

Today we are focusing on the next line of text in the Lord's Prayer  
- On Earth as it is in Heaven.

As we have been moving through this prayer week by week, I've been thinking about how this prayer is one of the first things we teach children in a church setting, so that they can recite it with this community and feel like they are a part of it. And as I contemplated earth being what it is in heaven, I was reminded of another story that we teach children as an introduction to human life and how we got to be in this community, and what we are called to do and who we are called to be. We start with Genesis.

Hear now these words:

Genesis 1:26-31

**26** Then God said, "Let us make humankind[a] 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,[b] and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

**27**

So God created humankind[c] in his image,  
in the image of God he created them;[d]

male and female he created them.

**28** God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” **29** God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. **30** 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, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. **31** God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

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God saw what God made and called it good.

A good Earth.

An earth as it is in heaven, maybe.

As someone who teaches kids about God, I think a lot about these words and stories that we pass on to our kids.

The Lord’s prayer is a powerful set of words to pass on, particularly those words: On earth as it is in heaven.

Sometimes I encourage the kids to imagine Jesus in such moments, a man with a fate hanging over his head, sitting with his followers, giving them pathways for the future, saying that when we pray, we should pray together, and right towards the middle we should pray for God's will to be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

I remember speaking the prayer as a kid, sitting next to my mother in a cushioned pew, saying the words, over and over and .....thinking very little about them, to be honest. I don't remember learning it. When you're a kid, the Lord's prayer is on the list of things and words to be able to parrot back, words on a page committed to memory and recited at a moment's notice, and this is a melodic moment within those words - thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

On the surface, it's a call to imagine what it is like in heaven and pray for God to make it and us like that. In that sense, it's a call for some trickle down work, do it down here like you do it up there, God. A few weeks ago downstairs with the kids, they imagined what God's kingdom of heaven, this place we are supposed to wish for, would look like. a lot of discussion focused around the eating establishments that would be there,

with some kids asserting that McDonalds belonged in heaven and others saying, no clearly God would favor Burger King.

But favored eating establishments aside, on the surface, this a particularly bold ask within the Lord's Prayer - hey God, make it down here like it is up there. You can do it. We need you to do it. And it's an important ask, Because to ask this is to presume that it is actually not already on earth as it is in heaven, and that that is a problem.

It almost reads like a lamentation moment within the prayer. Or as Scott said in his description of today's episode in the series...

Lament, for all is not right with the world.

And ain't that the truth!!!

For if you look around us, it seems that lamentation is the language of the current moment.

It seems like everywhere we go these days in the world, whether or not folks are willing to admit that's where they're coming from,

we're encountering grief, particularly given the current social, political, and physical climate.

Grief for lost loved ones, due to death, sure, but also due to seemingly insurmountable difference of belief...

a grief for lost connection.

Grief for lost futures, due to death, sure, but also due to the harsh and terrifying reality of climate change.

Grief for seemingly irredeemable mistakes, encountered in others, sure, but also in ourselves.

Grief that results in inaction... Grief that permeates and ferments and turns to regret ..... and anger.... and deflection.

lament, for all is not right with the world.

According to an article put out by Kaiser Health News, psychiatric and Psychological communities have recently identified a new phenomenon - climate distress, or climate grief. It's not yet an official clinical diagnosis, but it's prevalent enough that doctors have named it - after encountering waves of patients struggling with the reality of climate change. People who have absorbed all the recent scientific studies and want to do something to reduce global warming, but are completely overwhelmed and depressed by the scope of the problem, and filled with anxiety about how the

Earth will change over their lifetimes and the lifetimes of their children.

Sounds familiar. I've felt it. I'm sure some of you have too.

Lament, for all is not right with the world.

This week on Twitter, theologian Diana Butler Bass stated, "I speak in churches and at non-profits all over the US and the main feeling I encounter these days isn't fear; it isn't anger. It's exhaustion. People are exhausted."

That sounds like lamenting. We live in a world that is both grieving and worn out from the grieving. Grieving an earth that is not at all as it is in heaven, an earth we have not always held up our part of that creation bargain to protect.

