

REFLECTIONS ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION BY PAUL (April 20, 2008)

[These reflections were part of an Earth Day Worship Service in which Dr. Seuss' story the Lorax was read and acted out. The story is about a character called the Onceler who can make products called Thneeds from cutting down Truffula trees. The Lorax speaks for the trees, saying they have a right to not be destroyed, but to no avail and the forest is destroyed. When the Lorax leaves, he leaves a pile of stones with "UNLESS" written on them, which the Onceler now contemplate its meaning because his business is closed because there are no more Truffula trees.]

Dr. Seuss wrote the Lorax in 1971. He admitted that it was the first of his stories in which he intentionally set-out to make a political point. This was an environmental political point. In fact it cause quite a controversy in some parts of the country. You have about books being banned in Boston. Well the Lorax was banned in Laytonville, California. The book was seen as an anti-logging book and Laytonville, California was in the middle of an area of California where most people made their living directly or indirectly through logging.

Dr. Seuss got the logging industry so upset that they wrote a pro-logging book called *the Truax* to promote logging interests to counter the message of *The Lorax*. But *The Lorax*, this cute little story, is not about the logging industry. It is about greed and blindness to the consequences of our actions. So this is a good Earth Sunday message.

I want the children to come forward now. I have something that I want them to pass out to everyone here while I keep talking. [Children pass pebbles to everyone which are metaphorical Truffula seeds.]

After you have passed the seeds out, I want the children to return to the front, to stand up here with me for a few minutes.

We can laugh at the Once-ler in his blind greed, but we need to realize that everyone of us acts in some ways like the Once-ler. It's almost impossible for us to live in this country without being a Once-ler in one way or another. We buy our food in throw away packaging, we drive to the store in our cars—adding carbon dioxide to the atmosphere, and we heat our homes, for the most part, with oil or gas. All of this adds to the problems of carbon dioxide accumulation and global warming.

Nearly all of the manufactured products that we use generates hazardous waste of some from or another.

In some respects, the environment is better today than it was. In 1969, just two years before Dr. Seuss wrote the Lorax the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland caught on fire. On

August 1, 1969, Time magazine reported on the fire and on the condition of the Cuyahoga River. The magazine stated, "Some River! Chocolate-brown, oily, bubbling with subsurface gases, it oozes rather than flows." "Anyone who falls into the Cuyahoga does not drown," Cleveland's citizens joke grimly. "He decays". . . The Federal Water Pollution Control Administration dryly noted: "The lower Cuyahoga has no visible signs of life, not even low forms such as leeches and sludge worms that usually thrive on wastes." It is also -- literally -- a fire hazard.

We don't have that so much anymore. But there is another kind of fire that is concerning more and more people, it is the fire of global warming. The polar ice caps are melting and the earth is warming and we need to do something.

So what can you do? We need some form of inspiration. Something to remind us what we can do to. Let's pause for a moment with the question while the children come back to the front.

Now I want you to look at the pebble in your hand. Actually, I played sort of a trick on each one of you. It's not a pebble you are holding!

"It's a truffle seed. They're the last ones of all!

"You're in charge of the last of the truffle seeds.

And truffle trees are what everyone needs.

Plant a new truffle - treat it with care.

Give it clean water and feed it fresh air.

Grow a forest - protect it from axes that hack.

Then the Lorax and all of his friends may come back!"

So keep this truffle seed and remind us that we all have the responsibility of planting the seeds that will change the Earth and make it flourish. Were are you going to plant your truffle seed? In a world without end--maybe. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN "Touch the Earth Lightly"

(#569, The New Century Hymnal) <3 =48>

*BENEDICTION <.5, =59>

We walk this earth but a brief moment in time.

Amid our concerns and challenges, let us continue to celebrate our lives.

Let our lives be a blessing to this planet our beloved home in the vastness of the stars.

Let us remember our place, celebrate our place, and protect our place.

May our lives be peace. Amen.

POSTLUDE