

Season of Creation 3

Wilderness

September 20, 2020

WELCOME TO WORSHIP! It is our prayer that this will be a time of worship and renewal for you, when you will encounter the living God revealed in Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

Wild things... Fearful. Awesome! Beautiful! Wilderness. The place of the wilderness holds a highly formational place in scripture; for many people evoking a barren and forsaken place—forsaken even of God. Yet, the opposite is actually true. That the God we very often see as absent is as close as all the wild and uncontrollable elements of the wilderness—wind and fire, cloud and rumbling waterfall, on the mountaintop and in the deep darkness of a hidden cave. And devoid of all human resources; in the wilderness we learn to trust and rely on God.

Studies suggest there are very few “wild,” untouched places left on our planet. And ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson asks, “How many times should creation forgive us for overfishing, deforesting, polluting, endangering species, desertification, commodifying, or even just not paying attention?”

If we can learn anything from COVID-19, it is how quickly the regenerating Spirit of God restores and replenishes the wild places and creatures, when we take a moment to step back in awe and wonder of the wilderness of creation.

GATHERING

INVOCATION

In the name of the Creator, the fountain of life, the name of +Christ, the pulse of life, and the name of the Spirit, the breath of life. Amen.

Holy! Holy! Holy! Earth is filled with God’s presence.

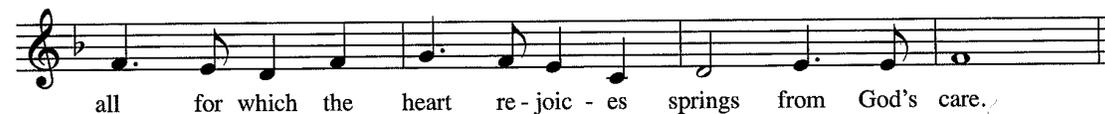
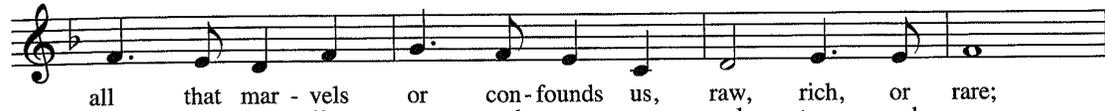
Christ we come into your presence today to worship in this sanctuary called Earth.

A planet filled with your presence, quivering the forests, vibrating the land, pulsating in the wilderness, shimmering in the rivers.

God, reveal yourself to us in this place and show us your face in all creation.

Holy! Holy! Holy! Earth is filled with God’s presence.

"All the Wonder That Surrounds Us"
(to the tune of "For the Fruit of All Creation")



REMEMBERING

We remember the wilderness God created, the wild places on Earth, the world of wonder and mystery, the deserts sands and prickly cactus and the spiny Gila Monster.

We remember the wild worlds and hiding places of our childhood, where we felt the mystery of caves and feared the grizzly bear; where we shouted over the sound of the thundering waterfall.

We remember Jesus in the wilderness with wild creatures of every kind and God who promises to be with us in the desert and on the mountain.

We remember and rejoice.

Thank you, God, for the wilderness, for the beauty, for the wonder, and for life!

“All the Wonder That Surrounds Us”
(to the tune of “For the Fruit of All Creation”)

*How can we revere God’s goodness meant for all time?
How ensure that each uniqueness keeps in its prime?
How can we revere with pleasure all God gives for life and leisure?
How preserve each earthly treasure meant for all time?*

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Gracious, Creative and Creating God we remember and confess:

That we have become alienated from Earth and that we have disrespected the wilderness of our garden planet. We are sorry. We have polluted deserts with radioactive waste. We have torn holes in the ozone layer. We have desecrated sacred sites and destroyed the home of wild creatures.

Gracious, Creative and Creating God we remember and confess. We are sorry.
We are sorry. Forgive us, renew us and all creation we pray. Amen.

