

## **Planet Earth Sunday**

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### **Gathering**

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*Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle.*

*This week, it would be appropriate to find a **green cloth** or scarf to signify that we are in a time of "growing".*

*Start by lighting the candle. The candle helps to centre us.*

*Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*

*A video of the prayers, readings and reflection can be found here:*

*<https://vimeo.com/597002198/201d34060f>*

### **Introduction**

*Today is Father's Day and it's also the beginning of the Season of Creation - over the next five Sunday's we'll be thinking about different aspects of creation*

*and our responsibility to care for, and act for, creation. We often encourage you to create a sacred space or light a candle as a sign of Jesus' presence. During the week you might like to collect some stones and place them somewhere that you will see them each day. As the weeks unfold there might be a word or a thought that touches your heart, perhaps you could use a permanent marker or liquid paper pen to write on the stones.*



### **Acknowledgement of Country**

*From the roar of the blow hole to the cliffs of the escarpment, down gushing waterfalls and along winding creeks and rivers, we acknowledge the traditional custodians, the Wodi Wodi people, who have cared for this land, and ask Your blessing on them this day.*

### **Call to Worship**

*As the days grow longer, birds seek out their partners and blossoms burst out of their tight buds we pause to give thanks for creation, so complex, vast and beautiful; so fragile. As we give thanks we also want to be part of the challenge and the warning encouraging all of us to act to protect our common home.*

### **Listen - For The Beauty Of The Earth (TIS 137)**

*<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIBkpAm3fhw>*

For the beauty of the earth,  
for the beauty of the skies,  
for the love which from our birth  
over and above us lies,  
Christ, our God to you we raise  
this our sacrifice of praise.

For the beauty of each hour  
of the day and of the night,  
hill and vale, and tree and flower,  
sun and moon and stars of light,  
Christ, our God to you we raise  
this our sacrifice of praise.

For the joy of ear and eye,  
for the heart and mind's delight,  
for the mystic harmony  
linking sense to sound and sight,  
Christ, our God to you we raise  
this our sacrifice of praise.

For the joy of human love,  
brother, sister, parent, child,  
friends on earth and friends above,  
for all gentle thoughts and mild,  
Christ, our God to you we raise  
this our sacrifice of praise.

For each perfect gift divine  
to our race so freely given,  
graces of your own design,  
flowers of earth and buds of heaven,  
Christ, our God to you we raise  
this our sacrifice of praise.

For the church that evermore,  
lifting holy hands above,  
offers up on every shore  
the pure sacrifice of love,  
Christ, our God to you we raise  
this our sacrifice of praise.

*Words: Folliott Sandford Pierpoint*

### **Today is also Father's Day.**

Our relationships with our fathers are often complicated.

For some of us, our father's love is like God's love – too deep, too long, too wide, too strong to measure.

Some of our dads were always there for us; some never were.

For some of us, God's love fills in the empty spaces our fathers left behind.

All of us are shaped by the relationship or lack of relationship with our fathers.

On this day when we remember what it means to have a father or be a father, we recognise the importance of fathers in our communities.

*(Source: Rev. Dr. LaGretta Bjorn, pastor, United Methodist Church)*

Often as fathers get older they regret some of the choices they have made, time spent at work not with their families, feeling that they haven't been able to get close to children or let them know how much they loved. For many men the last twelve months have made those regrets even greater.

Today there are dads who are cut off from their children and the isolation of the pandemic is making them feel hopeless. There are dads who are feeling desperate because of their work situation or lack of work. There are dads who are afraid because they don't know how they can provide for their families. Today there are dads who are struggling with anger and frustration that will lead to violence.

But in the last twelve months some dads have realised that the pandemic has given them a chance to spend time with their kids, to camp in the backyard, to play games and tell stories to create memories not regrets.

Today there are dads grieving children who have died. There are those grieving that they were never able to have children. There are those who are missing their father or never knew their father or are carrying the pain of being abused and rejected.

Father God, Jesus said to call you abba, our dad, the one we can always run to, so today we run to you asking that you would bring peace and comfort, that you would give strength and courage where it's needed, that you would provide help and understanding and support to those who need it, that you would be close to those who are broken by sadness.

Thank you for those who have been fathers in our lives and help us to be channels of your love to those around us. Amen.

### **Prayer of Confession**

Lord of life,

Things are not as they should be.

Our world is not as you intended.

We have overreached our place in the world.

We have upset the balance of nature.

We do not live in harmony with the environment.

We have exploited our planet.

