

..... **Daily Devotions**

April 22-28, 2018

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With Earth Day falling on Sunday, April 22nd, the theme for this week will focus on relationship to our world and God's presence and provision in it.

Sunday, April 22nd (Earth Day)

24 O LORD, how manifold are your works!

**In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.**

**25 Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
creeping things innumerable are there,
living things both small and great.**

**26 There go the ships,
and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.**

**27 These all look to you
to give them their food in due season;**

**28 when you give to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.**

Psalm 104:24-28

I will freely admit that I sometimes go overboard on saving the earth. I share all the right Facebook posts. I recycle to the point where I even pull dirty stuff out of the garbage, just to clean it off and place it in the right recyclable bin. I compost and keep my curbside trash to an absolute minimum. If we can keep it to two bags per week as a family, I pat myself on the back and then ask myself why we can't get it down to one?

And then I get in my car and go to work with toxic exhaust pouring out of my tailpipe and rising up into a perfect blue sky. When I get there, I remove the worn batteries from my lapel mic and throw them away, doing my part to add to the long-term pollution of the earth. I print off more copies of everything than I need, just to have them in front of me, and then discard them into the recycling pile just as quickly as I printed them. I am constantly working against myself.

We cannot, on our own, save the earth. God knows this and God, who created all of it and the wonderful intricacies of it all, promises to continue to provide through it for all that we need. But, as stewards of the earth and having been given dominion over it, we are certainly called to carry our weight. As we marvel in our world's wonders, let us ever be present of our place in

caring for it all, being reminded that it truly is an amazing gift that God has provided for us while we reside here for this short time.

Let us pray: *Almighty God, thank you for the world and for our place in it. Grant us wisdom and care in our stewardship practices. Be present with us and grant us joy in seeing you and knowing you in it. Amen.*



Monday, April 23rd (Land)

**21 Do not fear, O soil;
be glad and rejoice,
for the LORD has done great things!**
**22 Do not fear, you animals of the field,
for the pastures of the wilderness are green;
the tree bears its fruit;
the fig tree and vine give their full yield.**

Joel 2:21-22

I recently braved blizzard-like conditions to attend a spring outdoor show. I probably shouldn't have been on the road, but there was such a desperation within me to connect to what is promised to come when the ice and snow finally gives way to green grass and sunshine that I made the journey.

And was I ever happy that I did! I was overwhelmed with fishing lures, camping gear, garden seeds and lawn fertilizer. I came away with an image imprinted in my mind of what the perfect spring and summer will look like to me once I implement everything I brought home.

At the conclusion of the third day of creation, after God had separated the land and sea and had put vegetation upon the earth, God saw that it was good, an image that God had in mind for His creation. Unfortunately, we sometimes blur that image and mar it through our greed and desire to exploit our earth for our own gain. May we be ever mindful of God's provisions for us, granting us the food and products that we ever need and use, and in doing so, maybe we can do our part that draws us back to that perfect image that God had when God created this wonderful world we call home.

Let us pray: *Almighty God, thank you for the land under our feet and all that it produces. When we leave our footprints upon it, grant that they would be footprints that can be erased by the wind and not ones that are permanent and destructive. In your name we pray. Amen.*



Tuesday, April 24th (Sea)

**8 The one who made the Pleiades and Orion,
and turns deep darkness into the morning,
and darkens the day into night,
who calls for the waters of the sea,
and pours them out on the surface of the earth,
the LORD is his name.**

Amos 5:8

Water connects every one of us so intimately to God and to one another. In the Thanksgiving for Baptism liturgy that we at Emmanuel are using for the season of Easter, there is an intentional space created for us to lift up our local water sources, specifically for us in Menominee, the Menominee River and Green Bay. We as a local community are dependent upon these waters for tourism, recreation, transportation and even our livelihood.

As we all know, we're not the only ones and we're not the first ones to be dependent upon the water that God provides so abundantly. We are reminded in this liturgy that God used water to deliver Noah, Israel, Elijah, the Samaritan woman, and, finally, you and me in the waters of baptism.

As the ice gives way to open waters, may we ever be mindful of the many uses of water that God gives us; but also, even more importantly, the power that exists in these waters. In water that cleanses us so deeply that the last blemishes of sin are erased, God's presence is undoubtedly at hand and at work. Let us give thanks for that presence, for the power, and for the gift that is water.

Let us pray: *Almighty God, we give you thanks for the waters that run down mountainsides, through our communities, and under our feet. These waters are the sustaining essence for our mortal bodies, but the water of baptism sustains our immortal ones. Grant us joy as we draw from these waters and use them to wash us and cleanse our earth. Amen.*



Wednesday, April 25th (Sky)

Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

Matthew 6:26

In the aftermath of (yet another) April snowstorm last week, my attention was drawn to the many robins and other migratory birds which had returned to our communities in the previous weeks to commence their spring work of gathering food and building nests, only to be separated from the ground by two feet of snow. I mentioned something to a parishioner, an avid outdoorsperson and conservationist, and he responded assuredly to me that they would adapt.

And adapt they did. Instead of burrowing, the robins took to the trees and picked at the remaining apples in our backyard tree, the eagles gravitated back toward the open water to fish, and the gulls found delicacy's in our neighbor's trash bag set out overnight. It was an awesome experience to see how these birds, in the midst of a storm, simply adapt to their environments and maintain themselves and continue to prepare for what spring and summer entail, namely, nests and eggs.

