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## **Opening Worship Sermon**

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**Bishop Mark MacDonald, Anglican Church of Canada**

**Isaiah 6:1-4 & John 3:16-21**

These passages are two of the most familiar passages in Scripture. That is part of the reason I chose them. But they also share another thing in common, in the Ojibwe language of Indigenous North America, they both make reference to "Aki" - "A", "K", "I" - a word that, translated literally means "the land."

So - Isaiah: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and "Aki" are full of your glory...

So - John: For God so loved "Aki" that he gave his only Son...

I was struck by this usage. Aki here means more than territory, more than a part of the land. It is quite different from abstract notions of earth or world, as we infer from the English use of "earth" and "world." Aki refers to all of the life forces, creatures, and relations within an area that give life, including water. Perhaps, it might be better to say "eco-sphere."

So - Isaiah: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and all the relationships upon and within the land and water that give life are full of your glory...

So - John: For God so loved all the relationships upon and within the land and water that he gave his only Son...

Now, I point this out, not to praise the Ojibwe language, but to underline something in Scripture. In fact, I think the use of "Aki" gets us closer to the text in their original languages. But, coupled with a text like Romans 8:18-27, we can see a dimension of both God's power and love manifested in and through the various dynamics of life that we experience here in this eco-sphere of God's life and love.

So, God's purpose in Christ has a revelation in history AND in Creation - note: I would prefer not to separate history and creation, but the boxes our thought and language create often lead us to say and use things that only approximate, in a distant way, the manifold Glory of God.

The life, death, resurrection, and promised return of the Living Word of God are surging through history and Creation towards a horizon designed by God and greater than human imagination. In this horizon, Creation is not the corpse of an old world but the birthing ground of a New Creation.

It is the surging of the Living Word through Creation and history that urges us to attend. It is this New Creation linked to the Land, that we are called to serve. Nothing else comes close to the faithfulness we are called to - called together. The context of our Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, its horizon is Aki.