Our devouring of resources is unnatural.

Our excesses are overbearing

Our destruction of the wild places is abhorrent

Our ignorance of the damage resulting from our lifestyle is inexcusable

We should be sorry.

We know the facts.

We have seen the effects.

But little do we change.

Do not forgive our token gestures.

Hold us accountable until we repent.

Disabuse us of our perverted selfish ways.

Grant us the shocking vision of the truth.

But also call us to your purpose.

Awaken in us the seeds of change.

Help us take up our responsibility.

Show us how to make amends.

Join us to your mission,

That our world may be renewed.

That we may be redeemed.

That the Creating Christ may be served.

In his name.

Amen.

*(c) Jon Humphries*

**Reading: Isaiah 35**

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,  
and rejoice with joy and singing.  
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,  
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.  
They shall see the glory of the Lord,  
the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands,  
and make firm the feeble knees.  
Say to those who are of a fearful heart,  
'Be strong, do not fear!  
Here is your God.  
He will come with vengeance,  
with terrible recompense.  
He will come and save you.'

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;  
then the lame shall leap like a deer,  
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.  
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,  
and streams in the desert;  
the burning sand shall become a pool,  
and the thirsty ground springs of water;  
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,  
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

A highway shall be there,  
and it shall be called the Holy Way;  
the unclean shall not travel on it,  
but it shall be for God's people;  
no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray.  
No lion shall be there,  
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;  
they shall not be found there,  
but the redeemed shall walk there.  
And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,  
and come to Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
they shall obtain joy and gladness,  
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

**Reading: Mark 7:24-37**

From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' But she answered him, 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' Then he said to her, 'For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.' So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened.' And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, 'He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.'

**Reflection**

Today's gospel has two accounts of Jesus healing someone and they really couldn't be more different. a Woman and a man; a Gentile and a Jew. First a word spoken at a distance, then mud and spit and touch. The first part of this reading is one of those readings a lot of folk would rather skip over. Jesus heads off to Tyre, trying to get away from the crowds that are gathering wherever He goes. But why there? What was Jesus doing there anyway and what's with the way he responds to this woman's request? His response is openly hostile or harsh at best. This poor woman has to beg and argue and even then Jesus sends her on her way "for saying that you may go".

Then Jesus goes back via Sidon and in the Decapolis region the deaf man is brought to Jesus. He takes him aside-no argument, no need for harsh words, instead we see Jesus becoming intimately involved in healing this man, he touches he, puts his fingers in his ears, puts his own spit on the man's tongue. It makes you want to cringe and draw back. It's all a bit too personal. Jesus is totally engaged in what's happening- he brings him aside, he speaks he prays, he touches and then he unties. It's an interesting word. Actually the word we see here is only used in one other place in the bible - the Isaiah reading.

And that chapter of Isaiah paints some beautiful images of what God's kingdom and God's rule is intended to look like – the desert rejoicing and filled with blossom – the crocus in bloom – can't help but think of Swamp Road after heavy rain when the fields are carpeted in crocus blooms. Joy and singing, majesty and glory. But Isaiah hasn't forgotten the hard times - right there in the middle there's a recognition that we face difficult days too – in the midst of the rejoicing, we are reminded to help those who are doing it tough – strengthen the weak hands, support those who find it hard to stand, encourage the ones who are afraid, get along side and remind them how much they are loved, that joy is possible, that they are not alone.

And that's where this word comes in; sight for the blind, hearing for the deaf, the lame dancing with joy and the tongue of the speechless untied so they can join in the song.

As I read these two passages it seemed to me that this encounter with the deaf man had something to say to us about how we care for our world, how we face up to our

responsibility as stewards of God's beautiful creation – Jesus spoke to the man Ephphatha, Be opened - then his ears were opened, his tongue was released and he spoke plainly.

We need to be listening for God's word to us, individually and as a community – and NO I don't just mean our church community – we belong to one another. Then his ears were opened – we need to learn and hear what's happening to our world and how we can help, even in little ways. Then his tongue was released and he spoke plainly – how are we speaking plainly – I think we do that pretty well – banners and faith walks, information and visible knitted images, letters and social media interactions, let's make sure we keep on listening, hearing and speaking plainly for the sake of our common home so we can truly say "Thy kingdom come".

Let us pray...

Loving God, our Creator, our Father, our Sovereign,  
we come today mindful of the beauty of your creation  
and mindful of the need of your creation.

Lord, would you help us to be people who are listening,  
who have our ears open to hear your word to us  
and to hear the truth of what is happening around us.

