

An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood, showing a dense canopy of green trees covering most of the area. Several houses with various roof colors (red, grey, white) are visible, interspersed among the trees. A network of dirt roads or paths winds through the landscape. The overall tone is warm and natural, with a focus on the lush greenery.

# Morning Worship

## Season of Creation

*"The Earth is the Lord's  
and all that fills it"*

Psalm 25:1

6 September 2020

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our Morning Worship here at the Parish churches of Coxley with Godney, Henton, and Wookey. Although we are once again meeting together physically in our church buildings we understand that some people might not be able to attend for any number of reasons. It is hoped that following this liturgy, knowing that others in the benefice will be doing so at the same time, might help provide a spiritual connection between us and bring about a sense of community between the followers of Jesus Christ.

It is suggested that alongside this liturgy you have a means to listen to the suggested hymns which have links to videos with lyrics within this document. There is a mixture of traditional hymns and contemporary worship songs. If you do not know the tune then why not listen to the hymn/song and worship through reading the words alone.

The service is designed to be used easily by one person. If there is more than one person participating, either one can lead with others joining in with the responses in **bold** OR everyone present may join in with all the words.

The sections in *red italics* are rubrics: these explain what needs to happen at various points.

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# MORNING WORSHIP

## GREETING

Praise God! For even though we are apart the Lord is in our midst!

**Let us rejoice and be glad and give him the glory.**

## CALL TO WORSHIP

The Lord is here!

**His Spirit is with us!**

Though we find ourselves isolated  
in homes, apartments, and residential places,

**we look out our windows and remember,  
the heavens declare the glory of God,  
all creation rejoices in our creator.**

*Psalms 19:1*

Though we cannot be present with our church community,

**we rejoice that Christ is in our midst,  
he is with us always, until the end of the age!**

*Matthew 28:20*

Though we have to stand at a safe distance from others,  
giving space to those who pass us by,

**we recall we are all made in the image of God,  
connected to one another,  
connected to God.**

*Genesis 1:27*

## HYMN: ALL CREATURES OF OUR GOD AND KING

[Listen here](#)

## CONFESSION AND WORDS OF COMFORT

The Spirit of the Lord fills the world  
and knows our every word and deed.  
Let us then open ourselves to the Lord  
and confess our sins in penitence and faith.

**Father, we have sinned against heaven and against you.**

**We are not worthy to be called your children.**

**We turn to you again.**

**Have mercy on us,**

**bring us back to yourself as those who once were dead  
but now have life through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*A period of silent reflection follows*

Hear the words of comfort, our Saviour Christ says to all who truly  
turn to him:

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son,  
that whoever believes in him should not perish  
but have eternal life.*

*John 3:16*

## COLLECT

Let us pray.

*A period of silent prayer is kept.*

Almighty God  
you created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them,  
and you promised your people a land of their own;  
give us all a reverence for all that you have created  
that we may respect the needs and desires of all people  
to find their place within your world;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord  
who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit  
one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## HYMN: PRAISE TO THE LORD, THE ALMIGHTY

[Listen here](#)

## THE WORD OF GOD

Hear what God is saying to his people according to the book of Genesis.

**1**<sup>24</sup> And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so.<sup>25</sup> And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”<sup>29</sup> And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.”<sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.<sup>31</sup> And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

## THE SERMON

*By Revd Guy*

### THE 'SEASON OF CREATION'

Within the Church of England we celebrate a variety of seasons, from Advent, Epiphany, Lent, and Easter, which celebrate the life of Jesus, to the celebration of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and within all this runs the thread of the work of God the Father. But we do not have a particular season to celebrate God the Father. This, to me is a great shame, the Bible reveals to us so many different attributes of God that are worthy of celebrating - his love, his power, his mercy, his justice, to name but a few.

So this year, I thought we would rectify the situation, not for the whole of the Church of England, but certainly for our benefice. Every year within the benefice we celebrate Harvest on one Sunday, usually in September. Well this year we are going to extend that celebration and join in with the 'Season of Creation' celebrating both creation and our Creator. September 1st was the world day of prayer for the care of creation and the day that formally started the Season of Creation. It is ecumenical celebration which runs from the 1st September to the celebration of the Feast of St Francis of Assisi on the 4th October.

