SERMONS AT SAINT MARK'S

THE VERY REV. STEVEN L. THOMASON, DEAN AND RECTOR
ALL SAINTS' SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2025
DANIEL 7:1-3,15-18; PSALM 149; EPHESIANS 1:11-23; LUKE 6:20-31

EARTHRISE

BBC: The photo that changed the world.

On Christmas Eve, 1968, the astronauts on Apollo 8 orbited the moon and came around to see Earth rising on the dark horizon of space. William Anders took the photo, now known as Earthrise, considered by some the most influential photograph ever taken. Life magazine, Time, and Smithsonian all featured it on their covers shortly thereafter.

For most of human history, our ancestors could not conceive of the

globe as a whole, orienting instead to a flat-earth cosmology and a narrowly local existence for most people.

If there was any third dimension to be considered it was the ancient cosmology that finds expression in our scriptures, where the heavens above are the realm of the divine, the earth below is the realm of mortal existence and the divine footstep, and the waters under the earth are the place of chaos. In creation, God separated the dark oblivion of these waters with firmament, land upon which would live and move and have our being. An ordered existence. And behold, it was good.

I remember in my first week of seminary a quarter century ago that our Old Testament professor used the Earthrise image to instruct us on the field of biblical hermeneutics, a fancy word just meaning the art and science of interpretation. We always bring our interpretive lens to whatever it is we are considering—scripture, literature, culture, politics. We always bring our worldview to the mix. Earthrise invites us to step back and see if we can glimpse the greater whole, the larger picture, the contextual setting, or the more poignant possibility. The astronauts of Apollo 8 had a different perspective than anyone ever had before, and it changed the world in which we live.

It's a life lesson worth learning over and over again, and maybe this Earth might invite us to consider such things in fresh ways.

This Terra globe will be with us in this space for three weeks. We have the honor of serving as site for the North American premier of this. When I saw a similar exhibit in Dublin last year, I said to myself—oh, I'd like to have that at Saint Mark's! Not just for kicks, but as a hermeneutical tool for us in the Christian faith and life and our commitment to Creation Care.

If it inspires you to consider the global implications of our common humanity, or our fragile island home and the threats to it, or the cause of peace, which may be half a world over, but is very much part of our world—find Palestine, or Ukraine or Sudan in

North Africa, and pray for those places as they come into view in your orbit of life. If this earth inspires such reflections, I am glad for that.

If, on the other hand, you find it disorienting in some way, I'd encourage you to explore that as well. Step back and see what you can glimpse. And well, know that it will be gone in three weeks' time. Less than a lunar cycle in the scheme of things.

We originally were considering this installation in March, as part of our Lenten journey, intended to jolt us a bit from the comforts of familiar routine and our well-worn worship space, inviting us to consider in that penitential season what we have done, and what we have left undone, and how our actions impact the earth, its creatures, and our fellow humans.

But production design delays prompted us to move it to this fall, as the days shorten, and it was not lost on me that it would premier today, on All Saints' Sunday, when we baptize in the waters of the earth, helping order our lives as people of faith.

All Saints' Sunday, when we speak of the Fellowship of Saints that spans space and time, the saints whose lives provide us a glimpse of the orbit of eternal embrace and the ineffable joys that arise from it.

All Saints' Sunday, when we gather in this sacred cathedral and take our place in the mystical communion, orienting to the divine Creator who loved this world, and us, into being, and beheld it, and us, as good.

Our reading from Ephesians reminds us that we marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit. In baptism, we say it this way: You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism, and marked as Christ's own forever. And we offer the newly baptized a candle to remind them that the light of Christ burns brightly within them.

Our cosmology as Christians is grounded in a high doctrine of creation—that God created all things in love, and with love, and for love. And has chosen to dwell with us here, on this earth, in this world.

What does that mean for you, citizen of Earth?

What does that mean for us, as a community of faith, which on this day is reminded once more to consider the bigger picture, the broader perspective, and claim our part in this mystical sweet communion?

SAINT MARK'S
EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL

Saint Mark's Cathedral lives in a grounded faith and spirituality; we seek to liberate people for ministry. We are grounded in ancient Christian scripture and tradition while at the same time remaining open to the insight and truth of contemporary life. You'll find Saint Mark's Cathedral actively involved in service and outreach to our community. Together we pray, worship, study the scriptures, and explore the richness of twenty-one centuries of Christian experience. Wherever you are on your journey of faith, you are welcome here!