



## Spoken Reflections from Justice Choir Sunday As Shared by Worship Leaders Identified

MAY 12, 2019

### FIRST REFLECTION

"The Place Called Plant Earth"

BY REV. ASHLEY BAIR

GENESIS 1

We have one home,  
The place where the sun shines down  
on us, illuminating the brightness of our  
souls and warming our bodies to the core -  
rays that reflect off our eyelashes and shine  
through our fingertips, spreading sun to  
everything we touch.

We have one home,  
The place where the deep waters  
nourish us and tempt us, billions of  
molecules, tiny beyond our comprehension,  
and the tiny molecules of water are the only  
source at home that makes everything alive.

We have one home,  
The place where beast plays and  
flora grows, filling our home with beauty -  
and filling our home with abundance -  
feeding us both in body and in spirit. Here,  
we have enough to satisfy ourselves and to  
share.

We have one home, a gift made  
good. Our home was crafted especially for  
us, with purpose and love and in perfection.  
Today, we find ourselves looking not for the  
ways we can spread the sun or nourish the  
water that gives us life, or protect the beast  
and flora that provide beauty and  
sustenance for everyone - but, instead  
looking for ways to pollute the air that helps  
the sun shine, to poison the water that gives  
life, to sell land as if we had ownership of it,  
to kill the beasts and plow over the flora to  
make way for profit.

Today, let us look for what still lies  
beneath the concrete, in the molecules of the  
water, and in the warmth of the sun in our  
touch. For what was there in the beginning.

In the beginning when God created  
the heavens and the earth, the earth was a  
formless void and darkness covered the face  
of the deep, while a wind from God swept  
over the face of the waters.

Then God said, "Let there be light;"  
and there was light. And God saw that the  
light was good.

And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land earth, and the waters that were gathered together, Seas. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seeds, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with seed in it." And it was so. And God saw that it was good.

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." And God saw that it was good.

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals on the earth of every kind." And it was so. And God saw that it was good.

God blessed them.

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing. So God created humankind.

God blessed them.

God said to them, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to

every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life."

And it was so. God saw everything - and, indeed, it was very good.

We have one home,

The place called planet earth, a miracle and a wonder, where every living creature is blessed, our feet on the dirt, picking up pieces of history in the flecks of sand and the molecules of water that give life, and the sun that shines in us and through us as we roam in God's image.

*Music: The Place Called Planet Earth (music House of the Rising Son, words by Sheena Phillips)*

## SECOND REFLECTION

"Neighbor"

BY JENNIFER ANDERSON

LUKE 10:25-37

25 Just then a religion scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus. "Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?"

26 He answered, "What's written in God's Law? How do you interpret it?"

27 He said, "That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbor as well as you do yourself."

28 "Good answer!" said Jesus. "Do it and you'll live."

29 Looking for a loophole, he asked, “And just how would you define ‘neighbor’?”

30-32 Jesus answered by telling a story. “There was once a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead. Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road, but when he saw him he angled across to the other side. Then a Levite religious man showed up; he also avoided the injured man.

33-35 “A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man’s condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable. In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I’ll pay you on my way back.’

36 “What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers?”

37 “The one who treated him kindly,” the religion scholar responded.

Jesus said, “Go and do the same.”

*Music: One Foot / Lead with Love from Justice Choir Songbook*

**THIRD REFLECTION  
BY BOB HOUSER & BILL NEELY  
WORK OF THE PDA**

We were pleased to welcome several people from the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance to speak of their work and continuing need of support.

*Music: ¡No Nos Moverán! (We Shall Not Be Moved) - African American Spiritual (words from Agustin Lira, Luis Valdez, and traditional Spanish)*

**FOURTH REFLECTION  
BY KATIE MORRIS  
1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-11**

Pending

*Music: Be the Change from the Justice Choir Songbook*

**FIFTH REFLECTION  
BY REV. DAVID COLBY  
HOLY COMMUNION**

Service of communion.

*Music: Love is Love is Love is Love from the Justice Choir Songbook*

**SIXTH REFLECTION  
BY REV. DAVID COLBY  
2 TIMOTHY 4:7-8**

From the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Second Timothy, a letter circulated in the early church about leadership and faith and the importance of perseverance.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From

now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Someone once told me in the early days of my ministry, "Like a mighty turtle moves the church." I think they were offering some caution, warning me that there would be frustrations ahead.

Perhaps it was borne out of experience gained: of the church being slow to change its teachings. About cries for justice that were shunted off into long periods of study. The church was slow to speak out against slavery. The church took way too long to welcome women into ministry. Slow to change its teachings about sexual orientation, words of judgment too slow to change into genuine welcome. Indeed, the church has been passive and too slow on issues. I get impatient with the church. Not this one especially - but the church, capital C. And maybe that has been your experience as well. And for any who have been hurt by the church, on behalf of the church, I am so sorry.

There's a second issue captured in this image of the church moving like a mighty turtle. Sometimes it is used as an excuse. For simple issues, like repainting walls or changing lightbulbs. Someone says that it needs to happen, and then the matter gets sent off into committees that were required to get input from other committees, one of which designed a congregational survey while another created a blue ribbon task force. And the light bulb still needs to be changed. The impulse toward

community engagement, a goal for consensus may be admirable . . . BUT.

To issues like this – we can argue back that some things that do not have to be done slowly. That a sense of urgency and dedication can lead to good and rather speedy results. Like our calling of Ashley Bair as an associate pastor. We took the so-called faster route - and people from other churches are still amazed that we opened the position in August and Ashley was on the ground running in February. When disaster hits, it's good to know that people are trained, equipped and ready to go. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and their national response teams [*Two members of these national response teams had spoken earlier in the service.*] are ready to move fast. And then they will stick with the situation while their help is needed.

Which leads me to a third and final way I have come to understand this saying that like a mighty turtle moves the church. You have heard the fable about a race between a speedy young rabbit and a pondering turtle, right? How the boastful rabbit raced off from the starting line, looking back toward the beginning, doing some trash talking, and then became bored? And how that same rabbit decided out of an overcockiness, or a lack of preparation, or an underestimation of the challenge - decided to take a nap. You know what happens. The rabbit that had raced out to a fast start stalled out. And the turtle kept moving forward, slowly but surely. Kept her eyes on the prize and won the race.

Big issues take time to make progress. Most issues worth singing about,

worthy of our time and dollars and efforts take a sustained effort. For most major issues we need to condition ourselves that we are engaged not in a quick sprint that will start today and be over before tomorrow, but a marathon. And so we need to prepare to be a mighty turtle. To be able to keep moving forward at a pace that can be sustained. Like a mighty turtle - ready to be resilient and resolute.

The civil rights movement in America, often sustained and nourished by the church, had this image of holding on, of training eyes on the horizon, keeping faith that there was a prize worth grasping. And a song served to sustain hope despite short-term setbacks. A song provided courage when days were as dark as night. A song was passed down from wise elders to young

schoolchildren raring to go. Hold on. Keep your eyes on the prize.

There is an African proverb that says, "If you want to go fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, go together."

*The work of justice and wholeness takes dedication.*

*It is abetted by communities of care and conviction*

*It requires and builds resilience.*

To all who have gathered today, thank you. And keep your eyes on the prize.

*Music: Hold On (Eyes on the Prize) Refrain credited to Alice Wine, 1950s, music: African-American Spiritual*