

WELCOME AND NOTICES

CALL TO WORSHIP:

See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice for ever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. ¹⁹ I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. (Isaiah 65:17-19)

OPENING PRAYER

Loving God, source of all life, we come believing in the goodness of earth's life, in the value of all you have made. We come believing you have given us a unique role to play within creation, to bear your likeness and to care for the earth, to make known your restoration of all things in Christ. We come believing and we come in humility and in trust; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SONG: THE SPLENDOUR OF THE KING

The splendour of the King,
clothed in majesty
Let all the Earth rejoice
All the Earth rejoice
He wraps himself in light
And darkness tries to hide
And trembles at His voice
Trembles at His voice

How great is our God, sing with me
How great is our God, and all will see
How great, how great is our God
Age to age He stands
And time is in His hands
Beginning and the end
Beginning and the end

The Godhead Three in One
Father Spirit Son
The Lion and the Lamb
The Lion and the Lamb

How great is our God, sing with me
How great is our God, and all will see
How great, how great is our God

Name above all names
Worthy of all praise
My heart will sing
How great is our God

How great is our God, sing with me
How great is our God, and all will see
How great, how great is our God

I SEE THE KING OF GLORY

I see the King of glory
Coming on the clouds with fire
The whole earth shakes
The whole earth shakes
I see His love and mercy
Washing over all our sin
The people sing
The people sing

Hosanna, hosanna
Hosanna in the Highest
Hosanna, hosanna
Hosanna in the highest

I see a generation
Rising up to take their place
With selfless faith, with selfless faith
I see a near revival
Stirring as we pray and seek
We're on our knees
We're on our knees

Hosanna, hosanna
Hosanna in the Highest
Hosanna, hosanna
Hosanna in the Highest

Heal my heart and make it clean
Open up my eyes to the things unseen
Show me how to love like You have loved
me
Break my heart for what breaks Yours
Everything I am for Your Kingdom's cause
As I walk from Earth into eternity

Hosanna, hosanna
Hosanna in the Highest
Hosanna, hosanna
Hosanna in the Highest

CONFESSON:

'Heal my heart and make it clean.' Let us
confess our sins to God.

Loving God, whose generous earth was
created to speak of your beauty, given to
nourish its creatures, and sing of your
glory, we confess that we have harvested
injustice and pollution and not your
abundance and life. We have exploited
the land for our own sake and neglected
others of those you have made, other
people, other creatures and other lands.
Forgive us, Father, and teach us to live in
ways that honour you and care for the
earth; to the glory of your holy name.
Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

God, who is merciful and kind, is the one
who declares 'Yours sins are forgiven.' He
also says, 'Tend my world.' Let us receive
his forgiveness and care for his world.
Amen.

5TH SUNDAY GIVING: NOEL

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Generous God, we give these gifts and our
lives because you have given the gift of
your life to us. Bless all we have and all we
are for your glory's sake. **Amen.**

READINGS: MARY

ISAIAH 11:6-9

The wolf will live with the lamb, the
leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the
yearling together; and a little child will
lead them. ⁷The cow will feed with the
bear, their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
⁸The infant will play near the cobra's den,
and the young child will put its hand into
the viper's nest. ⁹They will neither harm
nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for
the earth will be filled with the knowledge
of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

REVELATION 21:1-7

21 Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new
earth,' for the first heaven and the first
earth had passed away, and there was no
longer any sea. ²I saw the Holy City, the
new Jerusalem, coming down out of
heaven from God, prepared as a bride
beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And
I heard a loud voice from the throne
saying, 'Look! God's dwelling-place is now
among the people, and he will dwell with
them. They will be his people, and God
himself will be with them and be their
God. ⁴"He will wipe every tear from their
eyes. There will be no more death" or
mourning or crying or pain, for the old
order of things has passed away.'

⁵He who was seated on the throne said, 'I
am making everything new!' Then he said,

‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’

⁶ He said to me: ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

REFLECTION: ECO CHURCH (5) Act 5 – New Creation

We have come to the final act in our five act series in the Bible.

Our first act saw that God made the world and it belongs to him (Gen. 1:1, Ps. 24:1). He made everything good, including human beings who were made in God’s image. God walked with Adam in the garden of Eden, and Adam enjoyed God’s presence. Now here at the end of the Bible we see God once again walking in the garden city with those he’s made. Today’s final Act is ‘New Creation.’

