

EMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH, MORRIS, MANITOBA
DEVOTIONAL FOR THE WEEK OF JUNE 3, 2020

Psalm 24: 1 2: The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters."

We were in the midst of a major building project and I was cleaning up some dry-wall dust when I felt another presence in the room. I lifted my head and found my inner voice speaking in my mind, "Oh no, not this guy." Yes, I admit it. Pastors have favourite and less favourite laymen in the churches they shepherd. This man was one of my less favourite characters. He had a one-track mind and always had the same arguments for his point of view. It was only a couple of minutes and he was off on his favourite topic again, the second coming.

I was glad that all the other volunteer workers were engaged in other parts of the building as I had decided to have some fun at his expense. Others may have thought that we were having an argument but I would call it a good old discussion. He repeatedly brought up the same arguments and reasons for his view of eschatology. He had all the answers and he told me he could show me in his Scofield Bible how everything would work in the end. I asked him why he was so enthralled with the second coming, pushing him as to the why. I figured it was far more than just a hope because of his love for God. His reply floored me. It is one I will never forget. "I am so interested in the second coming because then we will be able to get off of this stinking earth." His words, not mine.

This past week I found myself, down on my knees, running my hands through the rich soil of the flower beds along the rear fence behind our home. I love the feel of warm, moist soil and the miracle of seeds bursting into leaf and flowers opening in colours one can only imagine. As I worked in the flower bed, I was reminded of the verse I quoted above. I also was reminded on the story I mentioned above. I wondered how one can call the earth, a creation of God, a stinking place. Even with some of the ravages of pollution and mis-use, the earth we live on is a wonderful, beautiful and amazing place. I have been so blessed to be able to take pictures of many wild flowers. I have seen the bugling of a bull elk in mating season. I have sat at the edge of a beaver pond and had a beaver come within four feet of me just to see what was sitting there so still. I have been within fifteen feet of a moose cow who had just given birth to a wobbly calf. I have walked for hours in old-growth forest and seen the renewed growth jump into life after clear-cutting. The natural world is both fascinating and reflective at the same time. To me, this is an amazing place and in no way stinks.

None of this should surprise us. At the end of each day, God declared the work of creation for that day with a familiar statement, "It was good." What is not recorded in Genesis is the variety found in the earth he created. Mountains, plains rocks and oceans are familiar to Canadians. Those of other countries speak of deserts, rain-forests and jungles. It is good. What about seasons and warm waters and endless ice as in Antarctica? It is good. What about animals unique to continents and fish of every colour and shape found in the seas and the migratory patterns of birds and

whales? It is good. What about geese and ducks and raptors and hummingbirds and warblers and finches and song birds and larks and shore birds and flight-less birds? I could go on and on. It is all good. Let anyone who wants to speak of “stink” in the world do so in a positive sense as in the sweet smell of a rose. And that too, is good.

Prayer: Lord, I know heaven is real and I want to go there to be with you someday in your timing. But Lord, never let my motivation for going to heaven be because I have forgotten about the wonderful creation you have made. It is good and I want to enjoy it because it is a gift from you. Amen

Pastor Barry