## What Is Creation Saying to Us?

# Fourth Sunday, Year A: Love me!

Texts (non-lectionary): Genesis 2:5–15, 1 Kings 19:8–12 (or 1 Kings 19:1–13), Job 38

Submitted by Pat Milliken

### Gathering

#### Gathering Words

This morning,

the sun’s first rays called the day into light.

Did you hear

the chatter and song of birds

breaking the silence of pre-dawn night?

Did you see,

the colours of dawn

stretched across the heavens?

Did you feel

the cool night air

shifting to a morning breeze?

Creation is stirring;

our day has begun.

#### Sung (or Spoken) Response

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty!

Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee,

holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,

God in three persons, blessed Trinity! (VU 315)

Or

“Morning Has Broken” (VU 409 verse 1)

Some of us woke from peaceful slumber,

refreshed and renewed.

Or perhaps it was a long, endless night

of sleep deprived hours.

Or even the tormented dreams

of a restless mind.

Yet we have gathered here.

Whether reluctant or joyful,

weary or rested,

we raise our voices in song and praise.

#### Sung (or Spoken) Response

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty!

Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee,

Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,

God in three persons, blessed Trinity! (VU 315)

Or

“Morning Has Broken” (VU 409 verse 1)

#### Gathering Prayer

Creating One,

here we are, a gathering of your people;

evidence of Creation’s unfolding,

we come,

all shapes and all sizes

all ages and life stages.

We come

on dancing feet

or carefully walking.

We come

hesitant and unsure,

or filled with conviction and knowing our way.

However we come,

we are here to join with all of creation in praise and thanksgiving.

Accept our gift of worship

as with one voice,

one hope, one love,

we gather into praise.

#### Song of Praise

“Called by Earth and Sky” (MV 135)

Or

“All Things Bright and Beautiful” (VU 291)

### Listening

#### Story Time for All God’s Children

##### Scripture focus: Genesis 2:5–15

*This story may be told as is or illustrated with props displayed as the story unfolds. It may also be told interactively with the children adding their thoughts on the creation of a human creature and what may have been planted in the first garden.*

A story of Creation’s first garden as told in Genesis, the first book of our Bible…

In the beginning, after planets and stars had been sent on their travels, after earth had been formed and placed in its orbit, but before plants and seeds were created and before the first rain had fallen, God sat down upon the earth, reached into the dirt, and pulled up a handful of mud.

God began to shape and form and mould a human creature. First there was a body and then arms with hands and fingers, legs with feet and toes, and a head for the top, fully equipped with eyes, ears, nose, and a mouth.

Eyes to see,

ears to hear,

a nose to smell,

and a mouth to whistle, and sing, and talk.

When the human was finished, God blew gently into its nose; the human took a deep breath and began to live.

The next thing God did was to choose a corner of the earth where a great fiver flowed—the source of four great rivers—the Pishon and the Gibon, the Tigress and the Euphrates. Into this corner of the earth, God placed trees: sturdy, determined oak trees; bending, dancing aspen; sedate maple trees; perpendicular pines; sheltering elms; ash trees for basket weaving; cedar for fibre; chestnut for food; willow for medicine.

Into the garden God placed fruits: strawberries and raspberries; kiwis and grapes; large, glowing watermelon and tiny, precious currents; apples, oranges, figs, dates, olives, pears, and of course succulent peaches; an endless number of fruits to nourish and delight.

God planted a garden and into this garden God placed the human creature:

to guard and to cultivate

to tend and to till

to treasure and to love

to care for the garden

and to call it home.

#### Prayer

A long time after the first human learned to love and care for the earth, another human is said to have wandered the earth, planting apple trees. He is said to have sung this song—perhaps you know it and can sing it with me as our prayer of thanksgiving:

Oh, the Lord is good to me

and so I thank the Lord,

for giving me the things I need,

the sun and the rain and the apple seed.

The Lord is good to me.

*Or*

*Send the children on a virtual or real scavenger hunt to find things in God’s creation that:*

*▪ make them smile*

*▪ make them laugh*

*▪ make them feel sad*

*They might take digital photos or draw pictures of the things they find and then bring them back for the reflection time, later in the service.*

#### Reflective Reading

##### Storm Clouds Gathering

In the middle weeks of July,

in the midst of a heat wave,

when temperatures soared,

humidity gathered,

and the song of the cicadas sizzled through

endless hot nights,

plants and people

animals and insects wilted.

The air was without breath or breeze.

Oppressive. Still.

In that moment

clouds gathered on the horizon,

dark and ominous in the still, summer air.

A slight current stirred;

the darkness of sky stretched over the land;

winds grew in ferocity;

trees bent to the earth;

branches writhed and twisted.

The air became a cacophony of rushing sound

as the rain hit.

Pounding against the earth, driving against the fields, drowning the world in white noise.

Life twisted;

branches torn

trees shattered.

Abruptly—

wind faded,

rain eased,

clouds scattered into

silence.

In a storm-bruised world

the litter of broken leaves

the debris of branches scattered

the chaos of trees uprooted.

Devastated lives,

devasted hearts.

Stripped of sound and fury

the air was clear and cool,

still and silent.

Into the silence came the booming drum beat

of our neighbourhood bullfrog.

Speaking reassurance from the roadside ditch.

Gently came the first call of killdeer

and the muted sigh of mourning doves.

