Indigenous Land

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Preacher: Daniel Dixon

[0:00] Hello, friends. I'm Daniel. My pronouns are they, he. And just to note that the they does come first, I'm not on purpose. I have the honor, while Pastor Toneta and Pastor Anthony are in Colorado, are at conferences, to conclude our series on Place tonight.

Before I dive into that, though, I want to share a little bit about myself and my background. I know that for many of you, this might be your first time meeting me, and it is definitely my first time seeing many of you. I came to the table via Resurrection City.

So in 2020, after several years of not being part of any church community in D.C., I found Res City and Pastor Toneta in that vibrant community of faith.

Being there really restored my hope, both in God and in the church, and that I could find a sense of belonging and being in this place, in this particular place that I live in.

When this marriage happened between Resurrection City and the table church, I also decided that I wanted to commit to being part of this community as well.

[1:11] I've had friends who have been part of this table. I have several friends throughout the years who have attended here. And I wanted to make this my home as well. And so I joined as an elder, and will be serving all of you as an elder for the next two years.

I really don't want to get to know all of you. I'm on Slack. If you're on the table Slack group, please feel free to reach out to me, DM me. My name's Daniel Dixon. I'm on there. There's a picture of me with a cat.

So it'll be pretty hard to miss. Please reach out to me. If I haven't just said hello to you and gotten to know your name, I'd love to do that as well. Another important thing to know about me is that I'm a queer Christian.

And I don't know what I mean when I say that. I'm discovering that in the moment. I have always been queer, but I didn't know that I was queer until about two years ago. Three years ago is when I really discovered this truth about myself.

And I'm still learning, what does that mean for me? And so I'm really grateful to be in a place that affirms me, that affirms others who are like me, where we can have that journey to figure out, what does it mean for me to be a queer follower of Christ?

[2:19] Just two more introductory things before we dive into the actual sermon. I am a graduate student. I go to a school called N.A.T.S. That is the North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies.

And you know why we just use the acronym N.A.T.S. because that's a mouthful. It is a indigenous designed, delivered, and governed seminary. So the professors are primarily indigenous.

They teach from a perspective of decolonization. The school is not entirely indigenous. There are a few white settlers like myself.

And I'm going to sort of define those terms, white settlers, later in the sermon as well. But it's one way of denoting, one, my racial identity, but two, my identity to this place of the Americas, that I'm a settler on these lands.

N.A.T.S. calls itself a learning cohort. And by that, it means that we are co-learners together there at N.A.T.S., the professors and the students.

[3:19] And so tonight I want to share some of what I've learned in that journey with N.A.T.S. as a co-learner with all of you, as someone who's on this journey. Just three, like, bonus fun facts about myself.

If my Slack photo won't convince you of this, I love cats. I don't have any myself. But I do think they are the best creature ever created. Love them. My favorite bands are Muna and Julian Baker.

So I like happy music that's sad and sad music that's sad. That's kind of my genre. Either happy or sad, but always coming back to sadness. And then I love clouds.

I am part of the Cloud Appreciation Society, which is a prestigious, not really prestigious, but part of an international society of people who like clouds. So that's just a bit about me.

So as we come to the end of this sermon on, the end of this series on place, we spend a lot of time in Genesis.

[4:23] And I kind of want to walk through where we have covered before I talk about where I want to go today. So we had Anthony, who started off the series with Genesis 28, talking about how God is in this place.

Jacob waking up, discovering that God was in a place where he hadn't seen God before. From there, we had Chris talk to us about Genesis 1 and Genesis 2.

He challenged us to think of the land, to challenge this idea of a utopia as being a fantasy. And he encouraged us to love our neighbors, to go and learn the name of one of your neighbors.

I kind of cheated on that assignment from Chris because I know the names of my neighbors, but I did try to learn the names of some other people on my block who I didn't know. Clintonetta and her last two sermons introduced us to this idea of the city, the biblical theme of the city in Genesis.

And last week, walked us from Jeremiah to Revelation, talking about living for the good of this city, but this picture at the end of Revelation, of God's kingdom coming in a city.

[5:32] And this has been a beautiful series of reflections on place, how place shapes us and forms us.

But I have to also admit that it brings up a lot of dissonance for me and a lot of inner conflict. Because when I think about place, my first thought and my first feeling is not connection, it's absence.

I don't know the names of any of the trees in this area. I don't know the names of the plants. I don't know the history of where my family lives in Oregon. I don't know the history of where my family came from, from Norway and from Scotland.

