**The Parishes of Crail and St Ayle .**

**Reflections for the Locked out - Locked Down Church from Peter Neilson**

**Sunday 26 April 2020**

Hello to all my friends in Crail and St Ayle.

**Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Welcome to worship as our dispersed community of faith. Make sure you have a bible and a hymnbook and some means of listening to your favourite music. Please use as much or as little of this offering as is helpful for you to worship God in your own way. Taking time around our usual worship time, will give us a sense of worshipping “alone together”.

This week the focus is on God’s Creation. You might like to take these prayers outside. Sit in the garden and let the birdsong lead your praise.

**Gathering into the Presence of God**

**A Prayer of Columba**

Delighful it is to stand on the peak of a rock

in the bosom of the isle

gazing on the face of the sea.

I hear the heaving waves

chanting a tune to God in heaven;

I see their glittering surf.

I see the golden beaches

their sands sparkling;

I hear the joyous shrieks of the swooping gulls.

I watch the ebb and flow of the ocean tide

it holds my secret;

my mournful flight from Eire.

Contrition fills my heart as I hear the sea;

it chants my sins,

sins too numerous to confess.

Let me bless Almighty God,

whose power extends over sea and land,

whose angels watch over all.

Let me study sacred books, to calm my soul;

I pray for peace, kneeling at heaven's gates.

Let me do my daily work,

gathering seaweed, catching fish,

giving food to the poor.

Let me say my daily prayers,

sometimes chanting, sometimes quiet,

always thanking God.

Delightful it is to live in this peaceful isle

in a quiet cell,

serving the King of Kings.

Quoted in Robert Van de Meyer, *Celtic Fire,* Darton Longman and Todd, 1990

**Listening for God’s Word**

Read **Psalm** **19** aloud. Enjoy the beauty and energy of its poetry. Then pause on the familiar closing words for a time of silent meditation on what you have read.

*May the words of my lips*

*And the meditation of my heart*

*Be pleasing in your sight,*

*O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.*

Read **Romans 8:18-27**

**Reflecting on God’s Word**

**The Glory and the Groans**

**The Glory....**

As we take our daily walk for exercise we are surrounded by the glory of God’s creation. The buttercups smile at us. The wind whistles in our ear. The waves beat out their rhythm. The shingle draws its rumbling breath. The lark sings its invisible song. The gulls hang in silent suspension.

The Psalmist invites us to see beyond the glory of creation, to celebrate the glory of God in creation: *The heavens are telling the glory of God.* From the beginning of time, human beings have looked at the sun, moon and stars with wonder and amazement. That wonder has often morphed into worship of the heavenly bodies themselves. For the Hebrew writers, however, the mystery was not contained in Nature. Nature is a sacrament through which God’s grace touches us and sustains us, unbidden. The sun rises without our help. The earth rushes through space tilting towards springtime without a word from us. Behind the intricate complexity of astrophysics, chemistry and biology is the Creative Presence. *In the beginning....God.*

As our worlds shrink to four walls, and our news cycle becomes a claustrophobic reiteration of the deadly and the cheerful, there is healing for the soul in looking to the far horizons across the water and the fields. “I will lift up my eyes to the hills.” “Lift up your hears! We lift them up to the Lord!”

**The Groans.....**

I wonder if this is a time, not only to celebrate the glory, but to listen to the groans. The Apostle Paul, speaks of all creation “groaning”. That groaning can be heard in convulsive moments of volcanoes and floods, in the strain of overheating and forest fires. Creation has been groaning with the poisons we have poured into the air from our fossil fuels and the suffocating plastics in our oceans. It gives fresh meaning to the prayer of Columba who speaks of the sea chanting his sins.

The groans come from a planet that has been given no time to rest, pummelled by our 24/7 lifestyles, heedless of the rhythms of night and day, and demanding foods out of season. We have ignored the creation pattern of Sabbath rest for one day in seven for whole communities and for the created order, and Jewish longer rhythms of rest and debt release every seven years.

There is a hint in the Old Testament that the Exile was to allow the land to catch up on all the Sabbaths it has missed. (2 Chron 36:21) This has nothing to do with the grim sabbatarianism of our Scottish past, but with a healing rhythm, essential for the whole of life.

Observers are noting that this may be a time for our planet to heal itself- no planes, fewer cars, a slower pace of life for all. Los Angeles, normally polluted by air traffic, now has fresh air to breathe, and the citizens of Jalandhar in Northern Punjab can see the Himalayas for the first time in 30 years. Paradoxically, Covid-19 may be one of creation’s “groans”, which is turning into a seismic sigh of relief from our planet.

Paul likens the groans to the groans of childbirth – the prelude to something new. Paul relates this newness to creation waiting for “the glorious freedom of the children of God”. Let me leave you with another paradox to consider.

In the midst of this time of restricted freedoms, what are we being freed FROM? And what are we being freed FOR?

Questions to ponder the next time we walk around our beautiful East Neuk – seeing the glory and listening for the groans.

**Responding to God’s Word and God’s Spirit**

**Creation Groaning**

*Reflection on Romans 8:18-25 and Climate Emergency*

It’s time for action
I know it.
Our children know it.

And the earth cries out in pain.
Crisis, crisis, crisis.
Will you save me from the burning,
Protect me from the wind and storm,
From the silence
Of a million species
Dead before their time?

Creation groans
As though in childbirth.
Waiting, waiting, waiting.

It yearns for freedom from human sin.
The entire universe stands on tiptoe.

Will we fulfil its hope
And be Christ’s hands and feet of healing?

*(c) Christine Sine,* Godspace, *September 2019.*

**A Meditation to Go**

Wendell Berry is an American farmer poet who invites us to draw grace from living close to God’s creation. This is one of his Sabbath Poems*.* The setting is autumn rather than spring, but no matter.

I love the last line!

The sky bright after summer-ending rain

I sat against an oak half-up the climb.

The sun was low; the woods was hushed in shadow;

Now the long shimmer of the crickets’ song

Had stopped. I looked up to the westward ridge

And saw the ripe October light again,

Shining through leaves still green yet turning gold.

Those glowing leaves made of the light a place

That time and leaf would leave. The wind came cool,

And then I knew I was present in

The long age of the passing world, in which

I once was not, now am, and will not be,

And in that time, beneath that changing tree,

I rested in a keeping not my own.

From *The Peace of Wild Things,* Penguin (2018)

**A Celtic Blessing**

*Imagine you are in church with your friends, looking each other in the eye.*

Deep peace of the running wave to you,

Deep peace of the flowing air to you,

Deep peace of the quiet earth to you,

Deep peace of the shining stars to you,

Deep peace of the Son of peace to you,

Deep peace, deep peace.