

## **Old Turtle – A Reflection**

*Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church on June 6<sup>th</sup> 2021)*

Yesterday was World Environment Day. That is one of the reasons we read Old Turtle. I hope you enjoyed what is a beautiful book. It was written about thirty years ago and it is amazing how relevant, if not more so, it is today.

The story it tells is one we are familiar with. Creation, arguments, the arrival of humankind, more arguments, destruction and exploitation, finally realisation that enough is enough and action to turn it around. Maybe that is the point we are at now! This story has much to say about God, about creation, about the way in which we relate to each other and creation, about peace, about beauty, about diversity, about interconnectedness. I wonder what part of the story connected deeply with you.

Perhaps it was the reminder that together we are made in the image of God, rather than God being made in our images.

Perhaps it is the way each part of creation begins in the end to see God in other parts of creation and then respects it.

Perhaps it is the utter beauty of creation, each part just as important as every other part.

Perhaps is the way humans are described – wonderful, different, given a responsibility and yet so fallible and capable of violence and destruction.

Perhaps it is the wisdom of a voice that speaks rarely and yet utters such wisdom. A voice that causes people to stop in their tracks.

Perhaps it is the way the book echoes our times.

Perhaps it is the way God is described as both male and female.

Perhaps it is the way it names our questions about God and seeks to answer them.

Who is God?

What is God?

What is the nature of God?

Where is God?

God is everywhere and touches everything.

Perhaps it is the observation that God IS!

Perhaps it is the way it celebrates the sacredness of life.

Perhaps it is the plea for unity between all of creation and between people and creation.

Perhaps it is the realisation that we too have made God in our own image.

Our bible readings today both celebrate the wonder of creation and also remind us of the damage we humans can do to that creation – the creation groans waiting for redemption, says Paul in Romans.

It seems to me that we have forgotten who we are. That we are part of the creation called to respect and tend it.

The phrase I love most in this story is the description of human kind. Let me remind you of how we are described in this book.

1. God's gift of love to the earth
2. A prayer from the earth to God.

What a beautiful image, yet we too have forgotten.

We live in what the story describes as the scary time.

We need to hear the voice of Old Turtle – STOP!

We need to see God in everything and beyond everything.

As the climate changes, as forests are chopped down, as sea water rises, as animals become extinct, as weather patterns change, as floods, fires and droughts decimate countries, as we continue to pollute our oceans with our rubbish, as we continue to dig up the earth in our search for gold, for gas, for coal can we hear the voice of Old Turtle who says STOP!

May we remember who we are.

May we see God in all that is.

May we listen to the groans/voices of creation.

May we listen and change in time.

May we remember that we are God's gift of love to the earth.

May we remember we are a prayer from the earth to God.

May we see Old Turtle smile.

May we see God smile.