

Sermon August 27th, 2023

Working Together in God's Reclamation Project for the World

Today we reflect on the many forests we see across this great landscape we call Canada. From the Acadian forests in the Maritimes to the Boreal forests in the north. From Deciduous forests in southwestern Ontario to the Coastal and Columbian forests in BC. From the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence forests in Central Canada to the Montane and Subalpine forests that stretch across both Alberta and BC. These forests help keep our air cleaner by absorbing carbon dioxide. These forests are where we seek refuge from the hot sun in the summer months. These forests are where we go hunting, fishing, bird-watching, and camping. These forests are where we play in tree houses or play fun games like capture the flag. These forests provide for our wellbeing, whether it is the wood that shelters us or the paper we use in many different ways, or even the trees healing potential. Today we reflect on the many forests we see across this great landscape we call Canada.

We also reflect on the many fairytales, fantasy stories, and Disney classics that were set in forests. There is even a theme park called the Enchanted Forest where you can stop on highway one, and see models of these characters dwelling in the trees near Revelstoke, BC. These stories help us see the mystical nature of the trees. These stories help us appreciate all the life that exists in the forest. Not just human life, not just the life of the trees and vegetation. But also, the life of the animals.

Unfortunately, deforestation, wildfires, bug infestations due to a warming climate, have impacted these forests, and those who habitat in these forests greatly. One cannot go on a road trip

across Canada anymore without seeing the devastation left behind from these changes. For many of you, hunting, fishing, camping, and bird-watching in these forests is not the same from when you were children. Even the mystical nature of forests we see in classic fairytales has given way to more urbanized settings in modern stories.

I invite you to turn to your neighbour, and share a story about what you remember about the forest as a child? How did your experience of the forest breathe life into you? What do you see now in these forests? What has changed?

Well, in Isaiah, like our forests, the land is hurting along with the people who are in exile. Everything has become desert.

In response to this devastation, God promises the people that God will turn this desert into a beautiful garden, a radiant forest. God will restore God's creation.

Throughout the biblical narrative we see that God invests a lot of time and energy into God's major reclamation project for all of God's creation.

In the book of Romans, Paul says that Christ calls us, the church, to be active participants in this reclamation work. Coming together as one body to assist God in turning the deserts in our world, the grounds of ashes in our world, into lush gardens, and radiant forests once again.

I invite you to turn to your neighbour one more time, and talk about where you see God's reclamation project at work in the forests.

Now, as the planet warms, as our need for material goods and shelter grows, leading to more droughts, more fires, more bug infestations, more trees being sacrificed, it is hard to hear this promise. To believe we can still do something to change things.

However, what we hear in Isaiah and Romans is that no matter how bad it gets, the people continue to hope that change is possible. That with God anything is possible. That the forests in Canada can be restored. And that it will take everyone of us working together to make this a reality.

Let us pray, gracious God, we pray for the forests of this land, and around the world. We pray that you give us what we need to be active participants in your reclamation project for Your creation.
Amen.