

Genesis 1:1-26, abbreviated

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

“And God said: let there be light and there was light . . .”

And God said, “Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water. . .”

And God said: “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place and let dry ground appear . . .”

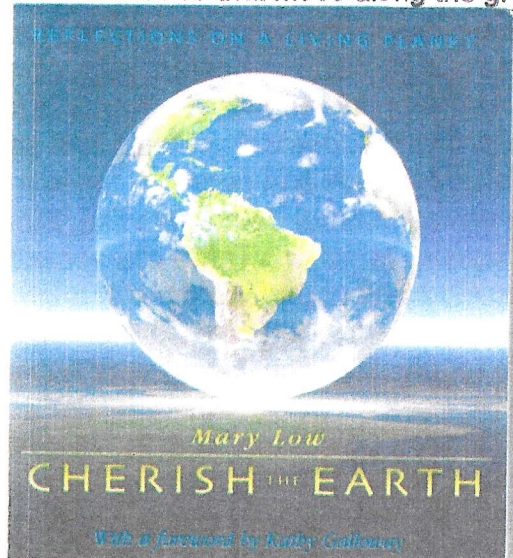
And God said: “Let the land produce vegetation and seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds . . .”

And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light to the earth . . .”

And God said, “Let the waters teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.

And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind. . .”

And God said: “Let us make humans in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”



‘Between Creator and Creation’

*Let them praise the name of the Lord,
For God commanded and they were created.*

Psalm 148:5

Kathy Galloway wrote: ‘The instinct to worship in response to the beauty and mystery of the universe is as old as the human story itself. The passionate outpouring of the psalmist is a song of praise to God the Creator which echoes down the centuries and still resonates today in the hearts of everyone who has ever looked out over mountain ranges folded into blue mist, or at innumerable stars over the desert, or out across a sparkling sea and wondered. That song of praise for the intricate delicacy of a leaf unfurling, for the massive solidity of granite and basalt, for the corn high in the field and the horse racing across a meadow has moved humankind to express its love for the earth our home in a thousand ways. In the late Middle Ages, the poets and singers of Scotland were known as ‘Makars’, makers. It is not too fanciful to imagine the universe as the song of God the Makar, a joyous outpouring of energy and creativity and wild ordering and continuous exchange. And it is truly a religious instinct to respond to God’s song-making with our antiphon of praise’ (Cherish the Earth, intro). Creation makes worshippers of us. In faith we sing:

*For the beauty of the earth, for the glory of the skies,
For the love which from our birth, over and around us lies,
Lord of all to thee we raise, this our hymn of grateful praise.*

In a second creation story in Genesis 2, ‘we find a wonderful picture of ‘God the ‘Makar.’ There is something rather touching, both literally and emotionally about this God, so profoundly human in God’s activity—modeling a human out of the earth’s clay, animating (literally, breathing life into) the creature, then planting a beautiful garden full of magical trees and treasure for the being to live in. But the human himself is as much a part of the earth as all the other forms and species. The name, Adam (Adamah which means ground or earth) links the human with

the ground of his being. He is created, not creator. The failure to acknowledge our createdness has been a big problem for human beings ever since---and an even bigger one for the other life forms we share the earth with. Instead of praising our Maker for the glories of creation, we have become like arrogant ego-centric roosters who think that our crowing causes the sun to come up. We have become anthropocentric as a species with an attitude that allows us to think that the universe is at our disposal and that it has no intrinsic worth other than its utility to the human species'. (Cherish the Earth, p. 13, adapted) We have failed to take our proper place among the rest of God's good creation.

In our faith tradition, one of the hymns that we sing ' to counter spurious ideas of freedom as undisciplined license, and to affirm how the profoundest liberty involves a sense of boundaries and structure" is 'God Marked a Line and Told the Sea' (Troegger's quote)

1. God marked a line and told the sea its surging tides and waves were free to travel up the sloping strand but not to overtake the land
2. God set one limit in the glade where tempting, fruited branches swayed. And that first limit stands behind the limits that the law defined.
3. The line, the limit, and the law are patterns meant to help us draw a bound between what life requires and all the things our heart desires.
4. But, discontent with finite powers, we reach to take what is not ours and then defend our claim by force and swerve from life's intended course.
5. We are not free when we're confined to every wish that sweeps the mind. But free when freely we accept the sacred bounds that must be kept.

'God Marked a Line and Told the Sea' is the hymn that many UCC congregations are using this Earth Day Sunday to theologically underscore Bill Kibben's "Keep It In the Ground" (fossil fuels) Climate Change slogan. The hymn also reminded me of a climate change cartoon by Toles entitled, 'Be Prepared to Be Corrected'.



Back to Genesis 1 where we discover how humans can best praise and glorify God. Back to the Word of God, which has the power to create, sustain, and redeem the created order and the human community. Back to our Makars' words to us . . . to take loving care of the delicate interdependent web of life on earth, according to the Creator's plan. One way that we hear God's call to respect the divinely woven integrity of creation is by becoming environmental justice activists: AKA passionate tree huggers and clean air enthusiasts, animal rights activists, organic farmers and eaters, intentional fair trade supporters, wet land preservationists, and 'waste-not-want' not recycle-reduce-reuse practitioners. As activists we take the courageous leap of faith and challenge the social-political-economic powers and organizations that go against the sacred grain of well being in the created order. When we engage in prophetic justice making we do non-violent civil disobedient protests and sign petitions. We do divestment of church and personal funds from fossil fuel companies and environmental destroyers like, Monsanto. We get involved in legislative action. There are some religious who say that praising God has nothing to do with taking responsible care of the interdependent web of life here on earth. To those nay sayers I like to say: "Try convincing your Maker of that one!"

Prayer. God our Maker, you alone have the words of eternal life. Help us to hold and keep your Creating-Sustaining-Redeeming Word in our hearts so that we are able to live purpose filled lives that are pleasing to you and a blessing to all creation. Amen.