I think we saw symptoms of this a month or so ago, when a lot of adults got very vocally angry with a teenager named Greta Thurnberg who dared to stand up to the rich and powerful adults leading this country, dared to say the things on the minds of the young people all over the world when it comes to the changing climate, dared to hold them accountable for decisions made that will not necessarily affect them but WILL affect their children and

grandchildren. ... dared to not worry about being nice or polite in doing so, dared to speak with harsh language, which is, by the way, the language of lamenting, the language of the honesty of grief experienced by folks facing a truly uncertain future.

The language of prophets. Prophet, after all, simply means truth teller. an earth as it is in heaven would have lots of truth. it would be much more honest. What's the point of beauty if it's all a lie.

And like so many prophets before her, Greta was called rude. She was told she should learn her place. She was told children should be seen and not heard. She was called horrible names by adults hiding behind twitter handles and user names.

And almost worse?

She was politely applauded.. and then forgotten.

Because the only thing that is more uncomfortable than grief is it's brother called "shame." and no one wants to face either.

And yet as UCC Minister of Environmental Justice Rev. Brooks Berndt said about Greta: The prophet has spoken. Harsh truths have been laid bare. The moment of reckoning is upon us.

Lament, for all is not right with the world.

I confess to you that as I thought about this this week, it weighed on me pretty heavily. And i think that's another reason we don't like to engage with this stuff because the weight of it can be unbearable. I kept thinking, What's the point of asking children to learn these words if we don't do our best to protect the world in which they will say them? What's the point of asking our children to speak truth if we are selective about the truths we are willing to hear? What's the point of lamenting and grief if despair is where it all ends?

And what's the point of asking God to make earth as it is in heaven... if we aren't willing to meet God partway in that.

I confess that I sat in this grief for awhile.

And then I remembered that the thing about lamenting and grief, is that studies and experience show that while it comes in many forms, the good and right way of dealing with it is the same no matter the situation. You can't move on from grief, you can really only move forward with grief. Walking alongside you, footsteps in the sand. And we, as commissioned caretakers of this Earth as it could be in Heaven, have to do the same. Take our grief for an

earth that is not as it is in heaven and walk with it awhile.

Forward. Into a future that is uncertain, but it is also the only one we have.

It's not going to be a comfortable journey. After all, we are humans commissioned by God to take care of the land and the sea and the animals and we haven't done that. And there's shame in that, and grief derived from that. But the thing about shame and grief is that whilst they are reasons for behavior, in this case, they are not excuses for inaction. We can and should lament a world that is not as it is in heaven. And then we should set about making it so.

And when I'm looking for hope, I think of Greta, and I can't help but be entirely certain children can be our best leaders in this.. They're all mini-prophets who can't help to tell the truth about hard things anyway. Because they can spot falsehood a mile away and because they haven't yet taken perceived impossibility as fact. Where we see inevitability, they see possibilities. Where we see closed doors, they see opportunities, and that's what we need. So What if we lived into that?

What if along with asking kids to repeat ancient prayers we

focused on modeling living into them? What if instead of hiding our grief from our children we modeled the language of

lamentations and the way those cries can spurn us into action?

What if instead of asking our children to listen to and rememberer stories, we listened to theirs and took them seriously?

What if instead of telling children to deal with the world we have created for them, we thought about creating one that as closely as we Meer mortals can get to heaven?

What if instead of teaching them to demands God do the work for them, we taught them to meet God in the journey?

What if we instead of teaching the language of platitudes, we learned their language of lamentation?

A language of truth. Of seeing the world as it is and declaring it boldly, without shame or fear. Of declaring our own inadequacies and apologizing for them, and then doing something about it.

A language profoundly dangerous to those empires that rely on lies and half truth to remain.

A language that is the start of our earth as it is in heaven.

That lamenting language in the Lord's prayer is not an inactive prayer. It's bold. It is saying to God, look we are going to try our best with this earth you have entrusted to us. Walk with us. Meet us in the journey. Move with us and help us find hope. Give us fortitude in the face of grief to continue on. Remind us every day of the reason for our creation. And fill us with hope and the confidence that we can bring earth just a little bit closer to as it is in heaven. This we pray, Amen.