

# Awaken and Listen to Creation

EcoChaplain Roger Wharton

Interspersed in the Bible is the call to God's people to awaken and listen. We are called to listen attentively so that we may be able to give words of comfort to those who need to be loved and encouraged. When we actively listen, we will be filled with inspiration, words, and love of God, and encouraged by the Holy Spirit to bolster up those who are down.

During this Easter season, choose to listen and learn from the "Book of Nature." The animals, plants, and natural events which we encounter all speak of God. To hear, we need to awaken our senses and alert our minds to be sensitive to this type of communication. The Judeo-Christian tradition labels this method of godly communication nature wisdom. The Easter season in southeastern Alaska is a perfect time to tune in to the nature wisdom that surrounds us.

The letter to the Philippians reminds us that Jesus became incarnate to live as a member of the earth community. In so doing, Jesus demonstrates that God is part of creation— not separated from it. There is a new bonding with creation that goes beyond the rainbow covenant. Through Christ there is a new relationship between God and creation, a relationship that is unique and special in all of the cosmos, because God chose to walk here in human form. The cosmos now waits in travail for the New Creation to be fulfilled as we become truly daughters and sons of God in Christ.

In Christ Jesus, God and creation are united. Jesus comes to serve the whole creation by reconciling God and humans. People separated themselves from God, and in so doing failed to carry out their responsibility to care for the earth and its creatures. Because of human sin, all creation suffers. The death and resurrection of Jesus not only redeems the human condition, but institutes a New Creation which embraces the universe. Christians now live in the hope of this New Creation as we strive with God's grace to walk the way of Christ serving others —indeed, all of God's creation

On the first, Palm Sunday the people sang and danced of the great deeds that God had done for them, and were excited as they anticipated a great act that God would perform. What is expected, however, never comes to pass. Instead there is a greater and more wonderful action of God in raising Jesus from the dead.

One of the reasons that we are not awake to creation and do not hear what God is speaking to us is that we are all caught up in remembering the past and anticipating the future. It is good to remember how God has acted. It is good to look forward to how God will act in the completion of the New Creation. But the present is where we are at the moment, and it is here that we need to listen to God.

Open your ears and see the wonder of spring. Smell and taste the goodness of the earth. Feel the breath of God blowing over the land and sea. Expand your heart to the love of God present at this moment. God will act in this day in ways that will never be duplicated. Each day is special and unique creation of our God bringing us closer to unity in Christ.

The trees giving their branches remind us of the many important connections Jesus had with trees. As a carpenter, he worked with wood. In the garden of Gethsemane, deserted by friends, only the trees witnessed his agony as he watered their roots with his tears.

Thorns ripped from a tree tore his flesh and drew blood. It would be a tree perverted by humans into an instrument of death that he would drag to Calvary, and on which he hung to give life to the world. His life-giving blood is first mixed with the wood of the thorns and the cross. Thus, the sin of the world, begun with the misuse of a tree in the garden of Eden, is reconciled, and all of creation is given new life in Christ Jesus in his resurrection.