

What a Wonderful World

(Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church, Sept 4th, 2022 (Psalm 104:24-30 & Lev 25:2-7))

Trees of green, red roses, skies of blue, clouds of white, colours of the rainbow, faces of people - what a wonderful world sings Louis Armstrong. The Psalmist knew it too, everything created by God, fed by God. God even knew it, calling it all 'good'. The writer of Leviticus knew it too, but also knew the importance of taking a Sabbath just as God did after all the creating. We are called to care for and be good stewards of all that is created and that means letting it rest.

We truly do live in an amazing world. Each year I need to go along the ocean road and feel the wind and salt on my face, I am still in awe of all those amazing formations in the sea there. I am equally fascinated by the limestone formations on the other side of the country called The Pinnacles. To take time, out I go down to a little sanctuary near me and watch the pelicans – these huge birds with an amazing beak that somehow, are able to get up in the sky and soar. One of the best experiences I had was out in the ocean off Busselton in South West Western Australia on a fairly small boat, when we surrounded by a pod of whales. Gentle, majestic, curious creatures that frolicked in the ocean, nudging the boat as they swam underneath it, breaching, slapping their tails, just as curious about us as we were about them. I am fascinated by the creation that surrounds us, I find myself standing in awe of it, reminded of how interconnected we all are, reminded of our great creative God.

How do you feel in nature? Take a moment of silence to praise the creator.

But ...

We know that all is not right.

As we gaze at the sun moon and stars, we know that we have problems with the ozone layer. As we marvel at the oceans and waterfalls and rivers we know that floods have decimated this country and currently are doing the same in Pakistan. We know that the waters are polluted and overfished and that much has become too salty or too dirty. Rain systems are changing, heatwaves are happening in places we never expected, the seas are rising as the polar caps melt. Our landscape once filled with huge trees and plants is being deforested so we can build houses and roads and mine. Dirty big holes in the ground as we look for precious metals so some can make huge profits. Such destruction removes habitats for animals and contributes to the warming of the planet. As much as we say, we love animals, more and more are becoming extinct and endangered. Even bees are in short supply. and we are only beginning to understand their importance for all of life as they pollinate many plants which in turn provide us with food. People are also living in danger not just from floods and heat but from famine and the loss of land as the waters rise.

We have forgotten to nurture the land.

We have forgotten to let the land rest.

We have forgotten God's call to us to be keepers of the earth.

Take a moment in the silence to confess our part in this.

Yet ...

Yet there is hope. We can turn it around. We can take seriously the commands of God to care for the earth, to nurture it. We can listen to the voices of creation as it cries out for rest and healing. We can all take little steps to make a difference.

We can nurture our own gardens, plant plants that will attract bees and native birds.

We can plant a tree this year.

We can grow our own vegetables and fruit.

We can recycle our water.

We can use less plastic.

We can stop buying more and more stuff.

We can buy our food carefully – buy local, buy in season, stop buying too much and throwing it out.

We can recycle our clothes, so they don't go to landfill as often.

We can use sun and wind to heat and cool us.

We can participate in cleanup days.

We can eat less red meat.

We can compost.

We can vote for change.

Thomas Berry¹ a Catholic priest, historian and who called himself a geologist, writing several decades ago said that the present is not a time for desperation but for hopeful activity.² How we might engage in this hopeful activity was clear to him, it was about treating the world as 'thou' rather than 'it'. Let me quote him

*"We can no longer hear the voice of the rivers, the mountains, or the sea. The trees and meadows are no longer intimate modes of spirit presence. The world about us has become and 'it' rather than a 'thou'."*³

In other words, treat it as God intended, as a place of beauty, as a place of which we are but a part and interconnected to the whole. Treat it as God's creation.

What a wonderful world, let's keep it that way.

¹ From The Great Work by Thomas Berry p.17 & 19

² Ibid, p.19

³ Ibid. p.17