

# Will you renew the life of the earth?

We will, with God's help!



*This is your daily resource to help you connect with the themes of Sunday & continue your prayers through the week. This can be done on your own or in the family group. The liturgy is based on Home Prayers found in the Book of Alternative Services (p. 687). **If you do not have a prayer book, please take & keep one for your use.***

*Our devotions this week will focus on the sixth of the six baptismal promises we make at baptism. It is possible you have been baptised but have never made these promises. This is ok. These promises can still be adopted as you move forward in your spiritual journey with Christ.*

Peace on your week,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Taylor'.

the Reverend David Taylor, Rector

## Our Sixth Baptismal Promise:

Will you strive to safeguard the integrity of God's creation & respect, sustain, & renew the life of the earth?

**We will, with God's help!**

### 1. The Preparation

*A candle is lit as someone says,*

**God of Israel, giver of love's law: liberate us from all that numbs compassion, so that we may find in your commands light undimmed & flavour undiminished; through Jesus Christ, fulfiller of the law. Amen.**

### 2. The Reading & Reflection

*Read the passage from Scripture then reflect using the wonder questions as your guide. This guide uses the New Revised Standard Version.*

## MATTHEW 5:13-20

*Notes on the reading:*

- *This reading continues the famous Sermon on the Mount where Jesus reframes the Law of Moses into the Law of the Heart. This project, however, does not dismiss the Law of Moses (v. 17), rather it uncovers its inner light.*
- *The Law of Moses is meant to bring word & action together. Jesus notices many religious leaders do a lot of speaking, but not a lot of doing (v. 20).*
- *Jesus likens us to salt & light. Salt has a lot of properties to it so we can imagine the many different reasons why Jesus calls us salt: it's a preservative, it gives flavour, it cleans, etc. In the same way light has a lot of different properties that we can reflect on: it uncovers things, gives heat, guides, etc.*
- *Jesus fulfills the law & the prophets. This is an important verse for those who presume Jesus came to undo one religion & set up another. He didn't. He wanted to show the heart of his own Jewish faith & so compel others to live into it.*
- *Jesus is not calling us to follow every command off the Law of Moses (v. 19). Rather he is highlighting the importance of understanding the heart of the law.*

***I wonder if you have ever experienced a religious leader not practicing what they preach.***

***I wonder what your favourite meaning of salt is.***

***I wonder what your favourite meaning of light is.***

***I wonder what it means to seek out the heart of the law.***

## ISAIAH 58:1-12

Notes on the reading:

- This reading is from Third Isaiah. Scholars believe that this section of the Book of Isaiah (chapters 55-66) was written after the return of the exiles. One theme that is prominent in third Isaiah is the call not to repeat the same mistakes as their ancestors did. Do not keep the Law in word only, but with the heart.
- The people of God are delighting in the rhythms of their faith. They fast at the right times; they pray the right words. But they do both these things while they practice injustice. This is not right.
- True prayer & fasting is not a matter of food, but a matter of fasting from harmful practices. Fasting from selfishness, gluttony, indifference, & violence is a true fast. Doing this gets the attention of God (v. 9).
- There is a strong connection between how we treat one another & how close God is to us (v. 11). God is not interested in establishing our greatness, but in ensuring our kindness, justice & hospitality.

*I wonder why you enjoy religion or spirituality.*

*I wonder how you have connected your spirituality to your action.*

*I wonder what sort of hurtful practices you need to give up.*

*I wonder how you have been kind, just & hospitable this week.*

## I CORINTHIANS 2:1-16

Notes on the reading:

- Paul continues to press the point in his letter to the Church in Corinth that their greatness is not in the pursuit of so-called wisdom or power, but in their connection to the cross of Jesus. He points to himself as someone who was not impressive in word, but in action (v. 4).
- Paul reminds the church in Corinth that they hold a wisdom that is unfamiliar to the world around them. It is a wisdom of the cross which is a letting go of one's own position of power for the sake of another.
- This wisdom flies in the face of the world's wisdom which suggests might is right, the rich are the favoured ones, success is a sign of God's blessing, & crucifixion is a sign of God's displeasure & abandonment. The Corinthians, Paul trusts, know otherwise.
- The Corinthians are spiritual people, so they understand this (v. 15). But their access to this Godly wisdom or Spirit does not mean they can become dominating or proud. No! They keep the mind of Christ who walked the way of the cross.

*I wonder what the cross means to you.*

*I wonder where you exercise power.*

*I wonder how you know that God has blessed you.*

*I wonder if you think of yourself as a spiritual person.*

## GENESIS 2:4 – 3:24

Notes on the reading:

- *This ancient story is the second account of creation in the Bible. The first is the poem in Genesis 1. Chapter 2 tells the story of the gift of creation & how humanity seemed to want more.*
- *This account of the creation highlights the generosity of God toward humanity. God has gone out of God's way to ensure humans are nourished, cared for, have friendship & safety. The whole world is given to humanity as a gift (2:8).*
- *The tragedy of this story is that the gift of the whole world was not enough for humanity. Instead of being satisfied with what God has provided, humanity wants to have more power & more control. This desire means that humanity is essentially thrown out of the paradise God has made for them into a world of struggle & pain.*
- *The first sacrifice on the altar of humanity's craving for power is the created world itself (v. 17 & 21).*

*I wonder how this world is a gift from God.*

*I wonder if this world has suffered at the hands of humanity.*

*I wonder what it might mean to be salt & light for the world (cf. Monday's readings).*

## ROMANS 8:18-30

Notes on the reading:

- *Paul's greatest piece of writing is the Letter to the Romans. Some scholars see this letter as an overview of Paul's entire theology as he prepares to make his presence known among the Christians in Rome. It is sort of like an introduction letter.*
- *This section highlights the broad implications of Jesus' life, death & resurrection. Christians are not those who received good news merely for themselves. It is good news for the entire world. This is a constant theme in Paul who wants to bring the many different factions of the world together into one great family of God.*
- *Paul stressed that currently we & the world suffer. But this suffering is incomparable to the result of the work of God in Jesus. The whole world is about to be set free from the enslavement of sin (i.e the pursuit of power & domination by humanity).*
- *Paul calls us to keep hoping & keep waiting.*

*I wonder if your spirituality is only for yourself, or if it is for more.*

*I wonder how our experience of Jesus might help our relationship to the rest of creation.*

*I wonder if you have hope for this world.*

### 3. Prayers & the Lord's Prayer

*Pray one of the litanies beginning on page 110 of the Book of Alternative Services & conclude with the Lord's Prayer.*