



Earth Day Sunday **April 19, 2020**

Introduction

Today we gather in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day.

Confession and Forgiveness

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Lord, when we have taken your creation for granted; **forgive us, gracious Father.**

When we have abused its resources and polluted its purity; **forgive us, gracious Father.**

When we have not fulfilled our calling to steward your earth; **forgive us, gracious Father.**

May we work with you in the renewal of creation; **empower us, Holy Spirit.**

May we speak and act for the good of your planet. **Inspire us, Jesus Christ.**

May we value and share the good gifts you provide; **encourage us, Father of creation.**

Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace we have been saved. In the name of † Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen us with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in our hearts through faith. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn (LBW# 148, ELW# 379)

Now the Green Blade Rises

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, Lord of heaven and earth, we humbly pray that your gracious providence may give and preserve to our use the fruitfulness of the land and the seas; and may prosper all who labor therein, that we, who are constantly receiving good things from your hand, may always give you thanks, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Children's Sermon

Watch [here](#).

The story of **The Great Kapok Tree** was written by Lynne Cherry. The story begins with the man in the rainforest chopping down a tree. The man gets tired and falls asleep before he chops the entire tree down. Animals, insects, and a boy who is native to the rainforest whispers in the man's ear to persuade him not to cut down the tree. They give reasons why he should not cut down the tree, for example, trees give us oxygen, the tree is a home for the animals, and the beauty of creation should be shared with future generations. God made all this creation. God asked us to take care of creation, so let's do our part!

Let us pray.

God thank you for creating the animals, plants, our friends and family, and all your creatures on earth. Show us how to love your creation. Amen.

First Reading: Genesis 1:1, 11-12, 20-31

Read the text [here](#).

Psalm: Psalm 104

Read the text [here](#).

Second Reading: Colossians 1:9-20

Read the text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

I love the story of **The Great Kapok Tree** that I shared during the children's sermon.

The story reminds me that if we abuse our natural resources, it's not only a loss to us now, but also to generations to come. While death, despair, and anxiety seem to be around us now more than ever, I give thanks that I am still able to enjoy creation. We are Easter people, but it feels like we're still in the tomb. Yet, God is continually making all things new.

Yes, we have dominion over the earth, but this concept has been abused. Natural resources aren't ours for the taking until there is nothing left. Dominion is more like stewardship. We have a duty to protect the land and all that is in it. God has given us everything we need, right here, on earth, in abundance.

In fact, we are co-creators with God. Any parent knows that. Artists, craftspeople, woodworkers, those that express creativity with textiles in knitting, sewing, and quilting are all creators. As we garden and farm, or if you're like me and you don't have a green thumb, strive to protect the earth, we are helping in God's mission of sustaining creation.

We can't bring the full restoration of creation about. Only God can do that. So why waste time washing out recyclables while the earth is already so far gone? Because, small steps matter. We are called to do our part and care for creation so that future generations may enjoy and benefit from the wonders of creation.

The world is groaning, saying, "Please stop feeding my animals plastic. Please stop using up all my natural resources." Your help may feel worthless but through Jesus, God has promised to bring heaven to earth and restore all creation, that is, plants, animals, and people in the resurrection to come. All things will be reconciled. When Christ returns, all things will be made new, and death and decay will be no more.

It may sound like it doesn't matter how we abuse creation if God is just going to fix it one day. Yet, I think we owe it to ourselves and future generations to help in stopping and reversing pollution and the abuse of God's good creation. I challenge you to start today. Amen.

Hymn of the Day (LBW# 563, ELW# 679) *For the Fruit of All Creation*
Listen and sing along [here](#).