And I enjoy nature. I love hikes. I love kayaking. I love being out in nature. But it always has felt like there's something missing when I think about place. There's something that just feels like it's not there for me.

I think about grief. Today in our moments of prayer, we prayed for people who were impacted by the hurricane in Florida. I think as well of the floods in Pakistan that have displaced thousands of people.

[6:40] I think of the droughts going on right now in East Africa. I think of the rising temperature in India. I think of all of the different ways that places are being destroyed, where life is being lost.

And I feel grief about that. I feel contradiction. I am a climate organizer and activist. I ostensibly love the climate.

I have spent time in the frontline communities, preventing pipelines from being built. I also have no idea how to garden. I've killed every plant I've ever owned, including succulents.

I don't know how bad you have to be to kill a succulent, but I'm pretty bad. But beyond just those contradictions, I want place. I want to have a sense of belonging.

And I wonder, is the work worth it? Do I really want to work hard enough to have a sense of place? And so I have those contradictions inside of me, this dissonance.

[7:38] And I want to explore that with all of you as we end this series. And so we've looked at the beginning. We've looked at Genesis. And Tonez walked us to Revelation, the end. And I want to start somewhere that's a little bit more in the middle.

So we're going to go to a fun little prophet named Habakkuk. Habakkuk is a minor prophet in the Hebrew scriptures. Before we dive into the scriptures that's going to guide us today, I just want to give some background on who Habakkuk probably was.

We don't know much about the person Habakkuk. We don't know much about what inspired him to write his short little piece of the Bible. But he was probably a contemporary of Jeremiah.

Last week, Pastor Tonez talked to us about Jeremiah's context. So this context of loss of land, of Jerusalem has been destroyed by Babylon. The people have been taken into exile.

There's this deep loss and this deep grief that emanates throughout all of Jeremiah. And Habakkuk writes at a similar time and has some similar feelings about place as Jeremiah.

[8:47] Habakkuk follows this kind of format that I like to call indignant questioning. So Habakkuk, the parts where he's talking in this book, is usually him being furious at God.

It's him saying, how long will you let violence happen on the earth? How long will you be silent? How long will you do nothing? So Habakkuk is questioning God with this sense of rage and anger.

Why aren't you not doing anything? Habakkuk has probably seen the kingdom of Judah. So at this time, we have Judah and Israel. He's probably seen Judah be destroyed by Assyria, which is one of the powerful empires of the time.

He's probably seen them fall. It's likely that Jerusalem and Israel were still there when he was speaking and writing.

We don't know for sure. But it's likely that he was speaking, watching the Babylonian Empire encroach on Jerusalem, encroach on Israel. And then one more thing.

[9:47] Growing up, when I would read the prophets, I often thought of them as speaking to the future. So whenever I'd read anything from Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, I'd think with this future lens of they're talking about the world to come.

They're talking about Jesus. They're telling the future. That's not really the prophetic tradition that existed within Israel. The prophetic tradition was more about covenant commentators, where the prophets looked to the past.

They looked to the relationship, the promises between God and God's people. And they said, this is what happens when you follow those promises. This is what happens when you break those promises.

They called the people back to God. And so I want to challenge us as we're looking at some of these passages to avoid the, this will happen in the future. Because there will be some will be verbiage in these passages.

To think that it's more of calling people back to a vision of what could be. What could be here and now. So with all of that, with a lot of that context setting, if we go to the first slide, Heidi, we're going to dive into our scripture today.

[10:55] Which is Habakkuk 2, 6 through 14. Verse 15.

Continuing on.

This is God speaking to Habakkuk.

Probably about Babylon. Speaking of Babylon. Babylon has a theology of place. Babylon exists as a historical place. But often the Bible is also used as a metaphorical place.

We see in Revelation. That there are two cities in Revelation. Babylon is one of those cities. And before the city of the new Jerusalem. The city of God comes down in Revelation.

[12:45] Babylon falls. Babylon falls. So there's this picture of Babylon as a place. As a certain way of being. It's a way that is built on taking what's not theirs.

It's a way that's built on storing and hiding what belongs to others. A way of being in place. A way of being in place that removes other people from place. A way of being in place with unjust gains.

I think that we can sort of use this passage to look at a couple of theologies of place.

That I think can point us towards how we still see in some ways Babylon existing today. So if we can go to the next slide.

So last week Pastor Toneta used the phrase settler colonialism. And I've heard it used a few other times here as well. And I want to talk a little bit about what is settler colonialism. I think it's also important to talk about this the day before Indigenous Peoples Day.

[13:47] To talk about the history of how America as a nation was formed on land that was not ours. When I say ours I mean white settlers.