We believe that God made the world and loves all he has made; that he sustains it by his power. Although the world has been spoiled by sin, God’s purpose is to redeem all things in Christ (Rom. 8:20-22). In sending Jesus, God showed that he plans to restore all things not do away with them. Because of Jesus, creation is to be ‘set free from its bondage to decay’, as Paul puts it in his letter to the Romans (8:21). As we have seen through this series God continually seeks ways to restore the broken relationship with himself, and that broken relationship includes all creation, not just the people within it. From the

earliest times the majority of Christians believed that God’s good plans for the earth were about a hopeful future rather than the destruction of it. The ancient Celtic Church had a very strong sense that from the very beginning God had destined his whole creation for resurrection, new birth. They would never have imagined God simply destroying it all when the beauty and majesty of this world speaks of his unending and sustaining love.

The Old Testament gives us an indication of what we can look forward to for creation. Hosea speaks of a day when wars will end, relationships will be equal and the broken relationships between people, creation and God will be restored. ‘In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the creatures that move along the ground. Bow and sword and battle I will abolish from the land, so that all may lie down in safety’ (Hosea 2:18). A similar vision is seen through the prophet Isaiah. In Isaiah 11 we read of a time when ‘the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea’ (11:9). In the same way that God’s presence was known in the Garden of Eden, so the whole world will one day be full of the reality of knowing God. Isaiah foresees ecological harmony within creation with former predators and prey living in peace side by side. All this will be part of God’s new heaven and earth (Isa. 65:17). Once again the picture is of the restoration of relationships between God, people and creation.

This new heaven and earth is not some kind of disembodied state in a kind of heavenly vacuum. Rather the prophets spoke of something very tangible. What they describe is our world but a world

without the pain and suffering, without the injustice and turmoil, without death and mourning. Now, of course, it is difficult for us to imagine such a world, for example, it's difficult to imagine a world where big cats won't be meat-eaters. But just because it's difficult to imagine doesn't mean God is incapable of re-creating this world.

When we speak of something being new, in this case new creation, we have to clarify what we mean. In the New Testament there are two words used – *neos* and *kainos*, both meaning something new. In the New Testament something that is *kainos* is something that is restored, renewed or repaired. And so, the new heaven and new earth that Peter refers to in his second letter (2 Peter 3:13) or in the book of Revelation (21:1), that we heard this morning, doesn't imply that the old world is thrown onto the scrapheap as though God is discarding what he has made. Rather it is speaking of the renewal of all God has made. Now if you think about it, Paul writes to the Christians in Corinth and speaks of them as 'new creations in Christ' (2 Cor. 5:17). I still have my old body, I still have the same DNA and so on, but in God's eyes I have become new and a process of transformation has begun. Just as God is into renewing broken, messed-up people and transforming us into new creations in Christ, so the whole creation will be transformed, renewed and healed. 'I am making everything new!' cries the LORD (Rev. 21:5). This is like a restorer getting to work on a damaged piece of art or sculpture. God will remove all that corrupts and defaces his good world.

Now there are passages in the Bible that speak of the earth being destroyed (e.g. Matthew 24:1-35; 2 Peter 3:1-13). 2 Peter

3:10 says, 'But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.' Sounds pretty conclusive, but if we go on, 2 Peter 3:13 says, 'But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.' We have to read Scripture in the light of Scripture. The common thread of such passages are the themes of destruction and renewal or judgement and salvation. If we only consider destruction and not renewal then it's no surprise if we get a skewed view of what the Bible has to say about the new creation.

Now some may ask, why bother to care for the earth if God is going to destroy it? But that view would forget two things. Firstly, God has called us to care for the world (Gen. 1-2). Secondly, if God did want to destroy his world, that's his choice. It's his world. However, the Bible paints more a picture of renewal than destruction. Yes, some things will be destroyed: sin, sickness, pain, and death among them. But the Bible reveals that God loves all he has made and will eventually renew it and also live in it.

The great drama of the Bible begins in Eden, the perfect garden, and ends in Jerusalem, the holy city where God himself lives with his people (Rev. 22:4). God and humanity walk together once more, something foreshadowed in the incarnation of Jesus. He walked with us on earth, redeeming it and giving us a taste of what is to come. Tom Wright says, 'The Christian hope is not simply going to heaven when we die but for new heavens

and new earth integrated together.' Our goal is not to be separated from the world but for the restoration of the world and for us to live in God's good earth where God's kingdom is come and his will done. Earth and heaven combined, all things brought together in Christ. It is the final accomplishment of God's great design, to defeat and abolish death for ever and live eternally in the light of God and of the Lamb who was slain for all creation.

