are especially reminded about how we can be grounded in God through Creation.

In every faith tradition there stands a story of creation – and whether you believe in the ancient Jewish story retold in Genesis, or the Algonquin stories of Wisakedjak and the forming of Turtle Island, or the fierce tales of Viking frost giants and how their bodies formed the earth – it really doesn't matter!

Because what's important is that in every explanation, and in every story about creation, there is always a sense of Divine Mystery. There is always a sense that earth is sacred.

Most creation stories begin with the sky and earth intertwined in darkness, and then a Divine presence bringing forth light to make oceans, land, and sky.

Our story in Genesis begins that way.

We hear the Earth described as an inky blackness. It is empty and devoid of anything. But God's Spirit hovers over it – then breathes light into it.

Now some like to believe that this story is a literal scientific account – but I like Old Testament scholar, Walter Bruggeman's notion; he describes our story in Genesis as a 'liturgical poem'.

He says:

"It invites a community in worship to consider and celebrate the world as God intended it to be."

As God intended it to be – I take that to mean, sacred and holy!

And even if you one to totally dismiss the notion of Creation, and prefer to stick to the scientific explanation of the Big Bang Theory – there is still the question of how it all began?

There is still a sense of Divine presence in creation.

The ancient Celtic Christians understood that. They had a deep understanding that God was present in the earth. They believed that the Spirit of God was *in* and was *with* all things, including the very ground on which we walk. They had a deep spiritual intimacy between the land, and the Creator.

But somehow, after the industrial revolution, Christianity began to lose that connection. The land became an object to be managed and controlled, rather than worshiped and adored.

The idea of worshiping God through the earth was considered pagan- and God was literally moved indoors to beautifully adorned buildings with tall steeples.

But, in doing so, we somehow lost the soil-yness of God.

I think that since that time we have been struggling to find our way back to our connection with the earth.

Theologian Diana Butler Bass in her book 'Grounded' writes:

"... we struggle to understand that we are animated dirt. Soil and life joined. From living ground we were made; to living ground we will return."

I think our Indigenous brothers and sister truly understand that. They have a deep respect for our relationship to the earth. There is a Cree proverb that says:

"we do not own the land, the land owns us. It feeds us, and clothes us, and lets us run free until the time comes to claim us back again."

Perhaps that is the meaning behind the song in our More Voices hymnbook called O Beautiful Gaia. The word Gaia comes from the Greek goddess of the earth – mother of all life. The words of the hymn are:

O Beautiful Gaia, O Gaia, calling us home.

O beautiful Gaia, calling us on.

Our scientific knowledge has sometimes forced us into a need to explain everything. It has stopped us from just being willing to experience a sense of Divine Mystery when it comes to the earth.

A couple of year ago I had the wonderful opportunity to visit a rainforest in Meares Island, BC. It is a protected forest, with trees that are over 2000 years old. As you walk through that forest, there is a sense of sacredness in the earth. There's a feeling that we are deeply connected to the earth on which we walk.

I actually made a video of my time there, and I will share it with you in the Shorelines next week.

Perhaps it is easier to feel God's presence in Creation when you are in a rainforest. I know it can be hard to remember that God is in the earth beneath us when we walk cement pavements, or drive asphalt roadways.

Maybe we all need to sometimes stand on the grass in our bear feet! Maybe we need to reflect on the fact that when we stand on the soil, we standing atop a vast underground kingdom of microorganisms. Trillions of microorganisms are in your own backyard, without which, life as we know it would not exist.

Maybe we all need to take time to scoop up a handful of dirt and remember that an entire eco system is in a handful of soil.

I don't know about you, but I most certainly have a sense of Divine Mystery when I try to comprehend that.

It is no wonder that sometimes the soil is considered a sacrament!

The connection between the soil and God is repeated again and again in the bible – in fact 112 times! The Psalms are full of imagery about the sacredness of the soil and the earth.

Writer and priest John O Donohue explains that *“we are powerfully connected to the ground, and the soil is intimately related to how we understand and celebrate God.”*

In other words – we are grounded in God through the earth!
God is literally under our feet!

So, during this Season of Creation, I encourage you to take time to intentionally connect with God through the earth.

Take some time to maybe dig in the garden and feel the dirt between your fingers.

Or take off your shoes and socks to feel the soil beneath your feet.

And as you do, remind yourself that you are always grounded in God, because God is present in the very earth on which you walk.

Amen.

As we reflect on God’s presence in the earth, let’s listen to the song O Beautiful Gaia from More Voices.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9669Urv5Ss&ab_channel=WPUC