

*Holy God, send Your Word, send Your Spirit, send Your love. Amen.*

*In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens ...  
Lord of the heavens and the earth...  
So heavenly minded he's of no earthly good...  
On earth as it is in heaven...*

We tend to make a distinction between “the heavens,” where we locate God, and “earth,” the realm of humankind and created things. But Jesus didn't seem to see them as so separate – he came into this world to demonstrate just how fully God imbued every part of it, how NOT separate God is from God's creation.

Our ancestors in the faith didn't make such strong distinctions either - In the story of how humans were created, we're told God made a mud-creature out of dirt and breathed life into it. Dust to dust. Can't get much earthier than that. In my little play about Cain and Abel in family therapy, they talk about their father and his inferiority complex, *“I came from dirt and that's how I'm going to end up.”* It is powerful to think that we are not only on the earth, we are of the earth.

Jesus was very earthbound as well, sitting on the ground to teach, making mud with saliva to restore someone's sight, drawing in the dust when a woman is about to be stoned for adultery. And he used the image of earth in his parables of seeds – earth as the place where growth happens, often unseen, a metaphor for the life of God that seems hidden and unmoving but is the source of all kinds of growth.

The earth is what we stand on, count on, our base, our solidity. Our faith. The earth is where things grow, the host to millions of creatures and life. The earth is where we grow things, getting our hands into the soil.

What do we love about earth?  
Solid... you can grow things in it...

The ancient Celts who embraced the Gospel of Jesus as it came to them  
embraced that “with-ness” fully – theirs was a faith both earthy and earthbound.  
Maybe it came from the animism of their religious past, the belief that spirits dwell  
in all things; it was a short trip from there to believe that God dwells in all things.  
But that also means there is holiness in all things, especially in the things of earth.  
the greens and browns, the grasses and mosses, stones and paths.

And earth is not meant only for standing upon or building upon  
but for walking upon, for journeying on.  
Celtic Christianity was a journeying faith; the Celts did not build great churches.  
They built abbeys and monasteries to house communities of pilgrims,  
monks who ventured forth on missionary voyages across land and sea  
to bring the Gospel to others.  
Worshipping a Jesus who rarely sat still, but was constantly on the move,  
journeying around Judea and Galilee to preach and heal,  
they too found God on the road and made God known on the road.

When did our experience of following Jesus become so sedentary?  
The great cathedrals of the middle ages in Europe had no pews.  
Some people had no churches, but worshipped outdoors.  
How might we begin to move more in our worship, in our prayer?  
I wanted us to go outside for prayer today, to feel the earth under our feet,  
but with the heat I thought better of it.  
Ironic, that the damage we have done to the earth makes it harder to enjoy her.  
For earth is where we began and something in us yearns for it.

Earth reveals the life that supports us.  
But earth also conceals – it is where we put things we don’t want to see,  
or we don’t want others to see.  
We bury our dead in the earth. We bury our waste. Axnd we bury treasure.

So Jesus also told a story about a treasure hidden in a field, which a person finds  
and realizes this is the most precious thing that could be found.  
Afraid of losing it, he sells everything he has in order to buy the whole field  
to ensure this treasure will be his.  
I’ve always thought the treasure was the realm of God,  
and when we discover it we are willing to give everything up to keep it.  
And it might mean that – for some it does.

But Jesus might also have been hinting that the one who finds the treasure and gives up everything to ensure it does not fall into the wrong hands is God. And the treasure is us – hidden in the dirt, not looking like much, but of so much value to God he gave up everything, his unity with his own Son, to possess us. “In his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” How does it change our experience of faith to know we are that precious to God? Does it perhaps inspire us to find that level of treasure in God?

This week, I invite you to cultivate an awareness of standing and walking on earth – even if there are layers of asphalt and concrete and flooring between you and earth. And cultivate an awareness of how much like earth our God is – supporting and feeding us. When we stand on earth, we stand on God. When we put our hands into dirt, we put our hands into God. You are the treasure hidden in dark earth, your truest life still to be revealed.

**Amen.**

### **Matthew 13:3-9, 44**

And he told them many things in parables, saying:

‘Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!’

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

### **Genesis 2:4b-9**

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up— for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.