

August 28, 2016

Element: Earth Genesis 1: 9-13

I am continually amazed about how plants can grow in the most unexpected and inhospitable places. Sometimes I wish they wouldn't grow so well in certain locations. And we all know the old saying "***a weed is just a flower out of place***".

In the first creation story in Genesis dry land appears on the third day and immediately life emerges on this earth. Fertility and fecundity are hallmarks of earth. The biosphere is set in motion. By the end of the third day it is a living flourishing landscape. The **Creator** causes life to inhabit every possible nook and cranny. If life can possibly be sustained it will be there. Earth and the thrust to life are one and the same. Just as **God** is in all things and all things are in **God**.

The properties of earth have much to teach us about our own internal landscapes: Earth comes in many different forms - soil, rock, clay, sand, dust, mud, mineral, and humus. Earth stands for what is material and solid in our being. The elements in earth are the same elements our bodies are made of. The air we breathe is a byproduct of bacteria and plant life. Even the blood flowing through our veins is iron rich. We are of the earth and we inhabit spaceship earth.

**Earth awareness** begins with our intuition of the oneness of all life. We recognize that our identity is entwined with lives beyond our own. This sense of expanded identity goes beyond human relationships. We depend upon trees, trees depend upon grasses, grasses depend upon animals, prairies depend upon ancient oceans.

Physically and spiritually, we all are woven into the living processes of the Earth. As science now tells us, we take part in a planet-sized living system.

Our breathing, our acting, our thinking arise in interaction with our shared world. Our own hearts constantly beat out the cosmic rhythm within us. We cannot escape our involvement any more than we can escape breathing the air that has traveled from plants thousands of miles away.

Now here is where our faith comes in: When we ground our spiritual awareness in this ecological context, then the fertility and unity of the living Earth, the wonder of intricate life sustaining relationships, in short the **Mystery** in the midst of life, flows through us. Our Earth awareness becomes a means of realigning ourselves.

Earth as an element symbolizes the necessities and commitments of our lives. It represents our limitations as well as our possibilities.

The word humility comes from the root humus, which means living earth. Humility means knowing both our limits and our gifts intimately. It means being in touch with our own earthiness.

When we are deeply rooted, in the living earth we know our place, our connections, our responsibilities, our limits. We are not dull and domesticated we are lively and grounded.

Getting in Touch with the Element of Earth:

Go up Mount Royal and enjoy the vistas.

Take your Bible outside and read the first creation story. Each time **God** says it is good, **pause** and **breathe** in that sense of the goodness of creation.

Walk barefoot through the grass/go hiking in the woods, **stay in the present** and **notice** what is all around you!

Visit your local farmers' market. **Touch/smell/taste.**

Compost your grass cuttings, leaves, garden clipping and kitchen scraps.  
In two years they become dirt.

**Give thanks** for nourishment and consider making a donation to the NDG Food Bank and/or St. Columba House.

Holy Ground Exodus 3: 1-5

Have you noticed how dogs settle down to sleep? They circle around and around, sometimes scratching the surface of whatever they are on so as to make a nest.

I looked around for the dogs one day when we were sitting on our friend's deck down by the water. I finally discovered the dogs right behind me, sound asleep, not curled up but kind of splayed out or half spread eagle in the dirt amongst pine needles. They looked so peaceful, so grounded, literally. And that got me thinking,

What grounds me? (Two things: Being in nature. My life with Vicki)

What is Holy ground for me? (Again two things: Having a vista of some sort stretching out before me. Christian community caring for one another)

So let me ask

What grounds you?

What is Holy Ground for you?

Are they the same or different?

The Ecological/environment movement has declared the whole earth, the biosphere as the new/old holy ground.

However at the same time we in the western world have turned into sanitizing freaks. Think about all those commercials on TV: disinfectant this or disinfect that. Germs are bad and they are lurking everywhere.

Dirt is a 4 letter word. Kids are supposed to stay clean, and free of any grime or germs. But my grandmother always said kids needed to eat a peck of dirt to be healthy.

Now think about what the church has said about being dirty/sinful/earthy. The Church for centuries has talked about washing away our sins –cleaning up what’s dirty. Earth was bad/impure/female - heaven was good/godly/male. We humans were separate from nature. No wonder we have had little thought about caring for the earth.

We were programmed to believe we could use the earth for our own ends with impunity. No one was saying that we were all part of a sacred ecosystem. No one was saying “*destroy nature destroy ourselves*”. No one was saying “*pollute the environment pollute our lives*”.

Humankind has not deliberately sought to degrade and destroy our habitat; mostly we have sought to improve it, for the human species at any rate. But the determination to bend the earth to our will, the insistence to see ourselves as creator not created and the failure to recognize ourselves as a species among species, inextricably interdependent, is a judgement now being read back to us. So, it is time to change our perspective, to relent and repent of our climate changing activities. We are standing on Holy Ground.

### **Application for Today**

It is time to recognize and respond to the Holy ground all around us.

### Earth Prayer Meditation

Follow your breathing inward: Settle into that prayerful place.

Be mindful of the earth beneath our feet, supporting and nourishing all life.

God in all things: All things in God.

Be aware of the interconnectedness, the inter-dependence of all life:

God in all things: All things in God.

See how much we take from earth's bounty and how little we return:

*Optional: (Be mindful that in destroying Earth's music we create confusion,  
in wrecking Earth's appearance we blind ourselves to beauty,  
in polluting Earth's fragrance we make a house of stench.)*

Remember as we care for the earth, the earth cares for us.

God in all relationships: All relationships in God

Give thanks for all the relationships, human and otherwise,  
which augment our lives and the lives of others.

God in all relationships: All relationship sin God.

Give thanks for all the opportunities you have to enrich the living Earth  
and the lives of others.

God in all relationships: All relationships in God.

Give thanks to the Mystery in the midst of life, weaving the circle of life, and allow yourself to become one with this Mystery.

God in all relationships: All relationships in God.

Now, with another deep breath let us return to our daily life renewed, refreshed and ready to bless the earth.

### The Sower and the Seed

When **Jesus** walked the countryside, he used metaphors of soil, crops and harvest to deliver his message, especially in his parables. Those listening to him were intimately connected to the earth, dependent on her fruitfulness. They understood the immediacy of what **Jesus** was pointing to.

He also extended his imagery to the wider biosphere adding images of the sea and wind, birds and sheep, field and treasure, of pearl, weeds and trees to describe the Kingdom of **God, God's New Day**. In the stories he tells us that the New Day is to be discovered in the midst of our everyday lives and our everyday environment. **God's New Day** comes in the here and now of Creation. And what's more there is an amazing grace amidst it all.

When our lives are hard and impervious **God** keeps sowing the seeds of salvation.

When our lives are shallow and self-serving **God** keeps sowing the seeds of salvation.

When our lives are choked with cares and superficial concerns **God** keeps sowing the seeds of salvation.

When our lives are finally ready **God** keeps sowing the seeds of salvation.  
And the beauty, the abundance of the Earth takes over. We bear the fruits of  
**God's** New Day right where we are.  
Let's take a deep breath and embrace what has been planted within us  
and bring it to fruition.