

“Tenants of Mother Earth”

18th Sunday after Pentecost

October 4, 2020

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Iao United Church of Christ

Philippians 3:4-14, Matthew 21:33-46

A Native American Quote titled – *“Earth, Teach Me”*

“Earth teach me quiet ~ as the grasses are still with new light.

Earth teach me suffering ~ as old stones suffer with memory.

Earth teach me humility ~ as blossoms are humble with beginning. Earth teach me caring ~ as mothers nurture their young.

Earth teach me courage ~ as the tree that stands alone.

Earth teach me limitation ~ as the ant that crawls on the ground.

Earth teach me freedom ~ as the eagle that soars in the sky.

Earth teach me acceptance ~ as the leaves that die each fall.

Earth teach me renewal ~ as the seed that rises in the spring.

Earth teach me to forget myself ~ as melted snow forgets its life.

Earth teach me to remember kindness ~ as dry fields weep with rain..”

Our earthly bodies are connected with Mother Earth, but our souls belong to our Creator in Heaven. As Rob Fuquay in his study guide, “The God We Can Know – Exploring the ‘I Am’ Sayings of Jesus, earth is only a stopping place for us, not a staying place. As stewards of our temporary spiritual home have we forgotten, as another Native American proverb puts it – “when we spit on our earth mother, we spit on ourselves.” What we do on earth affects everyone, not just the selected few. The inequality of our society, racial justice, socio-economics – etc. the harm caused to the earth affects many people who do not have the means to protect themselves as others do.

I was reading an article from USA Today and it mentions that the scientists believe that “2020 is expected to be Earth’s warmest year on record.” I was also

recalling that in 2006, the documentary “An Inconvenient Truth” about former Vice President Al Gore's campaign to educate people about global warming warned us about the effects of what would happen when ocean water temperatures begin to warm up. This year we have seen hurricane after another hitting the southern part of the US. We have also seen many tropical storms forming from the same area where hurricane Douglas emerged in the southern Pacific Ocean. We see now that the Antarctic glaciers have retreated three miles and where many areas within the US have experienced the warmest winters ever recorded since the 1880's. Many would like to say we are being “alarmists” but the “inconvenient truth” is that mother earth is sending us loud and clear messages of the harm we are doing. What are we, the Tenants of earth doing to our earth mother? We are busy putting fences up and building watch towers, keeping people out, thinking that will solve the global problem as if we are the only one's on earth or as if that will stop the effects of global warming.

Vice President Al Gore was rejected by many, and still is the case today. Many of our scientists who have been given the gift of science, are being rejected. Maybe some of us in our own communities, who want to move to become better stewards of our environment – are being ridiculed and/or rejected.

Beloved community, I believe we are called to be part of the “rejected.” We are called to be the people who are given a piece of mother's earth – not as owners, but as stewards – and to produce fruits for God's kindom. We are called to produce both physical food, to feed those in need. We are called to produce spiritual food, to feed those who seek and hunger for God's righteousness – as good stewards of our words and good stewards of our actions. Whatever stone gets thrown at us for being good stewards of what we are given will be broken into pieces so long as we hold on to our faith.

As tenants of this earth, God is the owner of this great vineyard of ours we call Earth. The Gospels give us the message of what we are called to do – be good stewards and produce good fruit – what great trust does God have in us beloved community. God entrusts us with this great vineyard and yet, now, we are asking for forgiveness on our overproduction of material goods, not goods that feed God’s people, but goods that feeds our ego, our individual wants and desires, even at the expense of our earth mother. When God tells Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply” I do not believe God meant for us to overpopulate our earth mother to a point of unsustainability. That is not being good stewards. And yet, God is patient! God continues to send us message after message after message, storm after storm after storm to appeal to us.

Another news article from the CBS News – Global Thought Leaders asks – “can we stop climate change and how will innovation help?” This question reminds me that God’s children are given such great talents to solve problems – that is the patience of God. God’s children are given this innate ability to be innovators – that is the gift of God. The article states that the good news is that “we know how to fix” the problem of global warming. That “we can stop climate change by reducing our emissions by 45% by 2030.” We will not continue to see the effects of global warming, but it would be a good start to produce the results needed. I believe, as the article also states, that we need to move away from “denial and avoidance” and move to solutions. Innovations that give way for rebirth to happen, rebirth of sustainability that stops harming our planet while creating jobs for our citizens. Solar and wind energy, electric powered vehicles that are affordable. Water is the main concern for many communities, especially those experiencing drought. Yet, scientists have developed a device that can capture water from thin air and release it when warmed by sunlight. This innovation could provide a new source of drinking water in drought

areas. Globally, Earth's air contains almost 13 trillion tonnes of water, a vast renewable reservoir of clean drinking water. There are many other innovative solutions out there that are waiting to be implemented if we invest our time, talents, and treasures to produce such good fruit.

Let us close with this beloved community. Even if we are rejected for wanting to save our planet and live more sustainable. Let us be and push our community leaders to be those rejected cornerstones of innovators. Let us be good stewards of this great vineyard that God has provided for us to live in, temporarily until we are called to our heavenly home. God gives each of us our talents, let us use the talents of our scientists and innovators to save our one planet we are privileged to call Earth.

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Amen, Amene, Ashe, A-ho, and Alleluia.