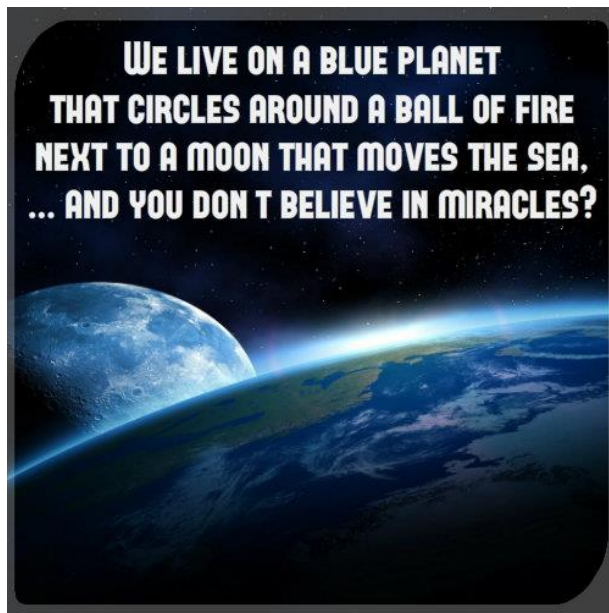


“Home: The Universe’s Sacred Earth”
Psalm 24

We will begin with some of the words of Psalm 24:

The earth is yours, O Giver of Life,
in all its fullness and glory,
the world and all those who
dwell therein;
For You have founded it upon
the seas,
and established it upon
the rivers.

Since the beginning of time, people have been fascinated by the beauty and majesty of God’s creation, especially our home planet earth. From the universe’s perspective earth is but a small speck and yet it is our magnificent home. One of the most common times I find myself praising God is when I come face to face with the grandeur of God’s creation on planet earth. One meme that expresses this sentiment is this one:



I recently learned about one of our national parks that seems to be a hidden gem. The Channel Islands National Park is just sixty miles from Los Angeles. Here is a part of a video clip from the park’s official website:

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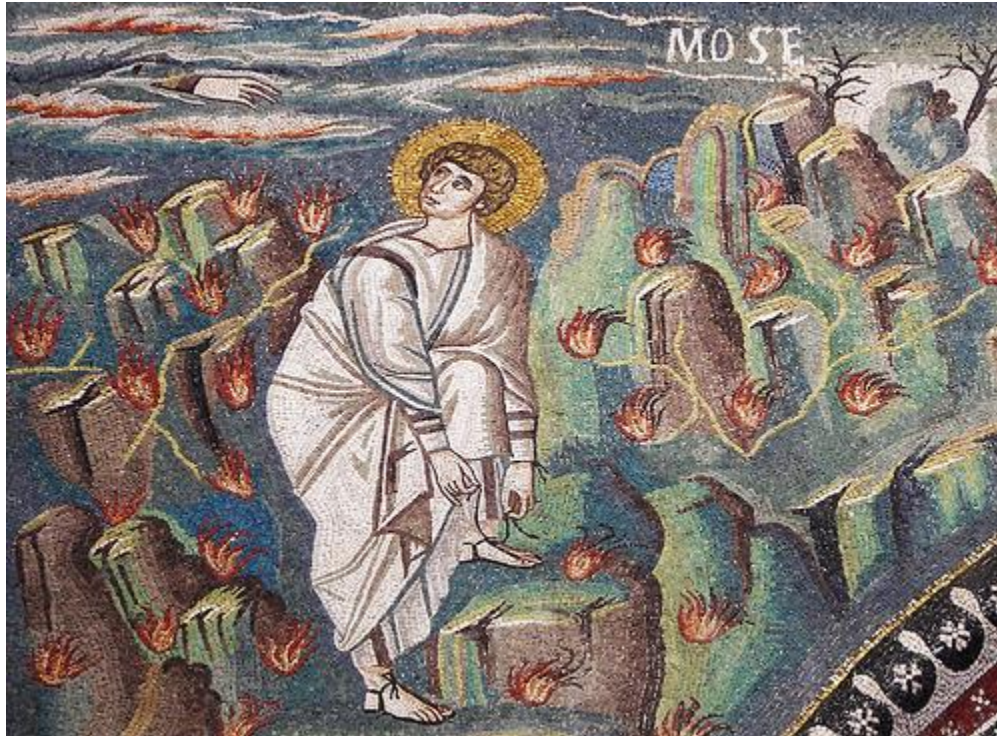
Such beauty takes our breath away. It brings us face to face with the awesome presence of God. You can see how the writer of Psalm 24 would want to start with the affirmation that the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it. Such an affirmation puts all things in perspective. It situates us in our home on planet earth where we can see the sacredness of all of life. This was a very powerful affirmation for the people of ancient Israel. It addressed their fear of chaos, knowing that God is the one who can bring order and life out of chaos. It also affirmed that all of life is sacred. Biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann describes this psalm as a psalm of orientation. There are 150 psalms in the Bible and some of them are about orientation, others are about disorientation, and still others are about reorientation. Psalms of orientation are about being grounded firmly in God's love. When life is clearly centered on God's presence. A good image for this sense of orientation is our sense of belonging, our sense of home. When we feel that we belong, we feel safe and loved and at home in ourselves and our world. So the Psalm invites the people to remember that their true home is in God's loving presence which is permeated in all of creation. When we know that God's breath and energy is in every living being, human and non-human, we can never be away from home. Nothing can truly disorient us. There is no place or a person on earth that does not belong to God. The earth is sacred. James Conlon writes this, "When we open our lives to the Divine, we remember that we are here to resacralize the earth. Wendell Berry notes, 'To live we must daily break the body and shed the blood of creation...when we do it reverently, it is a sacrament.'"

