**Creation 1: Listen to Creation Job 12:7-10**

“But ask the animals, and they will teach you,
    or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you;
**8**or speak to the earth, and it will teach you,
    or let the fish in the sea inform you.
**9**Which of all these does not know
    that the hand of the Lord has done this?
**10**In his hand is the life of every creature
    and the breath of all mankind.

I have always been in awe of the marvels of nature. Perhaps like me you have watched a video of spider spinning its web; or a sped-up video of a sunflower growing from a small seed to a magnificent bloom; or the miraculous ways that rainforests replenish themselves, with the older and mature trees protecting the undergrowth with their canopy. When I see these things, even if only in a video, I am simply in awe of creation around us. I often think that if only creation could talk to us – what wisdom would it share.

In our Young and Young at Heart story today – The Great Kapok Tree – we heard the voices of the animals in the rainforest, pleading with the woodcutter not to destroy their homes. I wonder what words of warning and wisdom animals and plants and trees would share with us today, if we could only hear them?

Our scripture today from Job is considered one of the Old Testaments Wisdom Texts. It was written between 700 and 500 years before Christ - that’s a long time ago. The wider book of Job discusses Divine justice and Divine response to ‘disruptions’ that may occur. And here, in the verses we read today, Job is emphasizing the ability of creation to understand the Divinity of the Creator. He uses verbs of instruction like – *teach us, tell us, inform us.*

But our responsibility as humans – is to listen!

If you look up the definition of ‘listening’ in google dictionary it says:

“*Give one’s attention to*”, “*make an effort to hear something”,* “*be alert and ready to hear something*”.

These definitions remind us at the get go that there is much more to listening than just attuning our ears. Ultimately, the practice of listening is something we enter into with our whole selves.

Real listening doesn’t just happen. We need to make space to hear another; we must lessen the distractions around us as much as possible. I am sure you all have experiences of talking to a loved one while they are watching TV, or on their phone, or maybe reading the newspaper. Maybe you’ve even said “are you listening to me?”

And in this age of zoom calls, it is quite easy to recognize when someone on the call is preoccupied with answering other emails or looking at something else – that’s if they even have their screen on!

We are so used to multi-tasking, running through our days continually adding more and more to our ‘to do lists’, or skimping on the time we need for rest and relaxation, that sometimes we have simply lost the ability to actively listen.

There have been many studies written on the art of actively listening, and most agree that it begins with ‘attending’. Meaning being present and being in the moment to notice the visual cues that are exhibited by another, and notice your own emotional response to what you hear.

Once we have done the work of preparing and attending, we are then setting ourselves up for ‘hearing’. And hearing is a skill that requires our ongoing attention. If our intention and desire is to hear the other, to hear life, to hear creation, then we are called to pay attention to how we actively prepare for this intention.

You might feel that you are quite good at listening to others. As a Minister, I feel that it is a great privilege to spend time with people, and to sit with them and intentionally listen to them as they tell their story.

But, I don’t think I am so good at listening to Creation.

Do I “*Listen to the birds in the sky?”* Do I “*let the fish in the sea inform me?”*

In the summer of 2020, I was lucky to spend some study leave time in a rainforest in Meres Island, in BC. Being in that ancient forest, where there are some trees that are over 2000 years old, I was truly struck by the interconnectedness of creation. I understood what Job meant by “*Speak to the earth and it will teach you.”*

I know that we are not all fortunate enough to spend time in a rainforest. But we can intentionally still be present in nature.

Forest Therapy, sometimes known as Forest Bathing, has become a growing healing process in the last decade. It is now active in 60 countries. National Geographic describes it as both a mindfulness practice, and a fitness trend that is rooted in the Japanese practice of Shinrin-Yuko. The philosophy of Forest Therapy is that:

 *It is a relational practice that brings people into deeper intimacy with natural places. And one of those natural places is our natural self; it’s a practice that holds the possibility of meeting again the kernel of who we are, and what we are born to be and how we are intended to be of service in the world.*

Now, I know you might be wondering if this is just a little ‘hippy-dippy’ for you. But honestly, isn’t that what Job could be telling us in this book of wisdom?

To stop, and intentionally and actively listen to creation all around us.

And what might you hear when you listen to creation?

Well, I’m not going to give you alarming statistics on global warming, or depletion of the Ozone. Yes, we need to be actively concerned for our environment, but I’ll save that sermon for another time.

Today, I simply invite you to focus on the idea that when we stop and intentionally listen to Creation, then we can hear the presence of the Divine Creator all around us.

Celtic Spirituality has become increasing popular and mainstream in recent years. One of the founding principles of Celtic Spirituality is the understanding the presence of God in creation. In a world of pending ecological disasters of over population, global warming, food shortages, pollution, Aids, traffic gridlock and industrial chaos, it is little wonder Celtic spirituality appeals. The ancient writing of St Columbanus reads: “If you wish to understand the Creator, first understand God’s creation.”

How can we understand God’s creation?

Well, we can begin by taking time to stop and really listen to the birds sing, to the leaves whisper, to the frogs chirp, and even to the torrential rain fall – and when we do that, we can simply become one with the Creator.

We can take time to breathe in God’s Spirit.

We can allow creation to call us into being who God intended us to be.

One of the most colloquial sayings about the book of Job is “The patience of Job”.

We have all become quite impatient in this world today.

So, let us be aware of that, starting from today.

Let us spend less time on our devices, more time in prayer, more time in meditation, and let us be intentional in ways that help us slow down, to listen to creation, and to allow us to be with God. Amen.