#### Scripture Reading

1 Kings 19:8–12 (or 1 Kings 19:1–13 for a longer reading)

*This reading is part of the story of the prophet Elijah. The story is of a time when Elijah is running for his life, seeking a place of safety. The reading begins where he journeys to Sinai, the holy mountain, and hides in a cave.*

#### Reflection

*Those who have borne witness to the impact of a windstorm may understandably find, with Elijah, that the voice of God comes out of the silence, not out of the storm, yet to truly love creation requires us to listen to all of creation, the powerful storms in their stark beauty that reshape a landscape and destroy life as well as the gentle beauty of bird song or the preposterous thump of a bullfrog’s call. This challenge of loving creation may be a reminder that the coyote and wolf are as worthy of space on this earth as Bambi and his friends.*

*Explore this challenge of loving the totality of creation by naming our lament and sorrow for the elements of creation which dismay, concern, frighten, and challenge us (a conversation about mosquitoes and black flies, anyone?). In the naming may come acceptance and the beginning of understanding. Then we can move beyond sorrow and lament into praise, thanksgiving, and deeper love.*

*It may be possible to link this with the children’s scavenger hunt—finding that which makes us smile, makes us laugh, make us sad. Perhaps this time of reflection could be a virtual scavenger hunt for the adults and a guided conversation with children and adults:*

 *What is easy to love?*

 *What is difficult to love?*

 *How do you love, anyway?*

*What shape does/will our love for all of creation take, in concrete, tangible ways?*

#### Response to the Reflection

##### Question to the congregation: Job 38

*Have someone read the text or selected verses. Or adapt it to be read responsively with the congregation.*

##### Reply (from A Song of Faith)

We witness to Holy Mystery that is Wholly Love.

God is creative and self-giving,

 generously moving

 in all the near and distant corners of the universe.

Nothing exists that does not find its source in God.

Our first response to God’s providence is gratitude.

We sing thanksgiving.

Finding ourselves in a world of beauty and mystery,

 of living things, diverse and interdependent,

 of complex patterns of growth and evolution,

 of subatomic particles and cosmic swirls,

we sing of God the Creator,

the Maker and Source of all that is.

Each part of creation reveals unique aspects of God the Creator,

 who is both in creation and beyond it.

All parts of creation, animate and inanimate, are related.

All creation is good.

We sing of the Creator,

 who made humans to live and move

 and have their being in God.

In and with God,

 we can direct our lives toward right relationship

 with each other and with God.

We can discover our place as one strand in the web of life.

We can grow in wisdom and compassion.

We can recognize all people as kin.

We can accept our mortality and finitude, not as a curse,

but as a challenge to make our lives and choices matter.

#### Hymn

“It’s a Song of Praise to the Maker” (MV 30)

Or

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

### Responding

#### Gathering our Gifts

We are gifted by a world that delights and astonishes us,

frightens and informs us,

provides all that we need

and more than we should possibly want.

From the abundance we have received

we give our gifts of thanksgiving.

Our morning offering will be received.

#### Sung Response

Johnny Appleseed’s Prayer (as above)

“All Is Done for the Glory of God” (MV 34, verse 1)

“We Give You but Your Own” (VU 542)

#### Prayer of Dedication

Creating God, with these gifts we say thank you

for all of creation,

from ugly toads to gracious butterflies,

from startling storms to star-filled nights.

We are grateful to be a part of all that is.

Holy One,

whose breath is our life

and whose grace is our hope,

receive the gifts we offer.

Bless them that they may be faith lived out,

hope lived, and love given for this world. Amen.

#### Call to Prayer

“Open Our Hearts” (MV 21)

Or

“Lord, Listen to your Children Praying” (VU 400)

#### Prayer for the Day

*Prayers found at VU 929 and VU 930 fit well with this service. Or you may use some or all of the following.*

Holy One,

Breath of Creation, stir in us.

Open our hearts that we may see,

all of creation’s glory.

Open our hearts that we may know,

life is holy.

Open our hearts that we may love

with wonder and awe and reverence.

Creating One

We understand that we live within creation,

all woven together by the sacred breath of life.

We confess the times we have chosen to forget;

we name to you our careless greed

when habitat has been denied,

when invasive species have been introduced,

when thoughtless destruction has been allowed,

even encouraged.

We name to you the flight of bob-o-links,

the thump of bullfrogs,

the discreet beauty of the painted turtle,

the majesty of elm trees,

the upright strength of the ash,

—all of your creation that is diminished and threatened

by our disinterest, by our complacent greed.

Forgive us.

Help us to discover the second chance

of a growing awareness,

a deepened understanding,

an active love.

May we live wisely, with reverence for Creation.

May we live gently on this earth,

giving room,

sharing space,

providing for all.

We celebrate the steps taken to redeem this earth,

the tall grass prairie replanted,

the wild turkeys returned,

groves of trees re-established.

Bless us as we better love your creation.

To you we give our praise and thanksgiving

for all that delights,

for all that teaches,

for all that is wondrous,

for all of creation.

Thank you.

*Time for silent prayers*

Creating God,

we offer our prayers for humanity

for broken hearts and wounded spirits

for moments requiring strength and courage

for our daily needs.

*Time for silent prayer*

Holy One, we gather all or our prayers into one by

praying together ....

#### The Lord’s Prayer

*You may wish to use VU 916.*

#### Commissioning

With loving hearts,

and hands willing to serve,

we go into this world

singing with creation

and loving the earth ever more deeply.

#### Hymn

“Joyful, Joyful We Adore You” (VU 232)

“Grateful” (MV 182)