

Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections
based on this week's lectionary readings

October 4, 2015 **World Communion Sunday**
Proper 22B/Ordinary 27B/Pentecost 19

The readings this week:

- Job 1:1; 2:1-10 ◦ Psalm 26
- Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12 ◦ Mark 10:2-16

[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

Hand-Crafted World

*I look up at your macro-skies, dark and enormous,
your handmade sky-jewelry,
Moon and stars mounted in their settings.
Then I look at my micro-self and wonder,
Why do you bother with us?
Why take a second look our way?*

Of course, the old language of Psalms is beautiful. Reassuring and grounding. That is vital in our own private reading and in our corporate worship, too. But sometimes we should be shocked into newness, too. Reading Eugene Peterson's the Message is like meeting the next generation in a family you love. You know the features, and still you are surprised to see them made new. This morning as I read Psalm 8 in the Message, I was struck by the idea of God's "handcrafted world." It's involved, so involved, isn't it? Profound attention is implied when something is crafted by hand. There is work and play. There is a love for the lovely. In the Psalm, stars are described as hand-made jewellery, mounted in their settings. That's a beautiful image because there's artistry there.

This Psalm sings that creation is good. That's a simple biblical statement, but it holds a lot of water. To proclaim that creation is good is to shout out against every dualism. You can't say that white is good and black is evil or that masculine is good and feminine is evil or any other dualistic split you can dream up if you are in the same breath proclaiming that creation is good. Because it's all creation. Good doesn't mean not broken. Good means loved by God. Together, we're all part of this good, hand-crafted world. And the Psalmist reminds us that we are asked to look after each other.

Our Genesis-charge is to look after the world. Our own place is that of carer. That feels right. We aren't just wandering around a gallery. We are tending and caring. Maybe that's why the Psalm opens with the image of singing children. It focusses our minds on care. And maybe also makes us remember that it care isn't all about shaping and teaching, but also about listening and celebrating.

Yesterday, the sun was just breaking through the clouds when I stepped out the door on my way to church. I tend

to go in a bit earlier than my family so that I can set things up and be ready to welcome people when they arrive. So leaving the house on Sunday mornings, I don't need to worry about the kids' layers and the soggy shoes of the day before. The Spouse would see to all that (thank you, my dear, for that good Sabbath gift). Yesterday morning, there was still a dampness in the air from earlier rain so I grabbed my umbrella just in case. I didn't see the rainbow until I stepped round the corner. It arched perfectly over the neighborhood. It was beautiful and startling against the grey clouds, large against the stretching sky. Another gift.

Reading Psalm 8 and thinking about our care for the world made me think, too, of that rainbow. Because we can't care for a rainbow. We have responsibilities to look after the world, but there are also things that are beyond us. There are good gifts around us that we are only asked to enjoy. This hand-crafted God-made world is fragile and abundant and more wonderful than we could ever imagine. There is so much that is beyond us. Maybe that's also like children.

Blue and I made some rainbows the other day. This is a strange, messy craft which does feel a little beyond your control. Here's how it works.

You start with a cookie sheet and you squirt on some shaving cream. Spread it out so that it covers the tray. Then dribble on some food coloring. Swirl up the colors a bit – we used a skewer for this. Now, it's paper time.

Gently lay a piece of white paper on top of the tray and carefully flatten it. Then lift it off and set it on the table. Now, gently scrape off the shaving cream. Underneath all the colorful mess, you will find a beautifully marbled rainbow.

You can use the same tray again with another sheet of paper, though the colors will be more blurry with each impression taken. Your rainbow papers need to dry, and then can be used however you like. We like using them to write letters to aunties.

Happy Monday – and enjoy October.