Apostles' Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,

born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven,

he is seated at the right hand of the Father,

and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church,

the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places in praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

Open the doors we close, O God, when we fear those who worship you in different ways. Guide us to unity and harmony so that we may come to respect and cherish our commonalities. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Open the paths we ignore, O God, when we prioritize financial gain and convenience over listening to the groaning of the earth. Inspire all to care for the world you have made so that living things might thrive. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Open the rooms we lock, O God, to those who live without a homeland or place of safety. We pray that generous nations offer refuge and peace for all. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Open the hearts we close, O God, to the cries of those in pain. We pray for those isolated physically or emotionally through incarceration, addiction, mental illness, chronic suffering, grief, and all in need, especially those we name aloud, or silently in our hearts. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Open the ways of love, O God, in the pursuit of peace throughout the world, and bless the efforts of missionaries, healthcare professionals, activists for women and children, and relief workers, especially those who find themselves in harm's way. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Open the way to eternal life, O God, as we remember those who have died in faith. Free us from the fear of death, that we embrace the peace you have promised. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

With bold confidence in your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into your eternal care, through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing of Gardening and Farming Tools

*You are invited to gather your tools in front of you and place your hands over them.
If you don't have any tools, hold out your hands palms-up to receive this blessing.*

Let us bless God, the creator of all things. God has given us the earth to cultivate, so that we might receive the bounty of its fruits. Just as the rain falls from heaven and waters the earth, bringing forth vegetation, so God's word will flourish and will not return empty.

Abundant God, we give you thanks for the fruitful earth, which produces what is needed for life. Bless those who work in the fields; grant favorable weather to all engaged in agriculture; and help us to ensure that all people share the fruits of the earth.

Abundant God, who breathes life into humanity and speaks creation into being, you have graciously entrusted us with the care of all your creatures. Pour out your Spirit upon these tools and this land, that they might be a place of devotion and care; of reconciliation with our wounded planet and with one another; of growth and flourishing within this soil and within our bodies. May the fruits of our labor be acceptable in your sight, to the well-being of all your beloved creation and your eternal glory.

Look at your tools (including hands). Notice their power and gentleness. Let us bless these things together. I invite you to say each phrase after me.

Blessed be the works of your hands, O Holy One. *(echo)*

Blessed be these tools that have touched life. *(echo)*

Blessed be these tools that have nurtured creativity. *(echo)*

Blessed be these tools that have tended gardens. *(echo)*

Blessed be these tools that have planted new seeds. *(echo)*

Blessed be these tools that have harvested ripe fields. *(echo)*

Blessed be these hands that are wrinkled and scarred from doing justice. *(echo)*

Blessed be these hands that have reached out and been received. *(echo)*

Blessed be these hands that hold the promise of the future. *(echo)*

Amen.

Blessing

The Lord bless us and keep us.

The Lord's face shine on us with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon us with favor and ☩ give us peace. **Amen.**

Sending Song (ELW# 538)

The Lord Now Sends Us Forth

Listen and sing along [here](#) (wait for English).

The Lord Now Sends Us Forth

Enviado soy de Dios

En - via - do soy de Dios, mi ma - no lis - ta_es - tá
The Lord now sends us forth with hands to serve and give,
pa - ra cons - truir con él un mun - do fra - ter - nal.
to make of all the earth a bet - ter place to live.
Los án - ge - les no son en - via - dos a cam - biar
The an - gels are not sent in - to our world of pain
un mun - do de do - lor por un mun - do me - jor;
to do what we were meant to do in Je - sus' name;
me ha to - ca - do a mí ha - cer - lo rea - li - dad.
that falls to you and me and all who are made free.
A - yú - da - me, Se - ñor, a ha - cer tu vo - lun - tad.
Help us, O Lord, we pray, to do your will to - day.

Text: Anonymous, Central America; tr. Gerhard M. Cartford, b. 1923
Music: ENVIADO, anonymous, Central America
English text © 1998 Augsburg Fortress.

Duplication in any form prohibited without permission or valid license from copyright administrator.

Worship adapted from sundaysandseasons.com. Copyright © 2020 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.

Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #SAS027356.

Today's reflection was written by Vicar Natalie Cook.

The confession was written by Sam Hargreaves.

The Great Kapok Tree was written by Lynne Cherry.