

Sermon 13 September 2015 'Earth Sunday'  
Genesis 1:26-28 Mark 10:42-45

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight Oh Lord, our God. Amen

**'Then God said...'** *This* is one way the ancient Hebrew people understood our earth was created. God wanted it, and then spoke and it happened... Our verses today come towards the end of the first creation account; the linguistically younger account, but much more precise and organised and detailed than the older account.... **It is** an orderly – priestly accounting of how the earth and living beings came to 'be'. Our passage today comes from the description of the creative efforts on the "6<sup>th</sup> Day" which culminated in the creation of humanity.

One of the best things about this account is that it is all **good**. **Original blessing** is an incredible place to start for our beginning, our place in the universe, our home. One of the two speakers at my conference was <sup>1</sup> John Philip Newell – A Scottish theologian who spoke to us about "Eriugena, who was a ninth-century Irish teacher.

Eriugena says that *if goodness* were extracted from the universe, all things would cease to exist. For goodness is not simply a feature of life; it is the very essence of life. Goodness gives rise to being, just as evil leads to nonbeing or to a destruction and **denial of life's sacredness**." [1]

**Further more** according to John Philip, Pelagius (fl. c. 390-418)[1] who was a British-born ascetic moralist (he became well known throughout ancient Rome). Pelagius "stressed not only the essential goodness of creation--*and our* capacity to glimpse what he called 'the shafts of divine light' that penetrate the thin veil dividing heaven and earth--**but, very specifically**, the essential goodness of humanity. Pelagius maintained that the image of God can be seen in every new-born child and that, although obscured by sin, it exists at the heart of every person, waiting to be released through the grace of God."

At the deepest level of all humans then, is this place that is 'of-God'<sup>1</sup> because of our beginning! That's not to say that we are very good at living up to our model – nor could we ever "deny<sup>1</sup> our capacity for falseness and for the ugly betrayals that tear us apart." But we are very carefully and mysteriously created, and so is our earthly home. I'm going to ask Savesh to play for us a clip from a Rob Bell talk about the Science of Fine tuning from his series called 'Everything is Spiritual'. I have tried to gather some of the details he talks about and print them in the newsletter (p3).

What a strange mysterious blue and green floating ball we call home. What a gift we have been given responsibility for; to 'rule' over. What a tragedy we have created and are creating because of our being torn apart from, one another, from our Creator and from the model of living **Jesus** called us to **follow**.

We have taken 'rule' and determined it's meaning to suit our own purpose, and in that moment **and every time since**, betrayed the gift of the creation of our earthly home. 'Creation is groaning' St Paul said (Rm 8:21-22) – waiting to be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God." ***Into the freedom of the children of God***; freedom because we have begun to repair the torn relationship of creator and creation; we have begun the return to God through our following of Jesus.

Today his teaching on the exercising of authority and 'rule' is that we have no excuse to do as others are doing. That to rule and 'lord it over' others so the tearing of the fabric of creation is continued, so that the betrayal of our humanity continues, so that the mysterious and preciseness of our creation is rendered irrelevant because we turned a dial.

We know what power abuse, and unjust authority feels like, **we know** it happens, *just as Jesus listeners knew*. **We know** when the exercise of authority is false and a betrayal of all that is a blessing and 'good'

<sup>1</sup> John Philip Newell in The re-Birthing of God;

for the earth and its living. And we have no excuse to follow a such false trail in life – Jesus said that way is not our path, not for us: vs 43 **‘Not so with you’** he said.

If we follow him, then our life’s path is to serve without being seen or demanding notice of our ‘great’ deeds...We are to give our life for the life of others – and today I am reminding us all that we have no excuse not to include challenge to give our lives for the life of our earth, because that’s what God’s rule over it includes. Will we serve with our lives – this blue and green planet we call home? Amen