

Sermon Suggestions – Listen to the Voice of Creation

Sunday, September 4:

Texts – Jer 18:1-11; Ps 139:1-5, 12-17; Philemon 1-21; Lk 14:25-33

This past summer, Monarch butterflies were listed as endangered species owing to increased concern over declining numbers. There was a time when Monarchs could be seen in the millions in their roosting grounds in Mexico. Why has it come to this? Habitat loss, pesticides, and the removal of vital milkweed which functions as the host plant for this butterfly. All of these issues are human created problems. Reading Jeremiah – we hear God’s voice using the metaphor of a potter creating, destroying, and recreating. How might God be using this moment to challenge us to do better, to listen to the voice of creation, to listen to the wisdom of God in Creation, and allow God to recreate our priorities and perspectives?

It is important that we seek and find God in Creation and see it as sacred since God is part of that as the Creator. When humans create, does our blood, sweat, and tears not make its way into what we create? God’s energy radiates from the sky and through the water. This energy is needed by the plants when the first shoots of green emerge from the seed.

To what extent do we also Listen to the Voice of Creation in the choices we make? How do we seek to honour the wisdom of God’s Creation as we make purchases, build, and travel in our world? What more could we do to safeguard the integrity of God’s Creation in our everyday actions?

Sunday, September 11:

Texts – Jer 4:11-12, 22-28; Ps 14; 1 Tim 1:12-17; Lk 15:1-10

Jeremiah offers yet another reminder of how the sins of humans have impacts on Creation (see Jer 4:23-26). To what extent have we already borne witness to such devastation? What can we/should we learn from this reality? How can we turn and return to God?

There is little practical sense in leaving 99 sheep to look for one that is lost. In the book Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer, it is suggested that we think of trees as people. Does it make sense to save those ones who give us shade and clean air and provide homes to wildlife? God cares for the trees and created a habitable planet for them for the benefit of all, including us. We need the trees just as the shepherd needs his sheep for sustenance. This parable highlights the profound, counter-intuitive love of God in Jesus. It can also be a challenge to us. If God, cares for the one that is lost – what more can we do to care for the ones that are lost, those beings in creation who are

at risk because of human behaviour, and those communities who are at risk due to climate change? Will God leave us to pursue these? What does that say about the choices we should be making?

Sunday, September 18:

Texts – Jer 8:18-9:1; Ps 79:1-9; 1 Tim 2:1-7; Lk 16:1-13

What would it look like to re-imagine the parable of the dishonest manager as an interaction between God (played by the rich man) and humanity as we squander the wealth of creation? To what extent do we appeal to one another by supporting human ideals of creation? Is the use of non-native grass that must be watered and mowed about fitting in with our neighbours? At what point do we even recognise that turf grass for yards offers little, if any, eco-benefit for insects, birds, and more? What compromises do we make for human beings at the expense of God's Creation? What consequences are we seeing of these behaviours? What does God call us to do?

Although it is normal for the planet to warm and cool on its own, the anthropogenic (human) contribution to climate change has been the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. The hotter temperatures, wildfires, droughts, and floods that we are now experiencing is the cost of squandering the wealth of creation. Not only do we spit in the face of God when we destroy and desecrate the beautiful gift God gave us, we also cheat ourselves. Studies show that those under the age of eleven will have to live with the harsh climate we have created. Their lives are about to change drastically as temperatures rise making it harder to grow food or as it becomes harder to live in harsh conditions that create health problems. Is having a beautiful lawn worth the disaster it creates? Restoring the perfect balance that God created when She made everything will help to alleviate this scary future that our children and grandchildren are currently forced to face.

Sunday, September 25: (orange shirt day, Sept. 30)

Texts – Jer 32:1-3a, 6-15; Ps 91:1-6, 14-16; 1 Tim 6:6-9; Lk 16:19-31

Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; (1 Tim 6:6-7) How many images have we seen where animals, birds, reptiles, and fish are struggling due to contact with human garbage? People intentionally cut the plastic rings because of the traumatic images we have seen. What does it say that our priority is often to reduce risk while still allowing for ongoing consumption? At what point are we able to say we can be content with less? How might we walk more gently on this earth?

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus further highlights how greed, and over-consumption contributes to the marginalisation of human beings as well as the

exploitation of the earth. In death, the rich man wants to warn his family. He is told the information is already available. What would it take for us to better pay attention? What do we need to humbly and honestly listen to the voice of Creation?

September 30 is orange shirt day in support of our Indigenous brothers and sisters. What other ways can we support in Truth and Reconciliation? The Pope has apologized and officially declared that the the First Nations Peoples of Turtle Island (North America) faced genocide in this dark past. Keep in mind that the Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) of First Nations Peoples is being considered as better than conventional scientific methods being applied in the field of ecology today. In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, a study is done on the harvesting of sweetgrass. They found that it doesn't matter how the grass is being harvested but that it needs to be harvested or it thins and dies. Everything that is alive relies on some sort of relationship with the world around it. How can we look to First Nations Peoples for knowledge and building a new foundation where all can walk forward together?

Sunday, Oct. 2:

Texts – Lam 1:1-6; Lam 3:19-26 (as canticle) or Ps 137; 2 Tim 1:1-14; Lk 17:5-10

What can we learn from a mustard seed? What can we learn from the tenacity of creation? How often have we seen plants arise in the most unlikely of places? What peace do we find in sacred natural places where there is harmony with the land? What joy can be found in the sound of a gently flowing stream and songs of birds? What hope can be found in fresh scents of plants following a rain? What possibilities exist as we see a bud break forth from soil? What do we know about the strength, grace, wonder, beauty, and wisdom of Creation? What more can we learn as we move beyond this Season of Creation?

Possible Study – Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants by Robin Wall Kimmerer

The theme for the 2022 Season of Creation is “Listen to the Voice of Creation”. Can we agree that Creation has a voice? Can we agree that there is something in Creation from which we can learn? How might we tap into that wisdom? Where can we go to help us centre our thoughts and reflections about nature?

In support of this journey, Social and Ecological Justice Huron is suggesting exploring the book “Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants” by Robin Wall Kimmerer. This book brings wisdom from multiple perspectives through profound story telling to invite us to listen more carefully at the world around us and how we choose to engage in relationship with creation and all it contains.

This resource is designed to support a conversation with this text in small groups or independently. To enable a five-week exploration, we are focusing on one chapter in each of the five sections. All are encouraged to read the entire book as you are able as it is filled with wonder, beauty, and wisdom. Our hope is that, through this text, people will find ways to listen to the voice of creation all around us.

If you are interested, we have created some notes for a five week study and are happy to share them with you. Please keep an eye open on our Facebook page for weekly posts about this study:

<https://www.facebook.com/SocialAndEcologicalJusticeHuron>

If you would like a pdf copy of our study, please email Caroline Sharp at carolinesharp77@gmail.com