**“Praise the Lord from the Earth”**

Earth Day 2016

**Sermon Preparation**

As prepared by Rev. Carol Devine, Minister, Green Chalice, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

**Revised Common Lectionary Readings for Sunday, April 24, 2016, the Fifth Sunday of Easter**

**(Year C): Psalm 148**

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights!

Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!

Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!

Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created.

He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.

Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,

fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!

Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!

Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!

Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!

Young men and women alike, old and young together!

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth and heaven.

He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his faithful, for the people of Israel who are close to him. Praise the Lord!

**Biblical Connections**

Jesus lifts up God’s care for the birds of the air to demonstrate God’s certain care for humans (Matthew 6.26-30). In Psalm 148, “Young men and women alike, old and young together” join in praise with “sea monsters and wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds” because “God commanded and they were created.” Because we have been blessed with life, we are to praise the Lord.

In Genesis 1 “in the beginning” God created the heavens and the earth, birds and sea monsters, cattle and creeping things, and finally humanity and called it all very good. Psalm 148 remembers the order of God’s creative process, celebrates the goodness of creation, and calls all creation to praise the Creator. The voices in the chorus of Praise include not only people and creatures, but also the sun, moon and stars, water and mountains, trees and weather. The circle of praise grows with every line to encompass all that God created in heaven and on earth.

In Genesis 1 humanity was given responsibility over “the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth” (Gen 1.26).

In the book of Job, God told Job to go to animals for wisdom, “Ask the beasts, and let them teach you; and the birds of the heavens, and let them tell you” (12.7) and put Job in his place when considering the details of how God created all that is (38-39). Perhaps humans were created last in Genesis and added last to the praise chorus in Psalm 148 to remind us, as Job was reminded, that we are not the center of the universe.

In Revelation 21:1-6, the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Heaven and earth are given new life; are given resurrection.

**Theological Reflections**

In the season of Easter Psalm 148 gives us an incredible image of resurrection. It is the image of the Peaceable Kingdom and the Canticle of Brother Sun and Sister Moon of St. Francis of Assisi. Instead of humanity singing our own tune, drowning out the voices of the rest of creation, we join in harmony to the magnificent symphony of heaven and earth. With our voices added, the song of praise becomes shalom.

16,306 species are endangered with extinction (<http://www.endangeredearth.com/>), their songs of pain and lament all but ignored by humanity. For the wellbeing of the least among us, our brothers and sisters in Christ, and for our own preservation, we must listen to the blues of creation and respond so that everything God created may soon join together in a splendid melody of praise.

**Children’s Sermon**

After the children have gathered, ask them, “How do we praise God in worship?” (Listen to and acknowledge their answers.) “How do we praise God in our everyday lives, at home and at school? (Listen to and acknowledge their answers.)

Our Scripture this morning has all heaven and earth praising God – the sun and moon, the waters and mountains, the creeping things and flying animals and the cows all praise God.

Show the kids an insect and/or a worm and a bird’s nest OR photos of different animals. Give the children time to see your items and ask: How can bug or a worm praise God? How can a bird praise God?

They praise God by doing what God created them to do, by moving in the dirt or crawling on the rocks, by flying in the air, by building nests, singing, laying eggs. All of the animals praise God by doing what God created them to do. And when we do what God created us to do – that Glorifies God. God created us to love and care for each other and the animals and their homes. When we do that – we are praising God.

Prayer: *God, we join with the sun and moon, the waters and mountains and all the animals that you created in praising you. Help us to do what you created us to do, to love and care for each other and for all the creatures of the earth so that our lives will glorify you. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen*