

Lord, open our ears to hear your Word spoken to us; Open our hearts to be changed by Your Spirit. Amen.

We are at the end of our worship series on Celebrating Creation. Those paying attention might notice that there has been at least as much lament as there has been celebration – it's hard not to grieve the profound losses human industry and exploitation have wrought on our wonderful world, its wildlife and wild places, its capacity for healing and growth. We have explored how we might live like we really care for our earth, how we might heal it, loosen our love of convenience, comfort and consumption, leave a habitable planet for our children and grandchildren.

Today we come to "restoring our balance," and I'm not sure why I called it that. I don't know if humankind's relationship with the natural world has ever been in balance, though indigenous communities more tethered to the land and water than westerners have managed it better. According to our creation myth-story, human sin put us off-balance from the start. And how on earth can we restore balance with the earth in time to stave off the disasters we are already experiencing?

Yet balance is God's desire for us. Healthy ecosystems live in balance, and healthy humanity lives in balance with itself each other, God, and with this natural world we've been given. We often feel out of balance in all kinds of ways, especially around our time and often food, so the invitation to balance is one that comes from God. Have you ever tried to balance on one foot, or done a yoga pose? Three things are needed: stillness, focus, core strength. How might we apply those principles to restoring balance to our environment?

We cultivate stillness and serenity, even in the face of disaster. That is our call, and our inheritance as saints of God. One of my favorite passages from St. Paul says, *"Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* The urgency of this emergency invites us to anything but stillness, yet solutions come more readily to minds that are still and receptive.

We can cultivate stillness. And focus.

Part of the reason we have not moved to address climate change

is that it's too vast – it's affecting our soil, water, air, food supply, weather, species, waste management, wildlife...Where do we start?

The magnitude of the crisis, the scope of work can leave us paralyzed.

We need to focus on one thing at a time – which aspect calls to you?

We tend to start at home – so we master simple things and go on to others.

Most of us recycle; we can get more thorough at it, and teach our children.

We can compost, buy less, re-use more. What if we tackle our use of plastic next?

Focus on water use and conservation.

Bob has found the “Planet Protector’s Guide” – a 38-page pdf with loads of great

practices for home use. For the sake of our forests, I decided not to print it out!

But I will put a link in the next E-news.

So we can start at home but as we get those practices down, let's widen our view.

If you love animals or birds, help protect them.

If you're a gardener or a lover of fresh food, work to protect pollinators.

How many of us support environmental organizations working on systemic change?

I've heard that many species are migrating northward as heat rises in our planet.

Scientists speak of making corridors through cities and highways to help them.

This is going to take work on domestic, national, legislative levels...

but one at a time. Stillness, focus.

And core strength. For us as the people of God, our core strength is faith.

Building that muscle by believing in God's power is what strengthens us.

We cannot do any of it without Jesus nor did he intend that we do.

He was the one who said, “With God with man it is impossible, but with God

all things are possible. How do we bring Jesus into this mess?

We start by realizing he's already in this mess. He is in all the messes in our lives.

He said, “I will never leave you or forsake you,” and he meant it.

I love that image of Jesus weeping as a coral reef disintegrates as he wept at the

grave of Lazarus, or at a clear-cut forest or a mine gash in the Earth or the

carcass of a rare elephant, killed for human greed, or to go back to that first

image of those little turtles caught in plastic, impaled on straws.

We know that Jesus also weeps for our condition, our demise, our disasters.

How do we bring him into this work at which we feel so unsuccessful?

We get a clue in our gospel reading. The disciples have worked all night at something they actually know how to do – and have gotten nowhere. It is not until Jesus enters the scene – by sitting on the shore, not even in the boat – that something happens and their nets fill with fish. Great story – God provides.

But it's what happens next that really grabs me:

he tells them to come ashore and have breakfast.

He has the breakfast cooking on a fire; he's all set – but he tells them to bring some of their catch to add to the feast.

Jesus could just have said, "Here, let me feed you," but he knows we are more engaged when we participate than just as mere receivers.

That is how God works – invites us to do our thing, with his help, and then invites us to add our contribution to the feast.

What has God brought about in your life that you can share in this feast?
What gifts do you have that you can put to use to help heal our earth?
What resources can you offer? What passions and loves can you bring?
Where do you want to work? Find that place, in stillness and focus and faith.

I didn't realize until a few weeks into this series that the titles for each week kind of flow together as a call to action:

To **live like we care** in order to **heal our earth** means **losing our lifestyle** and **putting our children first** so we can **restore balance to the cosmos**.

As we look at our climate crisis, as we celebrate our beautiful God-given creation, crisis and all, we can find ways to invite Jesus' power and love into this work.

Let's not try to do this without prayer. Let's not try to do this without Jesus.

Anytime we come face to face with the damage and the beauty,

remember Jesus is there. Jesus is with you. Invite his power to transform.

Let's bring our stillness and our focus into this work, building our core strength of faith in the One through whom all things are possible.

Let's bring our gifts to his fire so that all can eat.

So the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Amen.

John 21:1-14

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Isaiah 11:6-9

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. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. 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.

Reading from "Grief in a Silent Sea" Tim Gordon, marine biologist

at the University of Exeter and at the Australian Institute of Marine Science; his research focuses on the impacts of climate change on tropical coral reefs.

Jesus never scuba-dived on a dying Great Barrier Reef. He never saw the colors fade, the architecture collapse and the symphony silenced. But I think his words and actions at Lazarus' tomb show us how he might respond to today's environmental crises. If, while on earth, Jesus had seen the riches of creation reduced to a rubble field, he surely would have wept with us for its loss. He surely would have pointed us to its future redemption. And he surely would have used this as motivation to protect all that still remains of the planet's wonders.

"I am the resurrection and the life," said Jesus, as his cheeks shone with tears. One day, the sea will sing again.