So what? That's in the future. What about now?

This future vision of creation renewed and transformed when Jesus returns is a wonderful vision of God's kingdom rule established throughout creation. However, it is a vision of the kingdom not yet, and we still live in a world where creation groans and the world is not how it will be. This should firstly be a motivation for prayer. In prayer we can hold together the vision of a transformed world along with the agony of how things are now. Engaging in that prayer is transformative for us too, for we are praying what Jesus taught us: your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Maybe also that future vision can remind us to live simpler lives, not holding onto stuff so much, as we cannot take it with us. Living as though we care for creation and care for the poor of the planet is a choice, a choice that makes us consider the question 'Do I need this?' 'Is this good for the planet?' 'Is acting in this way a sign of love for God and love for my neighbour?' Scripture shows us that God's world is precious and we need to care for it and respect it. God himself is committed to sustaining and renewing creation, and has

entrusted caring for creation to us. So, let's honour God by caring for his world.

Let's pray.

SONG: CREATION SING THE FATHER'S SONG

<https://youtu.be/sx1TVHF007Y>

**Creation sings the Father's song;
He calls the sun to wake the dawn
And run the course of day
'till evening falls in crimson rays.
His fingerprints in flakes of snow,
His breath upon this spinning globe,
He charts the eagle's flight;
commands the newborn baby's cry.**

Hallelujah!

Let all creation stand and sing.

"Hallelujah!"

**Fill the earth with songs of worship;
Tell the wonders of creation's King.**

**Creation gazed upon His face;
the ageless One in time's embrace
Unveiled the Father's plan
of reconciling God and man.
A second Adam walked the earth,
whose blameless life would break the
curse,
Whose death would set us free
to live with Him eternally.**

Hallelujah!

Let all creation stand and sing,

"Hallelujah!"

**Fill the earth with songs of worship;
Tell the wonders of creation's King.**

**Creation longs for His return,
when Christ shall reign upon the earth;
The bitter wars that rage
are birth pains of a coming age.
When He renews the land and sky,**

all heav'n will sing and earth reply
With one resplendent theme:
the glory of our God and King!

Hallelujah!
Let all creation stand and sing,
"Hallelujah!"
Fill the earth with songs of worship;
Tell the wonders of creation's King.

Hallelujah!
Let all creation stand and sing,
"Hallelujah!"
Fill the earth with songs of worship;
Tell the wonders of creation's King.
Fill the earth with songs of worship;
Tell the wonders of creation's King.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESION: NOEL

SONG: HERE IS LOVE VAST AS THE OCEAN

Here is love, vast as the ocean,
Loving kindness as the flood,
When the Prince of life, our ransom
Shed for us His precious blood.
Who His love will not remember?
Who can cease to sing His praise?
He can never be forgotten
Throughout heaven's eternal days.

On the Mount of Crucifixion
fountains opened deep and wide
Through the floodgates of God's mercy
flowed a vast and gracious tide
Grace and love, like mighty rivers,
poured incessant from above,
And heaven's peace and perfect justice
kissed a guilty world in love.

Here is love, vast as the heavens
Countless as the stars above
Are the souls that he has ransomed
Precious daughters, treasured sons,
We are called to feast forever

On a love beyond our time
Glorious Father, Son and Spirit
Now with man are intertwined.

Here is love, for all creation,
earth for us to care and tend,
so we'll act now for our planet
in a love that will not end.
For in time the Lord will return
and renew the world as one,
earth and heaven linked together
in the Father, Spirit, Son.

CLOSING PRAYER AND BLESSING

Loving God, we thank you that your new creation will join heaven and earth in one holy and blessed union, where we will walk with you in joy and peace. Help us to take your transforming vision into this present world, that all creation may know your mighty plan and rejoice in your goodness; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(Peace from Guatemala)

The peace of the earth be with you,
the peace of the heavens too.
The peace of the rivers be with you,
the peace of the oceans too.
Deep peace falling over you,
God's peace growing in you.
And the blessing of God Almighty, the
Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be
with you now and for all eternity. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.