Over this season, within this benefice, we shall be looking at the themes of land, water, climate change, and sufficiency, all in relation to the world that we have been given by God starting this week with the land.

### THE LAND

Land is something that we both live on and live off, it is of fundamental importance to our daily existence, without it our homes would have no firm foundations and our tables would be bare. Within the Bible it takes a similar position of primacy with the very chapter of the Bible describing the creation of the world and then throughout the Old Testament the land being described as a gift to God's people. Whether it is the promised

land for Abraham and his descendants, or the return to the land for the Israelites in exile it is a theme that we cannot ignore.

But it is a theme that has too often been distorted. Our reading this morning from Genesis 1 has been used as justification for the exploitation of land for centuries. The misuse of the phrase “fill the earth and subdue it” and the description of mankind having “dominion over” creation have led to mankind doing what serves them best, without a care for the rest of creation. With more species than ever on the brink of extinction due to hunting or the destruction of habitats, land producing fewer crops due to intensive farming methods, and air pollution getting increasingly worse, we do not need to look far to see humanity's abuse of creation.

All of this creation abuse, this destruction of the world that God made for us to dwell in, can all be traced back to us. It can be traced to our selfishness, to our self-centeredness, to our sinfulness. Whether we damage creation deliberately or out of ignorance, the root of this selfish behaviour is us and our sin. Put simply, sin is the elevation of ourselves, our needs, desires, our preferences, at the expense of all others be it other humans, God, or the world. So when we read verses that speak of “subduing” creation and having “dominion” over it our default position is one of sinful abuse for our own gain. We abuse creation because of our sin.

### **HUMAN REDEMPTION? THE WORLD'S REDEMPTION?**

But thankfully our sin has been dealt with and so we have hope for humanity's care for creation once more. Through the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven, death, the consequence of sin, has been defeated and we are no longer prisoners to our sinfulness. We have been saved by the blood of Christ and all who trust in him will receive the gift of eternal life. But with this story of redemption and salvation there is a tendency in the world today to make it all about us, “I am saved”, “God saved me”, “Jesus is my saviour”. Our tendency towards sin even manages to make salvation about us. And it is about us, Paul in his letter to the church in Corinth says: ‘For our

sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God' (2 Co 5:21). Christ took on our sin so that we might be saved. Salvation is about us, but it is not all about us.

When we look across the Bible we see that salvation is not limited to humanity but extends across all of creation. Take the Old Testament and the account of Noah and the flood, not only does God save Noah's family but the animals too and his salvation extends to the land as well as after the flood subsides God promises to 'never again curse the ground' (Gen. 8:21). At the end of the book of Jonah, God takes pity on the city of Nineveh, a city God describes as containing 'more than 120,00 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle' (Jon. 4:11). Again we see God's mercy extending to both humanity and animals. Now, you may question these accounts saying that it is a peculiarity of the Old Testament, that that was what salvation looked like before Jesus and that salvation is different now, but that is not the case. Let's look at one of the most famous verses in the whole Bible - John 3:16 - a verse that is often quoted for its depiction of God's offering of salvation for all humanity.

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

Now you may already see where I am going with this. In this passage the word for world is *kosmos* which refers to the whole of creation, everything worldly, not just people. And this concept is not just isolated to John's gospel, in 2 Cor 5:19 we find the same word *kosmos* used to describe God's work of reconciliation, in Colossians 1:20 Jesus Christ is described as the one who reconciles all things to God. God's plan is to restore and save all of creation, not just humanity.

## **GOD'S PLAN FOR US AND FOR CREATION**

The book of Revelation speaks about God's kingdom coming in its fullness, God's kingdom is here now, we are building it, but it will



be completed when Christ returns. This coming kingdom is one where God renews all of creation, this is the promised redemption and salvation of the land (Rev. 21:5) we have heard about earlier today. But the promise of the redemption of the land and the promise that God will make all things new when his kingdom comes in power is not an excuse for us to abuse the world now. We cannot think with such a disposable mindset. Yes, the world will be made new. Yes, it will be a perfect creation once more; but our calling as Christians is to bring glory to God and to be witnesses to his kingdom on earth here and now. As such we should be a community whose aim is to live lives according to God's kingdom as best we can, by sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, by confronting injustice, by becoming more mature disciples, by growing in our relationship with God, and by caring for creation. If you take any of these things to their perfect completion then you get a picture of what heaven is like - everyone knows Jesus, there is no more injustice, we are mature in our faith, we have a perfect relationship with God, and the world is made new - this is what we are called to witness to! For today though, we will focus only on our witness to God through creation. If God's final plan for his kingdom involves the restoration of creation then we need to be those who steward the land and look after creation as part of our witness to God's kingdom and God's rule here on earth.

