

Scripture:

Psalm 19

### **Creation's Sanctuary**

When the worship committee came up with today's theme "Bubbling With Excitement" I loved the idea. The first verse that came to mind was Psalm 23:5 "You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows." And then as I leapt deeper into the theme for this first Sunday of the season of creation I thought of the many verses where creation celebrates and praises like Isaiah 55:12 "You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands."

And I began to imagine creation as a sanctuary praising God. According to Isaiah 6.3, "the whole Earth is filled with God's glory, the visible presence of God pulsing through creation." And so in this season of creation I want to encourage us (just as we attempt to do every Sunday) to carry our worship into our daily lives. What if we believed that all of earth was our sanctuary and on Sundays we "enter this sanctuary to worship and invoke the name of this God, Creator, Christ and Spirit, whose presence fills our planet."<sup>1</sup>

One author wrote "We need to commence with a theology that focuses on worship if we are to change our orientation to this endangered planet called Earth. We need to be conscious of the sacred place where we worship, a sanctuary called Earth. A sanctuary is a sacred or holy place, a location where the presence of God or the Other is experienced, a domain safe for flora and fauna, including humans, and a spiritual home where worship can be enjoyed.

All creation is sacred. All that exists has emerged as an expression of God's word. All of nature is sustained by God's Spirit. The entire cosmos bears the design of God's Wisdom. Everything everywhere has been touched by God, the Creator.

*All creation is sacred, but Earth is sacred in a special way. Earth is a sanctuary, a sanctuary chosen by God. This sanctuary is pulsating with God's presence and open for all to worship. It is in this sanctuary that we invoke the presence of our Creator. It is this sanctuary we enter to celebrate a Season of Creation.*

*God's glory may have been seen in the past at certain times in certain sacred places on Earth, such as the tabernacle or the temple. This text, however, makes it clear that God's glory, God's presence, may be seen in all of Earth.*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://seasonofcreation.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/a-theology-of-sanctuary.pdf>

just as the tabernacle and the temple were sanctuaries of God's presence, Earth is also a sanctuary of God's glory, God's visible presence. God, it seems, has chosen Earth as one planet in the cosmos to fill with a sacred pulsating presence. Earth is much more than a ball of water, dirt and air spinning through space. Earth is more than a speck of stardust that spawned life. Earth is God's sanctuary. Earth is a sacred site in the cosmos."<sup>2</sup>

I believe The Holy must consider all of creation and cosmos sacred for it is a holy piece of work and art. We as part of the Earth, and part of creation have the opportunity to be a part of that sanctuary, that sacred earth.

Martin Luther said "God's presence is 'in, with and under' every atom and organism of this physical world." The Apostle Paul said it is within God that we "Live and move and have our being" That is why I chose today's scripture Psalm 19 because it is filled with beautiful images of God's creation praising in the sanctuary of earth.

"The skies keep announcing the glory of God, The firmament proclaims his creation. Day talks to day And night communicates with night!

There is speech, but no words, Their voice is not heard!  
Yet their voice goes out through all of Earth  
And their words to the end of the world. (Ps. 19-1-4)

According to this Psalm, the skies above are conscious of the glory of God, the silent shimmering presence of God in creation. Night and day echo their message about God's presence, but all in silence. Communication is experienced throughout creation even when no vocal word is spoken. Creation is conscious of Earth as a sanctuary.

"Luther speaks of the masks of God (*larvae dei*) in creation. According to Luther, the face or presence of God is behind all creation. Earth is filled with God's presence/glory. Nature is like a mass of masks—everything from lizards to lightning, from snakes to sunsets, are masks of God...

Psalm 19 suggests that ...There is also an impulse in creation to reveal the very presence of God to those who have spirits that see or souls that hear. The skies are 'proclaiming' the presence of God. This impulse to reveal is more than the traditional claim that one can argue for the existence of a Creator on the basis of the wonder and majesty of creation. Earth is a sanctuary in which the sacred impulses of life are being revealed; God's presence is proclaimed by the skies.

And, according to Isaiah 6.3, the whole Earth is filled with that glory, that impulse to reveal God's presence. That means, I believe, that not only is Earth spiritual, filled with divine

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<sup>2</sup> IBID

presence, but that Earth has a hidden impulse to reveal that presence to those willing to see, hear, feel or discern it.”<sup>3</sup>

I think many of us here are nature people, so most of what I’m saying will come as more of a reminder than a surprise. For me when I am out in the majestic creation, skiing the mountaintop, sailing the ocean, or paddling a dragon boat in the Cattermole Slough, out to Shannon Falls, or towards a backdrop of Diamond Head I am often in awe of the sanctuary of the earth. I sense God and often worship in those places.

*“If our spirit becomes sensitive to this Earth as God’s sanctuary, we can become conscious of God’s glory in the soil as well as the sunset, the fronds of a fern as well as the eyes of a lion.*

There may indeed be other sacred sites God has chosen in the cosmos. There may be other planets filled with life. And God’s pulsating presence is everywhere (Ps. 139.7-12). Wherever the mysteries of life may yet be discovered in the cosmos, we are assured that this planet called Earth is a chosen place, a sanctuary, a sacred site in which we are privileged to live and worship.”<sup>4</sup>

“One of the problems we face as we seek to expand our spiritual consciousness and enter Earth as our sanctuary for worship, is our long history of worshipping in church buildings. Our orientation has been similar to that of Jacob. He had a remarkable dream one night and saw a ladder reaching up into heaven, with angels ascending and descending. When he awoke he was suitably amazed and called the place Bethel or the ‘house of God’ and declared it to be ‘the gate of heaven’ (Gen. 28.17).

Like Jacob, we have tended to view the church as a place apart from the rest of creation, a spiritual site where we can come closer to God in worship. Ultimately, however, the church has been viewed as a point of communication with the other world, with the domain of God, with heaven. Worship in such a sanctuary could become a place of escape from this world, a way of shutting out creation and all the curses it seemed to suffer, and making contact with the holy world of heaven.

*A theology of sanctuary recognises the whole Earth as sacred, as a planet chosen to preserve all forms of life. Earth is not only filled with God’s presence, but with an infinite number of living presences that God has selected to live here. Earth is a sanctuary where the sacredness of all life is to be revered.*

The living presence was seen in Jesus Christ. What amazing biology! The impulse behind all life has become a single life, a single human being with a heart, an arterial system and a pulse. Here God is not some detached figure in the distant heavens. God joins the web of life. God is not

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<sup>3</sup> IBID

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present as a spirit *in* a body; God has become one of us, part of our biology. In Jesus we hear the heart beat of God and feel the pulse of God's presence."<sup>5</sup>

And so as we enter into this season of creation together, as we celebrate the sanctuary of the earth and as we begin a new season in our congregation "Actioning our Dreams" and moving forward in new and amazing ways perhaps we too can be challenge to see God in new places and new ways. Perhaps we can discover new forms of worship, faith, love and grace together.

May it be so. Amen.

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<sup>5</sup> IBID