When we go through the storms of life, it's not always easy, but often we have to adapt as well. And what we find in adapting is that God is present in it and continues to provide for us, just as God had previously. Let us give joyful praise for God's presence and faithfulness to bring us through when unforeseen circumstances in life thrust change upon us.

Let us pray: *Almighty God, thank you for all the sky provides for us, from warm sunlight, to nurturing snow, to cleansing breezes, to open windows to view the nighttime heavens. Grant us security in knowing that through all of the changes that you are the steady presence in our lives, never wavering in your faithfulness to provide to us just as you have promised to do. Amen.*



Thursday, April 26th (Habitat)

- 7 “But ask the animals, and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;**
- 8 ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.**
- 9 Who among all these does not know
that the hand of the LORD has done this?**

**10 In his hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of every human being.
*Job 12:7-10***

I love where I live in Menominee. A short five minute walk will have me standing on the shore of Green Bay. A five minute drive will lead me to the mouth of the Menominee River. Fifteen minutes in just about any direction will present me with plains or forests. And yet, in the midst of it all are the church which I am blessed to serve, the gas stations that provide the fuel for me to get there, medical facilities, and countless places to purchase food. And the greatest joy of it all is that my family is here with me.

I believe that God has called me to this place at this time, though the journey to get here wasn't always straight and easy. I have struggled to provide for my family while dwelling in places that we weren't happy in. Yet, through it all, God constantly opened doors when others shut, placed persons in my life who were meant to be there just at that time, and reminded me throughout that I was never alone.

I invite you to take a moment and to take a look around at your surroundings and to reflect on the journey that has brought you to where you are now. Take notice of where God has been present in it and instrumental in clearing the path which you have trod. And, most importantly, know that this is not the end, but that an eternal home has been prepared for each one of us, just as Jesus has promised. As much as I love where I'm at now, I look forward to seeing what awaits me.

Let us pray: *Almighty God, thank you for your presence in all time and all space and for carving out this moment for me. Grant me joy in serving my brothers and sisters in my community. Be present in my words and in my actions, reflecting your love to all those who I see, hear, speak to, and know. Amen.*



Friday, April 27th (Wilderness)

From one ancestor he made all the nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him – though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For “In him we live and move and have our being; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’”

Acts 17:26-28

While tracking a deer which I had shot in my early years of hunting, I inadvertently ventured onto our neighbor's land and became disoriented of which way to go to return to more familiar turf. With this being the time before cell phones and never having the thought cross my mind to carry a compass (I wonder if I even would have known how to use it!), I walked aimlessly until I finally came upon a group of hunters who were coming in from the woods for the evening and were talking about the day's events. I recognized a few of these gentlemen as our neighbors and they knew who I was as well, so it turned out to be a friendly encounter where they teased me a bit about getting lost, but were more than happy to offer me a ride back to my home. I was grateful and fortunate for these good and caring people!

Many of us get lost in the wildernesses of our world as well. We may become dependent upon chemicals or people. We may be searching for meaning in our lives. We may be stuck in dead-end jobs or loveless relationships.

But God always places those people in our lives who rescue us as well. It's just a matter of searching for them and seeing them. God doesn't want us to be lost in the wilderness, which is exactly why God sent His Son, Jesus Christ to us in the first place. Jesus has rescued us from sin, death, and from all that threatens to swallow us up. Take time to recognize and know those people whom God has placed in your life to "rescue" you, and you'll realize that as long as you lean on the promises of your baptism, that you'll never be truly lost.

Let us pray: Almighty God, thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, to rescue me from the dangers of this world that I willingly and unwillingly walk into. Grant me safety in my journey of faith. Keep those around me safe as well, until we all gather together in the safety of your eternal kingdom. Amen.



Saturday, April 28th (Humanity)

- 6 The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.**
- 7 The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox,**
- 8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand in the adder's den.**

**9 They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.**

Isaiah 11:6-9

In my youth, curiosity led me into trouble. As I have grown older, I lament those all-too-often moments where I have allowed policy and rigidness get in the way of doing the right thing. I have no doubt that as long as I breathe the air of this world, I'll have moments of poor judgment and narrowmindedness. To make a long story short, I routinely work against God's desire for peace and security for all God's children by making a mess of everything around me.

But I know that God's not finished with me yet, and so I cling to that hope that I will get it all right. Much like the new plants that come from the soon to be unfrozen ground, I know that my belief that I know better than God does needs to die and from that death needs to rise to new life a firm belief that God will take me and all who make up this broken world, and renew us in vision and in spirit. It's just a matter of trusting God enough to open my heart and mind to the life-giving gift that He gives us, Jesus.

In the coming days, I invite you to embrace yourself and what God has empowered you with: your gifts, your passions, your loved ones, your church. Allow yourself to be exploited and in doing so, you'll gain greater appreciation for those in your life and what they offer as well. God has given us one world to share. Let us take joy in doing so.

Let us pray: *Almighty God, you have made us a little higher than angels and you have given us the awesome responsibility to care for your world and for your creation. In carrying this out, empower us to seek help when it is needed, to seek clarity when it is necessary, and to always lift up our brothers and sisters with whom we share this responsibility, in your Son's name, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

