## What Is Creation Saying to Us?

# Third Sunday, Year A: Work with Me!

Texts (non-lectionary): Genesis 1:30, Matthew 13:1–8, Isaiah 55:10–11 or Ecclesiastes 3

Submitted by Eileen Lavigne

#### Preparation

*Decorate the church with pumpkins, orange flowers, and vegetables. As the people come in, give each person an orange bookmark to decorate at home.*

*In the bulletin prior to this Sunday, invite people to bring food items for the local food bank. These items will be collected during the Offering.*

#### Scripture Sentence

Genesis 1:30

*(Reading very slowly, the reader gestures toward the flowers and vegetables on display.)*

And God saw everything that [God] had made and, indeed, it was very good.

#### Call to Worship

One: The God of creation provided and sustains this beautiful world for us to share with all and with future generations yet to come.

**All: We are called to be the planet’s caretakers.**

One: God created us in the Divine’s own image

**All: and set us free to be stewards of the earth.**

One: God calls us to work together, as one worldwide community.

**All: Let us worship God that we may work well on behalf of Mother Nature.**

#### Opening Prayer

Through our worship of you this morning,

may we find our hearts and minds

united with your Creating Spirit.

Help us to be worthy

of the gift of life you share with us.

Inspire us in this hour together

so that we may care more deeply for your good earth.

Amen.

#### Opening Hymn

“This Is God’s Wondrous World” (VU 296)

“Creator God You Gave Us Life” (MV 27)

#### Prayer of Confession

We confess to you, Sacred Creator,

that we have not always taken care of our environment.

We are sorry for the ways we’ve abused it:

wasting it,

hoarding it,

destroying it,

taking it for granted.

Forgive our foolish ways.

*(A moment of silence for private confession)*

For these and all our foolish ways, we pray,

forgive us, loving God.

Guide us to work diligently with our beloved Earth.

With faith and assurance may we find ourselves

in new relationships with all of your Creation. Amen.

#### Assurance of Pardon

God is always willing and ready

to forgive us and to guide us.

As we strive to live in harmony

with the Holy Spirit,

our daily work and play yield

abundant fruit for all.

We are forgiven.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

#### Children’s Time

*This is an active children’s time. Invite the children to pretend they are: flowers, birds, trees, the sun, stars, and grass. For each invitation and as they move and dance around, have them sing “Halle Halle Halle” or an appropriate similar refrain. Then chat with the children about being those parts of creation, e.g., What would it be like to be a flower? What would a flower like? What would a flower not like?*

*End with a brief prayer of thanks for the challenge God gives each of us to have compassion and love for all creation and to work hard to help other people feel that way.*

#### Scripture Suggestions

Matthew 13:1–8, Isaiah 55:10-11 or Ecclesiastes 3

*It can be very effective if the Matthew text is read as customary, i.e. as a teaching from Jesus, and the Isaiah text follows after (with no/minimal break between the texts) so that it flows as an enriching of the parable.*

Hymn

“In the Bulb There Is a Flower” (VU 703)

#### Sermon

In the beginning God created and looked at God’s handiwork and saw that it was good. The Holy One was pleased with it, and down through the many generations human beings have enjoyed Creation. They have used it to grow food for their families, and to provide shelter and security. God’s Creation was and is a source of life for everyone.

Is it that way today? In some areas, yes, and in some, no—in some places it has been abused to the point that the region can no longer be used as a source of life. *(Name examples, both distant and local.)*

We need to care about these places and encourage our neighbours to do the same. *(Again, provide some concrete examples of what can be done in your context to overcome the damage and destruction caused to nature.)* For example do we really use the three Rs: reuse, reduce, and recycle? In what ways are they a part of our daily lives? We need to think twice before we, too, do some action that will cause harm to Creation.

What about the way we treat the animals and birds? Many of them have been used cruelly as sources of food and clothing—I like to think of St. Francis and his love of animals (many churches observe his love on the first Sunday in October). But what might we do for abandoned pets? To stop puppy mills? The slaughter houses? Circus animals? Zoos?

*(Provide local examples of actions that have made a difference.)*

Consider the seed Christ imagines as planted in each of us to work for Creation: where has it fallen within us? And how do we fit the Isaiah text with the desecration of the earth? What does that say about God?

God is calling us to set an example for the future and working together to preserve Creation can be an awesome experience. Yet, while many people are involved in this activity, many more are needed right here, right now. If we come together and seek God’s guidance, then as we work together, our efforts will be rewarded and all Creation will rejoice before God who is continuing to create—the wondrous Circle of Life.

#### Hymn

“All Praise to You” (VU 297)

“Behold, Behold” (MV115) or “Called by Earth and Sky” (MV 135)

#### Invitation to the Offering

Let us present our gifts for our Creator. And as this is the time of year when we give thanks for the harvest, each person is welcome to bring forth a food item (for the food bank) which represents a fruit of the earth. *(If the church has a screen, pictures highlighting Creation could be shown while the offering is being received.)*

#### Offering Dedication

Loving Father, accept these gifts we bring this day.

May they be used to further your work in this community and beyond.

May they be in some special way a rich reflection of our work on behalf of your Creation

and thus of your good seed growing in our good soil. Amen.

#### Prayers of the People

You, Lord, are our Shepherd, our Guide, and our Creator. You are the one in whom we place our trust.

Thank you for the gifts of rain and sun that you send to help seeds grow.

Thank you for our mountains and great oceans, tall forests, and sunny prairies.

Thank you for the beauty of the robin’s song at dusk, and for the eagle’s screech high in the sky above us.

Thank you for (*examples from local context)*.

We pray for the farmers everywhere who plant seeds that become food and for fishing fleets who harvest your provisions from the seas. We thank you for all who work in mines bringing up gems that glimmer in our jewellery, oil and gas that heat our home. We thank you for *(include local examples).*

We pray for all with special needs, especially remembering this day *(names).*

And lastly, we pray for ourselves that we may always be a committed community of believers, ready to take up the hard work of truly caring for your Creation. *(Include local needs.)*

We unite our hearts and voices as we say together the prayer that you taught us: Our Father…

#### Hymn

“We Have this Ministry” (VU 510)

“You Who Watch the Highest Heavens” (MV 152)

#### Dismissal

We have gathered to seek the Presence,

to hear Christ’s word,

and to give praise for God’s gift of Creation.

As we go out into the world,

may we work together

in our homes, work places, and city

to ensure Creation is protected.

And may we take time this week

to enjoy its beauty and thank God for it.

And all the people say, **Amen!**