

Text: Colossians 1:15-20

Title: Living in a Christ-soaked Universe: Walk as if you are kissing the Earth with your feet.
Rev. Sharon Smith

We live in a relational universe.
The trees talk to each other. The stones hold our memories.
The birds generously sing songs of encouragement.

And physicists theorize how strings propagate through space and interact with each other.
Replacing the notion of separate particles.

We live in a relational universe.

Last year May 2018, I was leaving my Vancouver home. My patio was surrounded by trees – conifers, willow and fig – these were resting places for chickadees, blue jays and the occasional crow – who offered me their song and their presence.
My time living on that small piece of land, the land originally cared for by Musqueam and Tsleil Watuth peoples, transformed me.
It was my first dwelling place alone, without a partner, without roommates, without family.
And yet, I was not alone at all.

That piece of earth sustained me. It witnessed my life and held me. And when I departed, I rightfully said goodbye. I miss that piece of earth, and maybe it misses me.

We live in a Christ soaked world.
And in Christ all things hold together.

A Christ soaked world. A Christ-ened world. Anointed.

This beautiful poetry of an ancient liturgy is shared with us in Colossians 1. It reminds us that Jesus and Christ are related but are not one and the same.

The **first incarnation** of God – the invisible mystery, source of all being – was at the time of creation – long before the birth of Jesus. When spirit and matter joined – at the big bang.
Everything visible is the outpouring of this relational God.
And so we live in a relational universe.

Iliia Delio in the tradition of St Francis writes: “We are created to read the book of creation so that we may know the Author of Life.”

And friends that is why we take part in sacramental acts – where the visible, the tactile are the primary doorways to the invisible.

We light candles – And we see the Christ.
We are sprinkled with water – and we are Christ – ened.

We are anointed with oil - and we are filled with the presence of Christ.
 We eat bread – and we taste the Christ and are given sustenance to carry on.

And in these acts we are invited, my friends,

- to come home to our bodies - this piece of earth that we carry with us – to show our respect and care – the way we eat, the way we move, the way we rest, the way we touch each other.
- to reconcile with Earth – a most ancient Mother – she is the endless source and the inescapable destiny. Everything issues from her and eventually returns to her. She is Christ – soaked.

And we become in these acts of reconciliation – Christ-ened. Moving into union with God.

John O Donahue – the late poet, philosopher, priest - tells the story of how connecting to his childhood landscape transformed him.

... being born in the West of Ireland, the Burren region, a bare limestone landscape - abstract and aesthetic.

- it is as if they were all laid down by some wild, surrealistic kind of deity.

He says being a child and coming out into that, it was waiting like a huge, wild invitation to extend your imagination. And then it's right on the edge of the ocean, as a child he was invited into an ancient conversation between the ocean and the stone.

He learnt to move towards it with an open heart and a real, watchful reverence, absolutely amazed at what it could reveal to you - that landscape wasn't just matter, but that it was actually alive. It sustained him.

John O Donehue writes:

"It is a strange and wonderful fact to be here, walking around in a body, to have a whole world within you and a world at your fingertips outside you. It is an immense privilege, and it is incredible that humans manage to forget the miracle of being here. Rilke said, 'Being here is so much,' and it is uncanny how social reality can deaden and numb us so that the mystical wonder of our lives goes totally unnoticed."

Divine Beauty: The Invisible Embrace

You know when life gets too much. When our inner world is tight, strained or even shut down.

- Spending just a week by the slow ocean, is totally rejuvenating. And we somehow come back to ourselves.
-

As a follower of Christ, I have come to appreciate the life and wisdom of Jesus.

A mysterious God-man, who is for us the second incarnation - the Christ of all creation historically embodied in human form. Patterning a way of life for us.

Sacred life - living bread.

Jesus most often prayed outdoors. Finding for himself sustenance in the natural world.

That's where we usually find him in the Gospel stories – outdoors in the wilderness, on a mountain, beside the sea, or walking mile upon mile down dusty roads.

Jesus was immersed in the natural world and he used images of nature in his parables and teachings: weeds and wheat; seeds and rocks; lilies, sheep, and sparrows.

When we pray in the company of the living world, when we pray “with the Sacred, with God and each other,” we receive strength from beyond ourselves.

This incarnational way - where we embrace matter and Spirit as deeply connected – inseparable, calls us to live Earthy lives – Earth conscious lives.

A commitment to reconciliation - taking responsibility for Earth's wellbeing, and for our daily individual and collective actions that have led to her demise.

A demise that has become more clear and despairingly so...

The U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released a major report in October 2018 about what it will take to keep the earth's temperature below 1.5 degree Celsius of warming.

That's the level that countries around the world have agreed is a reasonably safe upper limit for maintaining life as we know it on this planet.

In order to avert catastrophic climate change like:

- the collapse of rain forests and coral reefs,
- the rapid melting of the ice sheets that would swamp coastal cities around the world and
- heat extremes that could lead to millions of climate refugees.

The U.N. report makes it clear that to stay within that 1.5 degree boundary of safety, or even within 2 degrees of warming, will require an extraordinary collective effort by human beings worldwide - the world has perhaps just over ten years in which to prevent climate catastrophe.

(See: <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>)

Given the enormity of the task, it is easy to feel helpless and overwhelmed, easy to shut down, throw up our hands and call it quits. “It's too late,” we tell ourselves. “What difference can I make? It's not my problem. Someone else will have to deal with it.

It's easy to collapse into fatalism or despair.

The Rev Margaret Bullet-Jonas, Climate activist and Episcopal Priest encourages us as people of faith to keep gathering with each other and with others of good will, to see each other's faces, look into each other's eyes, and feel each other's hands in ours. And to pray.

She writes: “taking action is essential, but in order to discover what we are called to do – and to find the strength to do it – we need to pray, to open ourselves to a power and wisdom that is greater than our own”

Margaret has taken to praying outdoors.

- “To feel her feet on the good earth,
- To feel the wind on her face
- She sings to the trees. She sings her grief to the trees that are being cut down, and her grief about so much more: about what we have lost and are losing and are likely to lose, making up the words and the music as she goes along. She sings out her shame to the trees, her repentance and apology for the part she has played in Earth’s destruction. She sings out her thanks, her praise for the beauty of trees and her resolve not to let a day go by that she doesn’t celebrate the preciousness of the living world of which we are so blessedly a part.”

(Sourced From: <https://revivingcreation.org/ten-years-to-avert-climate-catastrophe-what-do-we-do-now/>)

We are called to pray, to sing, to cry out, for we live in a relational universe.

And then we are called to act for and with this Christ-soaked Earth, our Island home.

For we can make personal and collective changes.

- Maybe we cut back strongly on our use of fossil fuels and switch to clean sources of energy.
- Maybe we fly less, drive less, and eat less meat.
- Maybe we push for the larger, systemic changes that must be carried out by businesses, politicians and non-profits.
- Maybe we lobby for policies that support renewable energy, carbon pricing, and clean green jobs.
- Maybe we sign up or send some money to climate champions.

“Walk, my friends, as if you are kissing the Earth with your feet.”
 – **Thich Nhat Hanh**

Amen