In the mercy of God, Christ hears your confession from the rocky and barren places of your hearts and forgives your sins against the wilderness and against all creation. In the name of God, the Creator, and of +Christ, God’s own heart; and of the Spirit of Breath, your sins are forgiven. **Amen!**

“All the Wonder That Surrounds Us”
(to the tune of “For the Fruit of All Creation”)

*God has willed that peace and justice walk hand in hand
These, with love, shall build foundation on which we’ll stand.
Love for creature, friend and stranger, love defying death and danger
Love as firstborn in a manger—heavn’s close at hand*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Let us pray. God, our Creator, we celebrate your vibrant presence among us and our kin in creation, especially in the rocks, the deserts and the wild world of the wilderness.

Help us to empathize with your creatures who are suffering. Lift our spirits to rejoice with the highest mountain and the dusty desert and all the mysterious creatures of the cave and the underground tunnel. In the name of Christ, who reconciles and renews all things in creation. Amen.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

FIRST READING: Joel 1:2-3, 6-7, 18-21

Hear this, O elders,
give ear, all inhabitants of the land!
Has such a thing happened in your days,
or in the days of your ancestors?
Tell your children of it,
and let your children tell their children,
and their children another generation.

For a nation has invaded my land,
powerful and innumerable;
its teeth are lions' teeth,
and it has the fangs of a lioness.
It has laid waste my vines,
and splintered my fig trees;
it has stripped off their bark and thrown it down;
their branches have turned white.

How the animals groan!
The herds of cattle wander about
because there is no pasture for them;
even the flocks of sheep are dazed.
To you, O LORD, I cry.
For fire has devoured
the pastures of the wilderness,
and flames have burned
all the trees of the field.
Even the wild animals cry to you
because the watercourses are dried up,
and fire has devoured
the pastures of the wilderness.

PSALM 104

O Lord, how great and all-powerful you are! And how beautiful is the world you created, so that we can live. Even before humanity was brought forth from the dust, you prepared a place in which to live and grow. And everything reflected the beauty and power of the living God!

There was clean air. Pure water from snow-capped mountains flowed through green valleys and gathered to become great lakes. The skies shone with a million lights. The land brought forth flowers and fruits to delight the eye and palate of God's creatures.

And every part of the land and the waters that covered the land and the skies that looked down upon the land were filled with uncountable forms of life; the world was vibrant and alive!

Your power and beauty were spread throughout the universes, and upon the heart and shape of humanity you imprinted your image; you imprinted your heart and shape. And in our short stay in this world, you have called us to participate in the ever-continuing and creative work of creation. Your creative activity has never ceased.

Limited and fallible as our humanity is, you have assigned our minds and hands as vessels of your life-giving energies that replenish the earth, that life might be given and sustained throughout all of creation.

O Lord, how great and all-powerful you are! And how beautiful is the world you created, so that we can live!

GOSPEL: Mark 1:9-15

The Holy Gospel according to Mark the 1st chapter.

Glory to you O Lord.

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near, repent, and believe in the good news."

The Gospel of our Lord.

Praise to you O Christ.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY "Sing Praise to God"

(to the tune "How Can I Keep From Singing")

Sing praise to God on mountaintops and in earth's lowest places
From blue lagoon to polar waste, from ocean to oasis
No random rock produced this world but God's own will and wonder
Thus hills rejoice and valleys sing and clouds concur with thunder

Sing praise to God from desert sand, in barrenness and hunger
With creatures wild, in fear and need, in wilderness assunder
In cloud and fire and darkest night, there God yet goes before us
No desolation can deter creation's sounding chorus

Sing praise to God where humankind its majesty embraces
And God is found in wilderness, in creation's many faces
Sing praise to God, in Jesus Christ; in grace that does not perish
In the Spirit creating all things new, let us God's goodness cherish!

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Let us affirm our faith together.