### **OUR PREROGATIVE**

Although God 'makes the springs gush forth' and 'causes the grass to grow for the livestock' as the psalmist describes in Psalm 104, God does not care for creation by himself but, as we read in Genesis 1 today, we have been given 'dominion' over all the earth and so we have a role to play. But this role needs to be understood in relation to the story of redemption.

As I have said already today, we understand the domination of creation by humanity as something that is for our own benefit and we understand it this way because of our sinfulness. But

when we look back at this through the story of redemption then we see that creation is not ours but God's. When we understand creation in this way, then we see ourselves as stewards, not rulers, looking after the world until it is made new with the coming of God's kingdom.

When we have the perspective of a steward we can start to understand our role in caring for creation, we can understand what subduing the earth and having dominion over it means. It means we subdue the earth according to God's rule. When we look at the parables Jesus taught we can see that God knows that creation needs to be subdued - it requires pruning for it to good growth. Not only that but if we care for creation then we are bringing glory to God because we are doing his work and showing the world the wonder and beauty of God's creation. That is why I think it is important for us to take care of the green spaces in our communities, so that people might see the beauty of creation and get a taste of who God is. As a church we can work with our local parish councils to campaign for the safeguarding of green spaces from development, we can work alongside them to clear rubbish from footpaths and playing fields. Closer to home, we can look after our gardens and churchyards to bring glory to God. In this strange time, more and more people are meeting outside, more and more people are walking around our villages. What an opportunity we have to show off the wonder of God's creation, to share with people that we're looking after our world until God makes it new once more.

You may know that to keep the congregations in our churches safe we are no longer holding services of morning prayer on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. But, in light of it being the season of creation and our calling to steward creation, I will be using that time to look after our churchyards. So on Monday morning I will be in Henton tidying up the garden of remembrance, on Tuesday, I will be in Wookey weeding the flower beds, and on Wednesday I will be in Coxley, clearing the overgrown grass from our footpaths. You are all welcome to join

me (as outside more of us can gather safely!) and let us make this Season of Creation one where we each steward creation as part of our gospel witness and bring glory to God through our natural world.

Amen.

## **HYMN: BUILD YOUR KINGDOM HERE**

[Listen here](#)

## **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,  
from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,  
who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,  
who strengthens us with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

## **INTERCESSIONS**

*Use the silence to bring before God your own concerns around that topic.*

Jesus, our exalted Lord, has been given all authority.

Let us seek his intercession that our prayers may be perfected by his prayer.

Jesus Christ, great high priest,  
living for ever to intercede for us,  
pray for the Church and its leaders, your broken body in the world...

*Silence is kept.*

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Jesus Christ, King of righteousness,  
enthroned at the right hand of the majesty on high,  
pray for the world and its leaders, and make it subject to your gentle rule...

*Silence is kept.*

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Jesus Christ, Son of Man,  
drawing humanity into the life of God,  
pray for your sisters and brothers in need, distress, or sorrow...

*Silence is kept.*

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Jesus, pioneer of our salvation,  
bringing us to glory through your death and resurrection,  
surround with your saints and angels  
those who have died trusting your promises...

*Silence is kept.*

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Jesus Christ, Lord over all creation,  
through whose blood all creation is redeemed,  
pray for us to be good stewards of your creation...

*Silence is kept.*

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Jesus Christ,  
keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit  
and in the bond of peace,  
and bring the whole created order to worship at your feet;  
for you are alive and reign with the Father  
and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**



## THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.

## HYMN: HOW GREAT THOU ART

[Listen here](#)

## DISMISSAL

God the Father,  
who first sowed in your hearts the seed of eternal life,  
bless you.

God the Son,  
who nurtures you with the rain and sunshine of love,  
bless you.

God the Holy Spirit,  
who brings us all to fullness of life,  
bless you.

The blessing of the one true God,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with you always  
and that you might be a blessing to others.

**Amen.**