

## LOVE YOUR MOTHER EARTH



### *Scripture:*

### **Psalm 8**

<sup>1</sup>O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens. <sup>2</sup>Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger. <sup>3</sup>When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; <sup>4</sup>what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

<sup>5</sup>Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. <sup>6</sup>You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, <sup>7</sup>all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, <sup>8</sup>the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

<sup>9</sup>O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

### **Genesis 1:1-2:4a**

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup>the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

<sup>6</sup>And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” <sup>7</sup>So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. <sup>8</sup>God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

<sup>9</sup>And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. <sup>10</sup>God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup>Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. <sup>12</sup>The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

<sup>14</sup>And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, <sup>15</sup>and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup>God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. <sup>17</sup>God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, <sup>18</sup>to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup>And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.”

<sup>21</sup>So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” <sup>23</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup>And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. <sup>25</sup>God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

<sup>27</sup>So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup>God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” <sup>29</sup>God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup>And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life,

I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. <sup>31</sup>God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

<sup>2</sup>Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. <sup>2</sup>And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. <sup>3</sup>So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

<sup>4</sup>These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

**This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!**



## LOVE YOUR MOTHER EARTH

The Genesis 1 account of creation is a very beautifully written creation story punctuated with God’s goodness. It is the foundation of our faith to believe that God is our creator and the creator of everything in the Universe. The biblical account of creation was written as an allegory to emphasize that our one God is the supreme creator of us all.

## SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY

Reflecting on my education in science and theology, we spent a lot of class time discussing Genesis and other readings on evolution and Christianity. It probably doesn’t surprise you that I believe the earth was formed over millions of years and not just in six days. The six days of creation is an allegory for understanding God’s role in creation. The creation stories in Genesis are not meant to be taken literally. The scientific understanding of evolution and the allegorical meanings in our Biblical stories are compatible. God is good and all of creation is good. God is responsible for creating our biological ancestors. And God continues to create diversity in nature as things evolve. We are expected to participate in creation and take care of all that God creates because we are also good.

Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury says the Genesis story and evolution are compatible. "[For] most of the history of Christianity there's been an awareness that a belief that everything depends on the creative act of God, is quite compatible with a degree of uncertainty or latitude about how precisely that unfolds in creative time."

The concept that the Genesis creation story is not meant to be taken literally was first verbalized in the first century. Prior to the development of modern science and the scientific method, two famous theologians, first century Jewish scholar Philo of Alexandria, and fourth century theologian St. Augustine of Hippo believed it would be a mistake to think that creation happened in six days or in any determinate amount of time.

The Genesis creation story is a story that contains a greater truth beyond the literal interpretation. The main point of the story is that God is our planet’s creator and sustainer and we are in partnership with God to keep it holy and healthy. Time is relative in the creation story. The six days of creation in Genesis in real time took

about fourteen million years. The Universe began developing fifteen billion years ago.

## THE BIG BANG

Our Earth is estimated to be about four and a half billion years old. Modern humans, Homo sapiens, have been around just two-hundred-thousand years.

Here’s a quick reminder of what all happened since the Big Bang four and a half billion years ago.

A video was shown:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZSt9tm3RoUU>

Time began with the Big Bang. But something had to create the singularity that exploded and expanded into our Universe. (The initial singularity was the gravitational density of all the mass and space-time of the Universe before it expanded in the Big Bang and inflated, creating matter and the present-day Universe.)

Saint Augustine had two answers for those who asked what God was doing before the creation of the Universe. Jokingly, he said that God was preparing Hell for people who ask such questions.

On a serious level, Augustine noted there was no time before God created it and hence the question is meaningless. When God created the heavens and the earth God also created space and time.

**Our faith encourages us, on this Trinity Sunday, to remember that Jesus was with God in the beginning and the Holy Spirit was God’s breath that swept across the waters during the creation. God is three in one; that is why it said, “Let us make humankind in our image.”**

John 1 tells the creation story this way: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>Jesus was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in him was life,\* and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

## EXPLORING THE UNIVERSE

Now four and a half billion years later, with the evolution of humans, we are able to explore the Universe on a grand scale (with telescopes on satellites) and on the tiny subatomic quantum scale with high powered electron microscopes.

Our explorations continue to reap new discoveries and amaze scientists. Recently a website released some fun facts about some of the things we have learned about the universe and about our human bodies that show what miraculous creations we are! For example:

- ♦Messages from the brain travel along nerves at two-hundred miles an hour.
- ♦Our blood circulates about twelve-thousand miles a day.
- ♦The human eye can distinguish between ten-million different colors
- ♦The brain contains eighty-six-billion nerve cells with one-hundred-trillion connections, more numerous than all the stars in our Milky Way galaxy.
- ♦If your DNA was uncoiled, it would stretch ten-billion miles, all the way from Earth to Pluto and back.

For more facts see:

<https://www.factretriever.com/body-facts>

## **THE BIG BANG, GENESIS AND US**

What does the connection between the Big Bang and Genesis and the evolution of humans on earth have to do with us today?

We have all helped to usher in the Anthropocene age. Anthropocene is the name for the current geological age, the first period of time in the earth's history when human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment.

