

## Resurrection: Tikkun Olam

Genesis 1:24-31 Romans 8: 18:25

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter – April 24, 2022

On this second Sunday in the season of Easter, and the Sunday closest to the celebration of Earth Day the texts from Genesis 1 and Romans 8 paint for us two very different pictures of Creation. In Genesis - creation is designed and blessed by God with abundance, goodness and endless variety. In Romans we hear the words of groaning, and longing as the Apostle Paul tells us that just as we wait for the restoration – the completion of our Resurrection experience – the creation waits as well, in anticipation amidst suffering and oppression.

For some, Easter is a one day event. It's : church, gorgeous Spring flowers, goosebump producing music, an inspiring sermon, easter baskets, egg hunt, and family time. A day of celebration remembering Jesus' rising from the dead.

However, In the church calendar Easter is a season - it a period of time over 50 days until Pentecost Sunday. But in reality Easter is on-going . Easter is every day, 365 days a year. But Easter is more than that! As followers of Jesus Christ we are Easter People, We are Resurrection People!

For us - the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the core , foundational identify of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. The resurrection is never limited to one Sunday a year. Every Sunday is a celebration of Resurrection, every day we live with the reality of death, but a Savior who has conquered that final enemy and who's promises are that as we were created to be eternal - so we shall be.

There is a tendency to limit the impact of Resurrection to the promise of live eternal, or a distant future in time and space when Jesus will return and reign and a time when our bodies will be restored – reclaimed – resurrected. Easter is all of those things – but so much more.

In Romans Paul is including the good news, the gospel of the Resurrection to include all of creation. The earth, and the heavens above the earth, creatures and all living things are included in the victory Christ has won over death and decay.

NT Wright (Theologian and Scholar) says this about the Resurrection and Creation:

*With Jesus we realize that what we call 'heaven' (God's space) and what we call 'earth' (our space) are designed to work together, to overlap and interlock; and we humans are created for the specific purpose of standing at the threshold between the two, summing up creation's praises before the creator and exercising responsible authority on his behalf over such bits of the world as may be entrusted to us... (starting with our own bodies, to which we shall return).*

If your media feeds this week have been anything like mine – you’ve been bombarded with emails, links, advertisements, invitations, text messages, mailings, articles on line, and in the paper about the state of earth and it’s inhabitants and what we can or should do about it.

Climate change, global warming, species extinction, air pollution, toxic fumes, toxic wastes that destroy natural resources, forests, and water sources as well as threats of nuclear destruction of people and the environment are daily fare. It is overwhelming and easier to ignore than to find the time to absorb what is happening to our world, and ways to participate in change.

So as Resurrection People - as Easter People - how are we then to stand at this threshold that NT Wright identifies. How are we to stand between the praise of God and the care of the planet?

What is our responsibility and how do we do it? Jesus in life, in death, in his teaching and in his rising to new life challenges our assumptions about ourselves, and our way of living.

Coming to grips with the good news of Jesus Christ as the victor over death not just our death but - *all death* - *Human and creation is the place to start.*

Jesus said: God loves the world!, and sent Jesus to redeem all of it. God loves the world in its completeness, it’s wholeness. God loves people, yes! But God loves this beautiful, intricate, amazing world as well.

The Psalms are filled with the elements of creation praising God. The mountains, the rivers, the rain, the sun, the moon, the stars, the birds, the fish in the sea and the animals that roam the earth - all have their place and their purpose in praise to the Almighty One.

For a long time the message of the Gospel has been focused on the saving of souls - the calling people to hear and believe the good news – of forgiveness, of reconciliation of relationship with God. Which is a good and primary message.

But the message of this Gospel - the message of Redemption is much greater and broader than that. The Good news is for all creation.

The creation story in Genesis speaks of periods of times that God took in creating the earth and the creatures - as days. However they may be measured - these periods of time were extensive and God took more time creating the world than God did in creating humanity. Think about that - The Genesis story allocates 5 days for creating the world and one day for creating people. This world matters to God - it is a divine gift, lovingly created to sustain life; creaturely life, plant life, sea life, bird life, and human life. This planet is not ours alone - we share it and it was blessed by God and pronounced Good.

Humanity was given responsibility for it in the very first verses of the Hebrew text in Genesis. God so loved this world, that it was entrusted to humans - as God's stewards to care for it – to use it wisely, with respect and gratitude.

Just as God did not abandon humanity after they rejected God, so God did not abandon the earth and its ongoing systems of renewal and restoration.

The earth bears witness to God's faithfulness in the seasons of Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall; in the Sun, Moon and stars moving through the heavens. In the birth of animals, plants and all living organisms.

But the earth, like humanity, lives with the fetters of greed and avarice, wastefulness, ignorance, destruction, and war that cause all to groan with longing for their redemption and release from the bondage of death.

We stand at the threshold of heaven and earth as God's emissaries, stewards, guardians of all of creation. We have been entrusted with its care until Jesus comes again to complete the plans and purposes of God.

But - how do we do it? How should we live? What should we be doing?

Big questions - I don't have answers for you! Sorry if your disappointed. I'm not going to tell you what to do - what organizations to support, what care to drive or how long to take a shower. But I do want to share with you a practice and tradition that has become very meaningful and inspirational to me.

The concept of Tikkun Olam:

“Tikkun Olam, a Hebrew phrase meaning “repair of the world,” is a deeply rooted concept in Judaism that refers to a commitment to perfect the world according to God's will through our own behavior, attitudes and actions.

All human activities are opportunities to fulfill this commitment, and every human being can be involved in tikkun olam—child or adult, student or entrepreneur, industrialist or artist, caregiver or salesperson, political activist or environmentalist, or just another one of us struggling to keep afloat.

Tikkun is often translated as *repair*. But in the Hebrew Bible and in the early code of Jewish law called the Mishnah, it has a range of meanings: improve, fix, prepare, set up, or just “do something with...”

*Olam* in Biblical Hebrew connotes *all of time*. In later Hebrew, it came to mean *the world*.”

So Tikkun olam literally means to do something with the world that will not only fix any damage, but also improve upon it, preparing it to enter the ultimate state for which it was created.

One description expresses Tikkun Olam this way: “It is a fine-tuning of our world’s voices. With each tikkun, we are creating meaning out of confusion, harmony from noise, revealing the unique part each creation plays in a universal symphony that sings of its Creator.”

Another deeper meaning of the term tikkun olam: The word *olam* also means *hidden*. We need to repair the world so that its Creator is no longer hidden within, but shines through each thing in magnificent, harmonious beauty. <sup>1</sup>

We stand on the threshold between heaven and earth as Easter people – with the good news of Resurrection as the lens through which we understand our place in God’s plans and purpose. What might the invitation of Tikkun Olam mean for you as you live your life in praise, and worship, with thanksgiving. How will you be a repairer of the world?

Will you let the invitation of Tikkun Olam inform the way that you honor Jesus by caring for the world God so loved.

May it be so.

CLOSING PRAYER: a poem offered by e. e. cummings

I thank You God for most this amazing  
Day; for the leaping greenly spirits of trees  
And a blue true dream of sky; and for everything  
which is natural which is infinite which is yes  
(I who have died am alive again today,  
and this is the sun’s birthday; this is the birth  
Day of life and love and wings; and of the gay  
Great happening illimitably earth)  
How should tasting touching hearing seeing  
Breathing any – lifted from the no  
Of all nothing – human merely being  
Doubt unimaginable you  
(now the ears of my ears awake and  
Now the eyes of my eyes are opened) Amen

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<sup>11</sup> Found in “Wisdom to Heal the Earth” by Tzvi Freeman