~ Katie Munnik,
[Presbyterian Record](#)



Reflecting on the Word



1st Reading: [Job 1:1; 2:1-10](#)

How would you respond to someone who charges that religion is only for those who can't make it on their own? How is Job described? What accusation does Satan bring against Job? How does the Lord respond to Satan's accusation? What advice does Job's wife offer him? What does Job say in response to his wife's counsel? Suffering is a mystery, and the opening scenes of this book deepen the mystery by showing how inadequate are our "reasons" for misfortune. What have you already learned about accepting trouble from God? What difference will this make to your own attitude toward hard times? [Quiet Time Bible Study](#), [InterVarsity Press](#), [Bible Study Courses](#)

Psalm Reading: [Psalm 26](#)

Why would David say "I have led a blameless life" in Psalm 26:1 but in Psalm 25:7 & 11, David writes of his "rebellious ways", "sins of his youth", his "great iniquity"? What is David's request of God in verse 3 and what does David expect to God to find in verses 4-8? Do you request the Lord to do the same and what would He find in your life? Is David being boastful or proud in verses 4-8? Describe a "blameless life" as mentioned in verse 11. If David believed he lived a blameless life, why would he ask God to redeem him? What is "level ground" in verse 12? How is it possible and what would it look like for someone to live out Psalm 26? How does Jesus want you to apply this psalm? [City Calvary Chapel](#)

Job knows pain, which convinces him of nothing other than God's absence. His situation seems hopeless, yet he never gives up calling on God. Finally, when God does speak to Job out of that whirlwind, and Job confesses that he had tried to understand all these mysteries on his own. Job decided to leave things in God's capable hands. So "gird up the loins" of your hearts and minds. You are also in capable hands.

~ Rev. Dr. Mary Lautensleger, [Liberal Lectionary Resources](#)



3rd Reading: [Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12](#)

Trace all the references to "subjecting" or "putting under feet" in Hebrews 2:5-8. What is the author's final conclusion about subjection? On the basis Hebrews 2:5-8, how should you feel about yourself? What hopes should you pray that God would bring quickly to reality in your life? Why does the author of Hebrews think that Jesus' suffering death caused him to be crowned with glory and honor? In what ways are the sufferings of Christ mentioned in verse 9 applicable to your own life and in what ways are they not applicable? How is Jesus described in Hebrews 2:10-12? What is important about each description? What does it mean to you to be considered a brother of Christ? What spiritual desires does that thought awaken within you? [The Voice, Christian Resource Institute](#)

4th Reading: [Mark 10:2-16](#)

Think about a child you know and how that child trusts his or her parents. Compare that picture to how you regard God. On the basis of verses 6-9, some Christian churches have refused to recognize divorce even when a couple has obtained a civil dissolution of their marriage. Do you think this is the intent of Jesus' statement? Why or why not? In verses 13-16 we find that Jesus has used a child or children for the second time to illustrate a spiritual principle. What does it mean to receive the kingdom like a little child? What obstacles were or are hardest for you to overcome in entering the kingdom? What evidence has there been of God's help in your overcoming these obstacles? In what areas of your life do you most need to express more childlike faith in God? How have you experienced the truth of Jesus' words, "No one who has left home . . . will fail to receive a hundred times as much"? [Quiet Time Bible Study](#), [InterVarsity Press](#)

Praying Toward Sunday

*Make us enjoy bubbles blown in the wind
and chased after in giggling glee
before they pop and splatter on our faces*

*Move us to climb the summer night to the rooftop
watching the Perseid meteor shower till dawn's
twilight with guttural wows and oohs at the sparkling
sky streaks*

*Give us energy for playing in the debris of the world
turning mud into castles and sticks into houses
and we imagine we are kings and queens again*

*Give us eyes to see an enchanted universe
where every magical dream and foolish hope
are possible and expected and make us giddy with
anticipation*

*Take our sticky adult minds and thin our thick thoughts
until our flowing childhood wonder returns at every
cricket and we are moved by every chocolate kiss and
lip kisses, too until finally you elicit our antediluvian
praise and we sit back in your loving arms and your
welcoming chest and we know very little except that we
are and we are in you*

~ Michael Coffey, [Qcotillo Pub](#)