

SPEAKER 1: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

SPEAKER 1: Welcome to morning prayers. If you please stand as you are able and join me. The song this morning. I made a mistake on the number Psalm-- 58. I put 54, I'm sorry. That was my mistake. So that is on page 29.

Almighty One. Do you really decree what is just? Do you judge mankind with equity?

AUDIENCE: In your minds you devise wrongdoing in the land. With your hands, you deal out lawlessness.

SPEAKER 1: The wicked are defiant from birth. The liars go astray from the womb.

AUDIENCE: Their venom is like that of a snake, a deaf viper that stops its ears so as not to hear the voices of charmers or the expert mutterer of spells.

SPEAKER 1: Let them melt. Let them vanish like water. Let him aim his arrows that they be cut down.

AUDIENCE: Before the thorns grow into a bramble, may He whirl them away, alive in fury.

SPEAKER 1: The righteous man will rejoice when he sees revenge. He will bath his feet in the blood of the wicked.

AUDIENCE: Men will say, "There is, then, a reward for the righteous. There is, indeed, divine justice on earth."

[MUSIC PLAYING]

SPEAKER 1: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

SPEAKER 1: I bring you greetings from Kenya, from the Maasai people where I come from. And the Maasai people of Southern Kenya are the subject of my reflection this morning. My reflection is titled, A Theology of Holistic Care and Human Relatedness. Inspiration from my grandmother and my father.

When I was a little girl I noticed that we had frequent visitors in our home. My father was a kind, compassionate and generous man with a great sense of humor. My mom was quiet and reserved, and way too busy with household chores, and taking care of 10 children. My mother served as a social worker, and a member of her local church, Mothers' Union. My maternal

grandmother lived with us because she was widowed. And since she had no sons she would then live with her firstborn child, in this case my mother, according to Maasai culture.

My grandmother and my dad were very close, and they used to chat and laugh for hours. Something, I think, my mother didn't like very much. At the heart of their conversation was the welfare of children, animals, and the environment. My grandma and my dad loved children a great deal. Grandma was a traditional midwife who had helped birth many children in my village and beyond. Both dad and grandma were traditional herbalist who treated humans and livestock with traditional herbs.

The Maasai people of East Africa are a pastoral people who keep large herds of livestock, and they dress like me. My dad had more than 1,000 herds of cattle when I was growing up. And he loved his animals way too much. All Maasai men love their cattle, especially cows. Women don't own cattle even though they participate in their livestock economy. A great deal.

Cows for the Maasai people are signifiers of social, cultural, and political prestige and honor. Cows for Maasai people also have spiritual and economic value. A Maasai man without cows is considered very poor, yet my dad and grandma drew so many visitors into our home, not just because of their roles as healers of humans and animals, but also because of their generosity and compassion. Sometimes we didn't always know the visitors, many of whom came from very far.

Many lived with various disabilities. Many white people from venerable backgrounds. All who came to our home were well received. After a few days they would leave with new clothes, blankets, food, and many livestock. I asked my mom why we always had so many guests in our home, and she would smile and tell me that they came to greet the family. I didn't get it, I just didn't know what that meant. Many years later, I came to understand it very clearly.

For Maasai people greeting is much more than just a shaking of hands, and exchanging the casual pleasantries. It's about human welfare and well being. Maasai people, like most people in the world love and protect children. This love for children is better illustrated in Maasai peoples' traditional greetings. Whenever Maasai people, especially men, greet each other, they ask a simple question. [NON-ENGLISH], which means, how are the children.

The simple greeting goes on and on, and moves into asking about the welfare of mothers, grandparents, the sick, and the frail. From there, it goes on to ask about the welfare of livestock, which are called [NON-ENGLISH], rains and the weather. This goes on and on because after the other person has narrated about the welfare of his or her family they then ask the other person the same question, which follows the same pattern.

It is only after everyone has narrated the welfare of their children, their mothers, their grandparents, the sick and the frail, the animals and the environment, that people then get into the business of the day. And this can go on for up to 30 minutes. It's only after everyone has narrated the welfare of the children that people start the business of the day. So I have been

thinking about what lessons we could draw from Maasai traditional greeting systems. And what values we could borrow to engender, or build more caring communities, or even nations.

At the center of Maasai people's greetings are values about the need to protect and care for children, the most vulnerable members of our communities, animals and the environment, and how we could nurture a spirituality of care, or a consciousness that recognizes that we can only be well when children, women, elderly people, animals, and the environment are OK. Maasai people who live in the wild and expensive African savannas, in Kenya and Tanzania where I grew from, have lived sustainably with the environment and wildlife for ages.

Stories and myths were told about trees that bleed and cry when they are cut in order to scare people away from cutting trees. These stories helped preserve the indigenous trees, especially those that had medicinal value. Maasai greetings raised questions about human relatedness. A philosophy of care and well-being that links people's health and happiness to that of animals and the environment. Such greetings acknowledge an environmental consciousness that links people and animal welfare with their surrounding.

This sort of consciousness also links with the African philosophy, popularly called Ubuntu. Which says, I am because we are, and because I am, so we are. Maasai and Ubuntu philosophies of holistic relatedness are values that drive my personal engagement with humanity, animals, and the environment. As a community mobilizer, leader, gender activist, and career educationist, I seek a world full of compassion, care, empathy, social justice, respect, and love for fellow human beings. Animals and the environment.

And I have my dad and mom and grandmother, who are watching over me from up there, to thank for teaching me to value all people, and other human beings. May Ubuntu and human relatedness guide all of us in our day to day interactions with community and environment. Thank you.

Let us pray the Lord's Prayer, found on the reverse of your order of worship. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Please stand as you are able, and join together in singing, In Christ, There is no East or West, which is Hymn 341.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

And now let us go. May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord grant you the desires of your heart, give you peace, joy, love, forgiveness, and hope, forever and ever. Amen.

AUDIENCE: Amen.

[MUSIC PLAYING]