

Readings for June 4, 2023

United Church of Strafford In Person and Zoom Service

Responsive Reading *adapted from Psalm 8*

Leader: O Creator Spirit, maker of all things,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.

People: **Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark to defend the earth,
to silence all who oppose or attack your creation.**

Leader: When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established,

People: **What are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?**

Leader: Yet you have made them almost as powerful as you,
and crowned them with glory and honor.

People: **You have given them dominion
over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,**

Leader: All sheep and oxen, the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

People: **O Creator Spirit, maker of all things,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!**

All: **What are human beings to you?**

an interpretive translation of Romans 8:5-17

People who live materialist lives set their minds on material things, but those who seek to align their lives with the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit while living in the material world. To set the mind solely and selfishly on material things is death, because they do not last or give the life that truly is life and they agitate desires that they cannot fulfill, but to set the mind on the Spirit brings life and peace and leads to the fulfillment of our true callings in the material world.

The mind that is set solely on material things, with material aspirations and values, is inevitably hostile to the Spirit, because the Spirit's laws and sacred way are different from a strictly materialist approach to life. The Spirit's laws create the ideal material world, but it does not work the other way—materialism destroys what the Spirit creates.

continued

A life lived in the Spirit creates beauty and harmony with all creation, it promotes the cause of love and life and light for all, but a life lived without any connection to the Spirit or respect for the sacred way of all nature creates disharmony, separation and alienation.

Our bodies may get sick, decay and die, but the Spirit carries us in the flow of undying life if we follow its paths of rightness. If the Spirit is in you that gave Jesus new life beyond his death, it will do the same for you in ways that you cannot now know.

So choose wisely what you invest in during your time on earth—if you invest only in your material life and are in debt to it for all you are, then you will die as all material things do. Invest in the Spirit, and let the Spirit rule your material life, including the actions of your body, and you will live.

You are a child of the Spirit, the Creator of all creation, and if you choose that identity and live by it, you throw off the fearful slavery that entraps pure materialists.

You are a child of the Creator of the universe, full of the gifts of the Spirit, and nobody can take that away from you. They are your inheritance, as they were the inheritance of Jesus.

If we accept the sacrifice that it takes to choose the identity and gifts of the Spirit over human selfishness and the materialist ways of our culture, then like Jesus, we will inherit the glory of being humans fully alive, immersed every moment in the flow of eternal life.