

“The World Is to Dig” or “Every Day Is Earth Day”
May 3, 2026

Genesis 2:4b-9
Colossians 3:1-17

They Might Be Giants released a new album a couple of weeks ago, wonderfully titled “The World Is to Dig.” And yes, they were going for a beatnik vibe with that—encouraging us, not to get out our shovels, but to, well, *dig it*. And I think even any squares that might be here today know what I mean when I say that.

I thought that would make a great title for an Earth Day sermon, but I was on vacation on the Sunday before Earth Day. And I’d already decided on another topic for last Sunday, when I returned.

What to do?

Then I remembered the motto, “Every Day Is Earth Day” and I realized I had the permission—if I needed it—to preach about the care of creation, the love of the earth at any time, even in May!

The World *is* to dig. So, dig it.

Look.

Look so that you really see.

Look. Look at the land, the sky, the water.

Look at the birds of the air and the newly flowering plants all around us.

Look!

And while we’re at it, let us listen as well. The birds of springtime. The rushing water. The wind through the newly-leaved trees. Let hearing be a joy to our ears.

Our actions to protect our much-endangered planet are important. We know that and that’s one reason we’ve found our way into the United Church of Christ—a denomination with a long history of caring for the earth.

You know that the small actions of a large group of people can have enormous consequences. You work at reducing your carbon footprint, you cut back on fossil fuel consumption. All that you do is good—keep at it!

But you also know that addressing climate change is not only a matter of individual action, however virtuous that might be. It requires the commitment and actions of nations and corporations whose resistance is still great and whose own immediate self-interests often run counter to enacting policies that will address this problem that grows while we stall.

So here we are—somewhere in this middle ground between individual action that is not enough on its own and large-scale global efforts over which we have little, if any, control or influence.

Our actions can become grimly earnest and our energy can be depleted.

So, there are times when we need to simply look, simply listen.

And in doing so, take delight in creation once more. Search the heavens, gaze at the earth. Stand in awe of all that you see and hear and feel and smell. Let this world sustain you. Let this world energize you once more.

Stop and look and listen—even now the trees and ground are telling the good news of God’s “Yes” to all creation.

All of this is connected to the good news of resurrection. Spring itself is something of a holy symbol, a visual sign each year of an ultimate reality: that life does conquer death; that our wintry hearts can thaw; that God can bring something new out of our barren circumstances.

In these days that can often seem dark, in these days when we can at times feel cut off from all that is good, in these days when we wonder what this world is coming to God seeks to comfort us through Creation.

Receive that comfort.

You who care for the earth—let the earth care for you.

The poet, Wendell Berry, put it so well:

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children’s lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Rest “in the grace of the world.”

God is still at work in the world and in our lives. In a world that moves toward death and despair, resurrection turns us once more in the direction of life and hope. Faith in the God revealed through Jesus Christ leads us to hope and to act for the good in all the adversity of life.

Take a few minutes today—and if you can, take a few minutes *each* day—to rest, to rest in the care, the love, and the strength of God.

You can do that.

You can do that for a few minutes today.

Maybe you can do it for a few minutes every day—because, you know, every day is Earth Day.

The world and all its troubles will wait while you rest, while you are comforted.

And from that place of rest, out of that deep consideration, rise and greet this day on this earth with all of its worry and challenges in peace, in strength, in hope.

After we have looked and listened, after we have touched and smelled and tasted—that is, after we have again received the grace of this world, perhaps we will be ready to once again take on our God-given role of stewards of creation, caretakers of the earth, our home.

In an unexpected way, Paul's words to the early Christians in Colossae help us. Starting from the resurrection we experience in our own lives, Paul writes: "If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth."

Now, on first hearing, those words might embarrass us more than they encourage us. They sound more like the cause of our problem rather than a way through. For we recognize, do we not, that there has been within Christianity a mistaken, though powerful, train of thought that denied the importance of life on earth, that put heaven on our minds, and led us to ignore if not abuse this earth since, like us, it will pass away.

Setting our minds on things that are above, we polluted the air and the water and the land. And while we have been able to reduce some of that pollution, our general carelessness and thoughtlessness have led to our rapidly approaching various climate change tipping points. We have paved paradise and only now recognize, as the song says, that you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone.

Why then would we even read, let alone heed, a call to set our minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth?

Listen further.

As Paul begins to elaborate on what this means to set our minds on the things that are above, he does not focus our attention on angels or afterlife or heavenly glory. He talks instead about how we live with each other in the day-to-day reality of our earthly existence.

Paul suggests that we get some new clothes—stripping off the dishonesty and the idolatrous greed in which we have clothed ourselves for so long. Away with our dishonesty about the destruction and permanent devastation we are bringing to our world. Away with the greed that has let quick profit take precedence over long-term care of the environment.

Take off those old clothes, Paul tells us, and put on honesty, compassion, forgiveness, gratitude, and love. We're all in the same boat, he says. There is no longer Greek and Jew, slave and free. We face a problem that is global in scope. To find solutions we need to see both our common predicament and our common human worth.

Setting our minds on the things that are above means we can better dig this world. Our own transformation from death to life—being raised with Christ—informs our efforts to bring new life and transformation out of the devastation we have brought to our planet.

The vision that faith gives us is not of some heavenly afterlife. In faith we look toward and pray for the coming of God's realm, in which the will of God will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Our Easter faith still speaks to us. Since we have been raised with Christ, let us set our minds on the things that are above. With honesty, compassion, forgiveness, gratitude, and especially with love for each other and for this creation, let us find new ways to dig this world.