We believe that God creates all things, renews all things, and celebrates all things

We believe Earth is a sanctuary, a sacred planet filled with God's presence, a home for us to share with our kin.

We believe that God became flesh and blood, became one in and with creation; a human being called Jesus Christ, who lived and breathed and spoke among us, suffered and died on a cross for all human beings and for all creation.

We believe that the risen Jesus is the Christ at the core of creation, reconciling all things to God, renewing all creation and filling the cosmos

We believe the Holy Spirit renews life in creation, groans in empathy with a suffering creation and waits with us for the rebirth of creation.

We believe in the church and as created beings; the communion we share in kinship with all creation.

We believe that with Christ we will rise and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation.
Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Loving God, creator of the Universe, you know every creature and its needs. With great trust we turn our hearts to you.

Jesus Christ, teach us to empathize with the earth... We pray for the world that through God's grace creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

Jesus Christ, make our spirits sensitive to the cries of creation... We pray for the world we live in that we become aware of our responsibility as stewards of God's good creation.

Jesus Christ, make our ears sensitive to the cries of justice from the hills and trees and for the endangered species of our forests... We pray for our local community that we may hear and understand the issues facing our natural world.

Jesus Christ, make our faith sensitive to the groans of the Spirit, groans from the deserts, the salt plains, and the winds... We pray for our world leaders that they may understand the need to balance the good of creation with that of economic advancement.

Jesus Christ, make our souls sensitive to the songs of our kin, songs of celebration from the sea, the land, and the air... We pray for our church that we may understand the role we play in celebrating creation as you meant it to be.

Jesus, teach us to care.

We pray for the sick and suffering among us and those who are suffering from COVID. Heal the sick, comfort the dying and grieving. Protect and uphold healthcare workers. We pray today especially for Sharla, Debi, Renee, Marion, Arne, Eva, Olai and Suzy, Dave and Trudy, Lyle and Marlene, Olivia, Syd, Pastor Dick and Jan, Corrie, Patrick, Myrna, Klaus, Harriet, Shirley, Eowyn, Lorraine, Catherine, Grace, Lilian, Margaret, Lars and Hazel, Clayton, Montgomery, Rosemary, Landon, Wayne, Elizabeth, and Judy and Ron.

We pray today for Edith and for Dan and Margaret. Bless the Good Shepherd Lutheran Women's Group and continue to bless and sustain Pastor Kathy.

We praise you for the generations that have declared your power to us. Give us faithfulness to follow them, living for Christ, until you call us to join them in the joyful song around his throne.

We pray these things in Jesus name, Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those
who sin against us;
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING

May God who established the dance of creation;
Who set the stars to twinkle in the heavens;
Who causes the waves to crash and foam;
Who makes the calf skip for joy and the trees clap their hands;
May God, Father, +Son, and Holy Spirit;
Fill you with joy and transform your lives; that with all the earth you might reflect the glory of
God. Amen.

SENDING HYMN: "God Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens" (vs 1&3) ELW #771



God, who stretched the span - gled heav - ens in - fi - nite in time and place,
As each far ho - ri - zon beck - ons, may it chal-lenge us a - new:



flung the suns in burn-ing ra - diance through the si - lent fields of space:
chil - dren of cre - a - tive pur - pose, serv - ing oth - ers, hon - 'ring you.



we, your chil - dren in your like-ness, share in - ven - tive pow'rs with you;
May our dreams prove rich with prom - ise; each en - deav - or well be - gun;



great Cre - a - tor, still cre - at - ing, show us what we yet may do.
great Cre - a - tor, give us guid - ance till our goals and yours are one.

SENDING

Christ calls you to be disciples, to serve others with love and compassion and to serve Earth by caring for creation.

- We will remember the wilderness!**
- We will care for creation!**
- We will celebrate with the creatures of the wild!**
- We will celebrate life!**

Go in peace, serve Christ, care for the Earth.
Thanks be to God! We will!

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