Often times when we think of taking care of the earth, we reduce it to something that we need and therefore we must protect it. While it is important for us to take care of planet earth for our physical survival, there is a deeper connection that we must claim. In the story of creation found in Genesis, God made human being out of the earth. We are connected to the earth through our connection to God. It is not only about physical health that we need the earth, but the earth is also our kin. The earth is our home emotionally and spiritually too. The trees and all non-human earth beings are our family members.

In *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Fortress Press, 1984), Walter Brueggemann identifies Psalm 24 as a "psalm of orientation," one that offers a "confident view that life is not troubled or threatened, but is fundamentally settled because God is known to be trustworthy and reliable."

The Spirit of God is in the pulsing energy in every being, and we are to recognize that sacredness that is all around us. How might we stay aware of that sacredness that is all around us? The story of Moses from Exodus 3 comes to my mind. When he encountered God on Mt. Horeb in a burning bush, he was asked to take his shoes off. Even though back in those days, people did not have shoes that were made out of artificial materials. Yet, still shoes were seen as separating Moses from his deep connection to the sacred. And so in order to show reverence, he had to remove them and stand barefoot on the ground. Today, I invite you to reflect on this experience of reverence, through a painting. I also pray that whatever connects with you from the

experience of Moses, will lead you to daily practices that help you to reverence the earth and the Creator who is the energy pulsing through all of creation.



This is an early sixth century mosaic from the Church of St. Vitale in Ravenna, Italy. This image is highlighted in the book *Saving Paradises* by Rita Nakashima Brock & Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker. It shows a different perspective on Moses' encounter with God in the burning bush. Instead of having one bush, we see many around him. The whole earth is aflame with God's presence. Everywhere around him was sacred. This is what attention to the earth and all of its beings as sacred can reveal. We are all invited, like Moses, to take off our shoes where we are, and see the world aflame with the Divine presence and love.

**Holy Ground, barefoot.
By Andrea Skevington**

This people had no temple,
no worship-place.
This people built temples
for others,
for gods they dreaded,
rising in terrible power
over them, having
no regard for
their misery.

They prayed under
the weight of their burdens.
They cried out in
the unprayer of pain,
and God, having no need
of temples, heard,
as God always hears.
And God, leaning to the
brokenhearted, saw,
as God always sees.

For the very earth is holy.
The ground under our feet.
Take off your shoes and feel it,
feel the dry-ground-powder
and the sharp stones,
the infinite tiny beings
that call the earth home.
Take off your shoes.
Know you are part of
all this, part of the
the glory that fills
all things, as the waters
fill the seas.
You will be heard,
wherever you are.
You can listen,
wherever you are.
You are home. Amen.