

Lara Glass:

Welcome to morning prayers. Please stand as you are able for our responsive reading. Today's is song number 24 found in your pew Bible on page 165. We will read responsively by whole verse.

Lara Glass:

The earth is the Lord's and that it is in it, the world and those who live in it.

Congregation:

For He founded it on the seeds. He established it on the rivers.

Lara Glass:

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? Who shall stand in his holy place?

Congregation:

Those who are of clean hands and pure hearts who do not lift up their sins to what is false and do not swear deceitfully.

Lara Glass:

They will receive blessing from the Lord, an indication from the God of their salvation.

Congregation:

Such is the company of those who seek Him to see the face of God of Jacob.

Lara Glass:

Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of Glory may come in.

Congregation:

Who is the King of the Glory? The Lord is strong and mighty. The Lord mighty in battle.

Lara Glass:

Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of Glory may come in.

Congregation:

Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts. He is the King of Glory.

Lara Glass:

You may be seated.

Choir:

(music)

Jeff Barneson:

Good Morning. The scripture reading is from Romans chapter eight beginning in verse 18.

Jeff Barneson:

I considered that the sufferings in this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits an eager longing for the revealing of the Children of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not on its own will, but the will of the one who subjected it in hope that the creation itself would be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Jeff Barneson:

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now. Not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the spirit grown inwardly while we wait for adoption through redemption of our bodies. This is the word of the Lord.

Jeff Barneson:

I've been keeping bees since 2011 when my two boys ages six and seven needed a homeschool science project. We read a couple books including the Idiots Guide to Beekeeping, assembled some hive boxes, and ordered a box of bees. A few weeks later we put the queen inside the hive and dumped 10,000 bees on top. Did you know that a bee may take 10 forager flights of up to six miles each day? And that it takes six million bee flights to make on pint of honey? Or that workers, all female, for all their work during the one month they live produce a mere 1/12 of a teaspoon of honey? Or that bees, those same worker bees, gather around the queen when it turns cold and beat their wings to generate heat and keep her space a comfy 92 degrees all winter long no matter the outside temperature? I love bees. They are amazing. I can go on and on but Lara would not be happy.

Jeff Barneson:

Keeping bees has also been frustrating and confusing, at times nearly heartbreaking. You probably read about the threats to honeybees. In Cambridge it's tricky because it isn't just one thing, the stresses on our bee population if from many: pesticides like Round UP and fungicides that weaken the bees immune and reproductive systems, parasites like roll mites and other pests that infect the hives and attach to the larva and shorten their lives, bacterial diseases with names like American foulbrood that sound like something from a vampire movie. The collective stresses threaten to obliterate our bees.

Jeff Barneson:

Last week I went to my hive to check on the bees. It was a warm day and I was surprised to see no activity. Sure enough when I looked in the boxes out poured 10,000 dead bees and I have no idea why.

Jeff Barneson:

The Apostle Paul says that creation's groaning and that we are groaning too. I thought of this passage as I cleaned the dead bees from the hive, the bees that worked so hard and as a colony I so admired. My wife thinks my grief is a bit much, but I felt a deep loss. Maybe you know some of this as well. I certainly feel it. I feel it when I hear the cynicism and despair in our friends when they recount the latest bit of fake news from the elected officials. I feel it when I hear students who are struggling to get free from their addiction to pornography. I feel it when I hear grad students when they share their faith, their deepest convictions are dismissed or mocked in the classroom. I feel it when my wife describes the treatment incarcerated men in her class experience when the prison's locked down. There's a lot to groan about.

Jeff Barneson:

That's why this passage from Paul is such good news. The groaning Paul is describing isn't just pointless pain. It's the groan that precedes the birth of something new, something that the followers of Jesus recognized as the Kingdom of God. The story of suffering and decay and bondage and futility is not the end of the story. We're invited to lean in because our adoption and redemption and freedom are on the way. And not ours only, but the redemption of the whole creation.

Jeff Barneson:

This is what we look forward to in this Lenten season. The cross is before us still, but so is the resurrection. Paul says, "I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. We groan with all creation, but not as those who have no hope." For my part, I just ordered another box of bees.

Jeff Barneson:

Let us pray.

Jeff Barneson:

Give us to join all of your creation as we await in groaning our adoption and redemption through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Jeff Barneson:

Now as our savior Christ has taught us we are bold to pray.

Jeff Barneson:

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. 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 forever and ever. Amen.

Lara Glass:

Please stand as you are able to sing hymn number 29, This is My Song, O, God, All the Nations in your crimson memorial church hymnal.

Congregation:

(music)

Lara Glass:

As you leave the sanctuary please note that we will not be shaking hands or hugging, but other forms of expression of enthusiasm and your appreciation are much welcomed, peace signs, raise of hands, whatever feels right to you.

Lara Glass:

May we live this day compassionate of heart, clear in word, gracious in awareness, courageous in thought, and generous in love. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Congregation:

(music)