In an article in the *Guardian* titled: **Humans Cause Climate to Change 170 times Faster than Natural Forces** it states, "The impact of people's intense activity on Earth far exceeds that of natural events spread across millennia." This video by National Geographic features Bill Nye, the Science Guy helping us understand Climate Change:

[http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/news/101-videos/el\\_nino?source=relatedvideo](http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/news/101-videos/el_nino?source=relatedvideo)

**John Muir said,  
"When one tugs at a single thing in nature,  
he finds it attached to the rest of the world."**

Mahatma Gandhi could see early in the twentieth century that man was failing at our job to care for the earth when he said, "What we are doing to the forests of

the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another."

There is no denying it. Our precious earth is sick, and so are we!

## **MOTHER EARTH**

**Our Mother Earth is suffering and dying along with us:** Cancer and other diseases are ravaging humans and animals. The World Health Organization predicts that between 2012 and 2030 worldwide cancer cases will increase fifty per cent. And in that same time period deaths due to cancer will increase sixty per cent.

Currently diseases caused by pollution lead to worldwide deaths of eight-million-four-hundred-thousand people each year. This should not be happening in this modern day and age when our technology is so advanced! But it took many years for it to get so bad. Flint, Michigan, for example, has been dealing with polluted water sources since 2007 and they still don't have clean water. In fact, it has been getting worse for the people of Flint.

**Our Mother Earth is suffering and dying along with the children of South Sudan and Syria:** Climate change is threatening our Earth's ability to produce food. As climate change worsens, civil wars erupt around the world due to fears of losing sources of clean water and land that can still produce food.

More than forty per cent of South Sudan's population is in urgent need of food and clean water. Across the country, three years of civil war conflict has devastated food production.

The civil war in Syria that is still raging today was sparked by a food shortage resulting from a severe drought. KQED reported that: "Starting in 2006, Syria suffered its worst drought in nine-hundred900 years; it ruined farms, forced as many as one and a half million people into cities and decimated the country's livestock. Water became scarce and food expensive. The suffering and social chaos caused by the drought were the drivers of unrest.

Climate scientists have argued that global warming exacerbated the historic drought, thanks to major changes in wind and rainfall patterns. Thus, even if negotiators do reach a resolution, the underlying strains in the region may be there to stay. In fact, almost half of the countries most at risk of water shortages in the coming decades are in the Middle East or North Africa."

**Our Mother Earth is suffering and dying along with our fish and coral due to plastics:** Humans have made enough plastic since the second world war to coat the Earth entirely in cling wrap.

Research, published in the journal *Anthropocene*, shows that no part of the planet is free of the scourge of plastic waste. Everywhere is polluted with the remains of water containers, supermarket bags, polystyrene

lumps, compact discs, and other plastics. Some break up and form microscopic grains. In total, more than three-hundred-million tons of plastic is manufactured every year. The impact is highly damaging.

A large percentage of fish now have plastic in them and we are eating those fish. The trouble is that plastic is very slow to degrade. Some forms will take one-thousand years to degrade.

The Great Pacific Garbage Patch that floats between California and Hawaii is about twice the size of Texas. Much of it is plastic.

Manila Bay in the Philippines also has a huge problem.

How do you think we doing as the chosen stewards of God's precious earth? Will our great-great-grandchildren be forced to rocket to Mars or some other planet because the earth will be uninhabitable for them and their families? How will we explain when they ask why we didn't take better care of our earth for them?

**Our Mother Earth is suffering and we are also dying because we are living self-centered rather than other-centered lives.**

God called us to take care of one another and the world. When we become self-centered we neglect others and ignore the fragility of the earth and the future. We must admit we truly don't love our Mother Earth when we live in short-sighted, self-indulging ways.

So, let's resolve to do otherwise. Let us live with the health of our great-grandchildren in mind. Let us learn all we can and do all we can to stop global warming, stop the use of plastics, stop producing big carbon footprints on the earth and encourage others to do the same.

### **SOME GOOD NEWS**

Now it's time for some good news that I recently learned! My daughter, Kathryn, is currently interning in Washington, DC at USAID. They have a global climate change program that enhances the resilience of countries that are having trouble dealing with the effects of climate change. The USAID Office has a Global Climate Change (GCC) adaptation program. The GCC aims to build resilience in disaster and crisis-prone countries by strengthening their adaptive capacity and promoting peace, democracy, human rights, and good governance. Isn't that awesome?

Today you can do something, too! Here are postcards on the table in Campbell Court from Interfaith Power and Light to send to your senators to encourage

them to pass legislation that takes better care of our Mother Earth. I'm happy to report that our church is working hard to become more "Green." One example is our Building and Grounds Committee is replacing our old light bulbs with energy efficient ones. We welcome your ideas and involvement with our green efforts, too!

However, after studying all that is happening to our world, I sincerely believe God might be regretting the creation of humans because we have failed so badly at being good stewards of creation.

We all must act now, and pray fervently for the healing of our Mother Earth, to stop her suffering and death.

I believe we might be able to turn this tide of global warming around and maybe God once again will see we are "very good." Amen.

### **Benediction:**

**Citizens of the Universe, you are a miraculous creation as the beloved children of God. You were all given the responsibility for the wellbeing of the earth and all of its creatures. So rise up and go and do your job well! (After we sing this blessing and have a fun picnic.)**

**And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen**



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