**Squamish United Church**

**Season of Creation – Week #2 September 14, 2025**

**Jeremiah 4:11–12, 22–28; Psalm 14**

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Friends, today’s scriptures are not easy ones to hear. Jeremiah speaks of winds sweeping through the land, skies growing dark, the earth laid waste. He looks out and sees chaos, devastation, and mourning. This isn’t simply about natural disasters. Jeremiah is holding up a mirror to a people who have turned from God. Creation itself is caught up in the consequences of human sin—violence, corruption, greed.

Psalm 14 strikes the same chord: “Fools say in their hearts, ‘There is no God.’” These are not people who lack belief in the existence of God; they are people who live as though God does not matter. People who have forgotten what it means to walk in covenant—with God, with our neighbours, and with the earth.

**Jeremiah’s Vision of Desolation**

Jeremiah’s words are haunting because they feel so familiar. We too live in a world where the earth mourns. We see it in wildfires that turn our skies red and cause of to choke when we set foot outside our doors. In floods that wash away homes, farms and livelihoods. In the quiet disappearance of species, one after another.

Just to illustrate the degree of biodiversity loss we're facing, let’s take you through one scientific analysis. According to the World Widelife Foundation,

* The rapid loss of species we are seeing today is estimated by experts to be between 1,000 and 10,000 times higher than the *natural extinction rate*.\*
* These experts calculate that 1% of all species will become extinct each year.
* If the low estimate of the number of species out there is true - i.e. that there are around 2 million different species on our planet -  then that means that between 200 and 2,000 species die every single year.
* But if the upper estimate of species numbers is true - that there are 100 million different species co-existing with us on our planet - then between 10,000 and 100,000 species are becoming extinct each year.

Rev. Cameron Trimble, a minister and eco-theologian like me, reminds us that Jeremiah’s vision is not just historical warning—it is a prophetic lens through which we can read our own time. Trimble writes: *“The prophet’s lament is an invitation to notice what we so often ignore. Creation is speaking, and when we fail to listen, we are complicit in its suffering.”* Let me say that again: *“Creation is speaking, and when we fail to listen, we are complicit in its suffering.”*

And like Jeremiah’s people, we are tempted to ignore the warnings. To numb ourselves, to look away. Recently, I was watching CBC’s The National as I do most nights. But this night felt different. There was a report on yet another attack on the people of Gaza. Before I knew it, I was transfixed watching video footage of building after building being blown up while children run for cover. I sat in horror thinking shouldn’t there be a warning. Something like the video footage you are about to watch may be disturbing to some viewers. They use to say that but not anymore. Perhaps because we are numb to the violence that we don’t even post warnings anymore. But the thing about these readings is that Jeremiah will not let us look away. He insists that the mourning of the earth is not just background noise—it is the voice of God calling us to wake up. So we must not turn away, turn the sound down or change the channel when the bombings happen.

**The Earth Mourns with Us**

“The earth mourns,” Jeremiah says. Creation groans. And don’t we know it? Sometimes it feels easier to throw up our hands in despair. To mourn without moving. But mourning alone is dangerous. Lament is only the first step. God does not call us to stay in despair—God calls us to act. This is partly why we gather when someone dies. To support the family and friends of the deceased but also to publicly witness and lament as a collective.

I think of a story shared by Rev. Trimble about a congregation in Seattle that witnessed the decline of a local river. At first, they mourned quietly, sharing grief in worship. But the lament became action. Church members began cleaning the riverbanks, lobbying for environmental protections, and teaching children about stewardship. What started as mourning transformed into community engagement and hope.

If we do nothing, we are like artists who stand before a blank canvas, holding the brushes of our lives, but refusing to paint. God calls us to be co-creators of a new way of living—co-creators of justice, of renewal, of beauty and hope.

**Psalm 14: Human Folly and God’s Longing**

As we listen to the words of the psalmist we can’t help be hear about the foolishness of humanity: greed, corruption, violence. It sounds all too current. And yet, the psalm does not end there. It ends with a glimpse of salvation and hope: “O that deliverance for Israel would come from Zion! When the Lord restores the fortunes of his people, Jacob will rejoice; Israel will be glad.”

Hear the Good News…Hope rises even in the ashes. God is not done with us. Restoration is possible.

**Stories of Hope and Small Acts of Change**

A few nights ago, I was walking around Granville Island when I came across a man, standing on a street corner with a cardboard sign. But it wasn’t the kind of sign we usually see. It didn’t say, “Need money” or “Hungry, please help.” His sign said two simple words: “Free Compliments.”

People stopped. Some looked confused, some smiled, some even laughed out loud. The man wasn’t asking for anything—he was giving. “I love your hat,” he told one person. “You have a kind face,” he said to another. And something remarkable happened: the street seemed to change before my eyes. He told me like he loved my sunglasses and my smile. I instantly felt my shoulders relax, I laughter out loud and walked away smiling. A bit of hope was born on an ordinary sidewalk.

Friends, that is what repentance and renewal can look like. A simple turning. A shift from despair to generosity, from numbness to life. When we turn back to God, even small acts of hope and kindness ripple outward, transforming the world around us.

Rev. Trimble emphasizes this point: *“Creation does not wait for our perfect acts of heroism. Even the smallest gestures of care, attention, and love participate in the renewal of God’s world.”*

**Our Covenant with Creation**

We are in covenant not only with God and each other, but with the earth itself. When we break that covenant—through exploitation, neglect, or arrogance—the land suffers. But when we honour it, creation rejoices.

This is our call:

* To lament, honestly naming the brokenness.
* To repent, turning our lives toward justice and gentleness. AND
* To renew, co-creating with God a future where earth and all its creatures can flourish.

**Calls to Action**

So what does that mean for us, here and now?

* It means we cannot afford to shrug and say, “That’s just the way the world is.” We must wake up and listen to creation as it mourns.
* It means rethinking how we live: what we consume, how we travel, how we care for the land under our feet.
* It means joining our voices with those who cry for justice—for the poor, the displaced, and the voiceless creatures of the earth.
* It means planting seeds of hope, in our daily choices, in our advocacy, in our compassion.

Consider the story of a small rural church in Canada that began a simple initiative: a shared vegetable garden for the neighbourhood. At first, only a few members participated. Within months, children were learning to plant, neighbours were sharing harvests, and the community’s sense of connection and care had grown. The garden became a symbol: that small, consistent acts of life and care can flourish into something transformative.

**Hope in the Creator**

Jeremiah’s vision is bleak, but it wasn’t then nor is it now the end of the story. Even in desolation, God remained present. And so, it is today. The Spirit still sweeps through the earth, calling us to awareness, stirring us to action.

When the earth mourns, we mourn too. But we do not mourn as those without hope. We mourn as people who believe in a Creator who forgives, renews, and restores.

Friends, the earth is waiting for us. The people of the world are waiting for us. The poor, the homeless, the lost and the broken are waiting for us. God is waiting for us. And the good news is this: it is not too late. Together, with God’s Spirit moving among us, we can turn lament into life, despair into action, mourning into joy.

May it be so. Amen.