Would you help us to listen and to take things on,  
and then to speak plainly in those places that you call us to be a voice for our world. Amen.

### **This is our faith**

Are you among those who believe in God, Who  
births all created things, renews all things, and  
cherishes all things with love?

Are you among those who believe in God,  
Who through billions of years has evolved this  
Earth as a nurturing home for all creatures, all  
members of the Earth family?

Are you among those who believe in Jesus,  
God become flesh and blood, a human part of Earth,  
Who lived and breathed and spoke among us,  
suffered and died on a cross,  
a faithful witness to God's desire of loving care  
for all human beings and for all creation?

Are you among those who believe  
in Jesus, the risen Christ, Who is at the  
heart of the New Creation, reconciling all things  
to God, renewing all creation, and filling the universe?

Are you among those who believe in the Holy  
Spirit Who renews life in creation, groans in  
Christ and in the Holy Spirit we will rise to  
celebrate a New Creation?

This is our faith. Through it we see God's  
revelation emerging in new ways among us.  
Through it we embrace the promise of God's  
saving love and our mission to restore the  
household of creation. Amen.

*(Pilgrim Uniting)*

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## Responding

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### **Prayers of the People** - Rhonda Back

*God wants the ears of our hearts to be opened - God wants us to really hear what God is saying, listen to God's message and be willing to share it with others.*

*God wants our mouths to be opened - God wants us to talk to God in praise, thanksgiving, request and intercession for others.*

*God wants our lives to be opened - open to where God sends us; open to what God wants us to do; open to changes and new directions in our lives.*

*So let us pray for those disconnected from God and God's truth.*

There is so much wrong in our world today God.

Most is our doing, most is because of our choices.

Most suffering and injustice is as a result of human unkindness, yet some is not.

Disease and misfortune strike the faithful and faithless.

The world so often is not how we would have it, and life is so often not as well as we would have it, and so we pray for all who suffer, all who are afflicted, all who are

attacked, all who are oppressed, all who are unwell -

all who need your help.

On this Fathers Day we pray particularly for those fathers who have lost loved ones through conflict, war, disease and malnutrition. Help them in their grief, anguish and despair.

You are God : you are at work in the world for good. Help us tell others of this truth.

Things might not miraculously change as we pray that they would. Loving God be at work in the lives of those enslaved: give them hope and call us anew to work for their good.

Help us to really hear you, know your work and know your love, that we might be led deeper into a faith we can share with others.

In Jesus name we pray

Amen

*You might like to take a few minutes to bring your prayers to God for those you know and love, for our world, for world leaders as they influence decisions that will impact generations to come, for those around the world who are struggling, for those who are causing others pain, for fathers...*

### **Offering**

*Take a moment to reflect on God's goodness to us, to you.*

*What of your resources - time, skills, money etc - can you offer for the sharing of God's love in the world?*

Lord we ask you to take the offerings of our hands and hearts. You brought all we see out of nothing – take our small gifts, brought with loving hearts and use them we pray.

Amen.

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## Sending

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You might like to read over these lovely words from JB Brown:

**We're standing here on holy ground"** (Tune: 'Ellacombe(2)', 86 86D, 453 TiS)

We're standing here on holy ground,  
on land your hand has made;  
Your art displayed in timeless rocks,  
in purple haze and space;  
Its mighty gums and feathery ferns  
your beauty magnify.  
Tread softly then, in awe reflect,  
and listen to the land.

We're standing here on holy ground,  
on land which ancients trod.  
They wrote your law in hills and streams  
in rocks and caves and trees;  
A law to tell us who we are,  
to guide and make us strong.  
Tread gently then, respect the earth,  
remember whence we've come.

We're standing here on holy ground,  
on land that toil has shaped.  
It's fertile plains will feed us all,  
when tilled with care and love.  
But mindless greed and drought and flood  
wreak havoc in the land.  
Then let us tread with love the earth,  
that's fed us faithfully.

We're standing here on holy ground,  
on land we long to share,  
Where each has space and equity,  
and neither want nor fear  
But demons fierce are dancing here  
of race and greed and hate.  
Engrave upon our wills, we pray,  
your ancient covenant law.

We're standing here on holy ground,  
we seek your rule on earth;  
Your will be done in politics,  
in law court, market, church;  
Your gentleness among us reign,  
and each one dwell secure;  
May generations yet unborn,  
live here in harmony.

© JBrown. (Adapted – Verses 1-2, 4-6)

Marion Haigh  
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