

Lectionary reflections for Earth Sunday: April 21 (Easter Sunday, Year C)
(Acts 10:34-43/Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24/1 Corinthians 15:19-26/John 20:1-18)

“The physical resurrection reminds us that physicality, the created order, and our human lives are worth dying and rising for. Before Jesus’ death and resurrection, he said to the religious leader Nicodemus: “God so loved the world.” Traditionally we have interpreted “the world” as humans. But there is good evidence to believe that redemption is not limited to humans; St. Paul spoke of “all creation groaning for our redemption” (Romans 8:22). In fact there seems to be a link between our redemption and the earth’s redemption, and little biblical evidence that this is related only to an afterlife.

When Jesus burst the chains of death on Easter morning, he limited the effects of death for humanity and creation. By rising in the physical world he confirmed the importance of the physical. By Jesus’ resurrection we might also join with Christ in blessing creation and seeking creation’s renewal.

We Anglicans love the association with Jesus’ resurrection and the idea of a bursting spring garden. We notice that when Mary was weeping outside the Garden Tomb, she encountered the Gardener. When he spoke her name, she recognized Him. Her first response was to go and tell, and that is the first message of Easter: to tell that Jesus is raised. But the second message might be that because of Christ’s resurrection there is renewal and rebirth for the created order. Resurrection and spring and gardens deeply resonate with Christians. An authentic response to Easter is to not only proclaim “He is Risen!” but look for ways in which we can renew the earth.” - The Rev. Stephen Drakeford (2010)



“Does celebrating Earth Sunday on Easter sound strange to you? It shouldn’t. After all, Easter Sunday is the day in which we celebrated the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Jesus’ resurrection demonstrates that to God, matter matters. Not only the human soul, but organic, human flesh – and by extension, all flesh – is, in God’s hands, redeemed and transformed.

Easter also tells us that sin and death do not have the last word. The devastation that humans have wreaked on creation – polluted air, toxic spills, loss of biodiversity, changing climate – can make it easy to despair. Scientists warn that we need to make radical changes to our way of life to address these challenges, yet human nature being what it is, this seems impossible. But by breaking the stranglehold of sin on our lives, Jesus’ death and resurrection opens to us the possibility of a new way of living, in harmony with God’s purposes for us and for all God’s creatures.

Colossians 1:20 reminds us that, through Jesus’ death and resurrection, God was reconciling all things – on earth and in heaven – to Himself. In his rising from the dead, Jesus, the one through whom all things were made and in whom all things hold together, reconciles all things to God, restoring creation to the glory and integrity God intended for it. We do not see this restoration in its fullness yet. Still the Resurrection stands as a promise of God’s ultimate destiny for all creation.

Christ’s victory is a victory not only for us, but for all creation, setting us free from sin and in doing so, liberating the creation to share in the glorious freedom of the children of God (Romans 8:19-21). Let us go forth today, in the power of Christ’s resurrection, to live this liberation now. – Elin Goulden (2011)