

Kuhn Memorial Presbyterian Church
955 Main St. (P.O. Box 222)
Barboursville, West Virginia 25504
April 18, 2021
Earth Day Observance

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

Psalm 150

Praise the Lord!

Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.

Praise him for his acts of power, praise him for his surpassing greatness.

Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre.

Praise him with timbrel and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe,

Praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord.

Hymn

Morning Has Broken

Text: Eleanor Farjeon, 1931

Music: Gaelic Melody

Morning has broken like the first morning;

blackbird has spoken like the first bird.

Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!

Praise for them springing fresh from the Word!

Sweet the rain's new fall sunlit from heaven,

like the first dewfall on the first grass.

Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,

sprung in completeness where God's feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight! Mine is the morning.

Born of the one light Eden saw play!

Praise with elation; praise every morning,

God's recreation of the new day!

Prayer for the Earth

O God, we thank you for this earth, our home;

for the wide sky and blessed sun, for the salt sea and the running water,

for the everlasting hills, and the never-resting winds,

for trees and the common grass underfoot.

**We thank you for our senses by which we hear the songs of birds,
and see the splendor of the summer fields, and taste of the autumn fruits,
and rejoice in the feel of the snow, and smell the breath of spring.**

**Grant us a heart wide open to all this beauty;
and save our souls from being so blind that we pass unseeing
when even the common thorn bush is aflame with your glory,
O God, our creator, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.**

Time With Young Disciples

Scripture Reading Revelation 21: 1-5

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Morning Message

"What did Jesus have to say about the environment?"

That is the question Presbyterian minister, Leighton Ford, asks the reader in an editorial he wrote for the *Charlotte Observer*.

He goes on to say he owns a variety of Bibles. From King James to the New Revised and so on. But he had never seen or even heard of the *Green Bible* until a young friend gave him one for Christmas.

The cover is not green- it's more of an earth-tone light brown. What makes it "green" is that every word, phrase, and paragraph that mentions the created world is printed in green. Ford says he can flip through the entire thing and hardly find a page without some words printed in green.

But, Ford asks, with all the varied Bibles, editors and publishers, in all the languages the Wycliffe people can translate, why would we need another Bible?

He says it's because the earth and all its wonders are gifts of God to us, for our care and our use. In our consumer society, we may go about our days without recognizing the importance of the natural environment. The editors of the *Green Bible* want us to ask of ourselves, "What is my role as a Christian in caring for the earth?"

Leighton Ford is a prolific writer and sought-after preacher. He has long been involved in Christian organizations that focus on the faith development of young people. It doesn't hurt that he is the late Billy Graham's brother-in-law. But Leighton Ford has had a well-known and respected ministry apart from the Billy Graham Association.

In 2016, the year in which this article was published, young people from around the world were gathering to pray about global climate change. The Billy Graham Library was host to one of these gatherings.

Rachel Lamb, one of the national organizers, believes that creation care is a gospel issue. She says, "We know that God created the world, and it belongs to Him and not us...we are only stewards or trustees of God's creation, and we aren't to abuse or neglect it."

Ford says he can confirm Rachel's statement. Whenever he opens his Bible, he can find hundreds of texts that speak to that very thing:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

"I am establishing my covenant...with every living creature."

"All the trees of the field will clap their hands."

"I saw a new heaven and a new earth."

Another Presbyterian cared deeply and reverently about the environment and was instrumental in preserving the American wilderness.

John Muir, born in 1838 in Dunbar, Scotland, grew up in a strict Presbyterian home. He was well-acquainted with Scripture. He memorized three quarters of the Old Testament and all of the New Testament. He had a fine, agile mind.

Memorizing Scripture was not his only gift. His interests and abilities were far-reaching. John Muir listed his professions as naturalist, author, environmental philosopher, botanist, zoologist, glaciologist, and early activist for the preservation of wilderness in these United States. He was also a husband and the father of two daughters.

Muir wrote extensively about his experiences in nature, especially in the Sierra Nevada. He co-founded the Sierra Club, which still exists, and through his activism, helped preserve the Yosemite Valley and Sequoia National Park.

It is said that “the spiritual quality and enthusiasm toward nature expressed in his writing has inspired readers, including presidents and congress members to take action to help preserve large nature areas.”

According to author William Anderson, Muir exemplified “The archetype of our oneness with the earth.” Another author said Muir believed his mission was to save the American soul from total surrender to materialism.

John Muir’s life and work was so vast and his influence so broad, we could go in one of several directions to explore his contributions to American life. But, it is his relationship to God that I wanted to lift up for us.

It is said, that after he had studied Scripture and the works of great theologians and historians, he became attached to the American landscapes he explored, and he began to see another “Primary source for understanding God: The Book of Nature.” In nature, he could study the plants and animals in an environment that he believed “Came straight from God, uncorrupted by civilization and domestication.”

He came to believe that the best place to discover the true attribute of deity was in Nature. One of his biographers says John Muir styled himself after John the Baptist, whose duty was to immerse in mountain baptism everyone he could. To John Muir, nature was a great teacher, revealing the mind of God.

Lest I portray John Muir as some type of 19th century super-hero, it must be said that he was flawed and sinful like the rest of us. Although he renounced the beliefs later in life, Muir was said to have had a scandalous attitude about African Americans, which certainly takes the shine off his character. He is not the first actor in the American story to have shamed us, but it is important to acknowledge truth and do better in our generation.

I usually park in front of the church, which I really enjoy, especially in the springtime, because, rain or shine, signs of God’s presence, like business cards with petals, dot the path. A crocus, a few daffodils, dandelions, and violets. I love the violets. For some reason, they make me feel at home.

John Muir saw nature as providing a home for even the smallest plant life.

He wrote, "The little purple plant, tended by its Maker, closed its petals, crouched low in its crevice of a home, and enjoyed the storm in safety."

May we all enjoy our storms in safety.

A Time of Sharing

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

*Blessing

May you go out to enjoy all God's gifts of creation.

As they have been treasured and tended by generations before us,

let us care for God's wonders today,

and preserve them for our children's children. Amen.

*Postlude

Leading worship today: Karen Gold, Mark Baker, Choir members, and Cinda Harkless.