Land that was stolen. It's a way of being in place that piles up stolen goods. So it takes. It takes resources. It takes from others.

And it's about becoming wealthy. So if you can go to the next slide. So if you're like me perhaps at some point in school in elementary or middle school or somewhere you learned a rhyme about Christopher Columbus.

It went something like in 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue. I don't remember the rest of it. But that beginning of that rhyme is stuck in my head for the rest of my life.

I can never forget it. I often think of settler colonialism as an event. Something that happened. Something that occurred a while back.

[14:50] That happened a long time ago. You know my family lives in Oregon now. And I think about the westward expansion as something that happened in time and then stopped at a certain point.

And while there are definitely those events, settler colonialism is a structure, a way of being in place. Eve Tuck and Wayne Young are two scholars who have done a lot of work around colonization and settler colonialism.

The way that they describe it is settler colonialism is a persistent social formation and political formation in which newcomers come to a place, claim it as their own, and do whatever it takes for the indigenous people to disappear.

And we see that in Habakkuk's proclamation and this woe to Babylon. We see the story of a nation that comes to a place that takes what's not theirs and makes the land, the cities, and the people disappear.

One way of thinking about settler colonialism is it is saying, I'm here now, you go away. Saying, I'm here, and because I'm here, you can't be here anymore.

[16:08] Ultimately, there are two things that drive settler colonialism as a theology of place. One is exploiting labor. The other is acquiring land.

When we think back to Habakkuk, we think back to that picture, that vision of this place. Labor and land are tied to it. And we look at the history of the United States, how this place was created.

The push to drive indigenous people off of land was driven by the urge to acquire land, to take more and more land.

But as more and more land was acquired, as more and more was attained, that's where we also see labor. We see the dependence on enslaved peoples to build.

We see that exploiting labor in place. Enrique Dussel is an Argentinian speaker and philosopher.

[17:12] And he talks about how colonization, and particularly settler colonialism, shapes a certain view of self, a certain self-identity. Now, most of us are probably familiar with the saying from Descartes, I think, therefore I am.

Enrique Dussel says that that's not actually true. That in a settler colonial society, there's a different form of being created, and it's ego conqueror.

I conquer, therefore I am. And so it's this formulation of self by conquering place and conquering people. And so it's this formulation of self by conquering place and conquering people.

When I look around the world right now, when I look at the fruit of settler colonialism, something in me wants to rise up against that. And some lady Habakkuk say, how long, Lord, will you be silent while this happens?

I think about in the U.S. I think about how the massacre of buffaloes on the plains was a political move to force indigenous peoples off of their land by removing their form of sustenance.

[18:19] And that nearly led to the extinction of an entire species. I think of the resource extraction and the Congo and the way that the Belgian Empire came in with this focus on getting rubber and resources to pile up their stolen goods, to pile up their wealth.

I think of South Africa. I think of so many other examples where you can hear this cry from Habakkuk of, how long, Lord, will you be silent while this place is desolate?

Habakkuk also points us to another theology of place. So this other theology of place is the doctrine of discovery. So Habakkuk says, woe to him who builds his house by unjust gain.

Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and establishes a town by injustice. So the doctrine of discovery, we can't really go too in depth into either that or the settler colonialism in this amount of time.

But Mark Charles, who's a Dene author, speaker, he lives here in D.C., puts it this way. The doctrine of discovery is basically the churches in Europe saying to the nations of Europe, wherever you go, whatever land you find not ruled by white European Christian rulers, those people are subhuman, their land is yours to take.

[19:55] The doctrine of discovery was the formal stance of the both of the Catholic Church, but also of other churches at that time as well.

It was a driving force for colonization in North America. We see another picture of this through the Marshall Trilogy.

So I'm not a law student, but I really love kind of like nerding out on legal things. The Marshall Trilogy is a series of three court cases that occurred that basically set up the doctrine of discovery as the preeminent doctrine of land in the U.S., legally speaking.

So basically it's three court cases that are disputing land, and the dispute is whether or not that land belongs to indigenous people who are there or to white settlers who are claiming that land as their own.

And in the Marshall Trilogy, the court lands on the side of the white settlers. And the reason why they do is they say it was discovered land. So they say that because these white settlers discover the land, they have the right to be there.

[21:09] And they bring up this idea of civilization. Civilization from within the framework of European worldviews at that time was very tied to place, to agriculture, and to a specific way of being in place in agriculture.

And so that's why this argument worked. Because when Chief Justice Marshall, when the other members of the court looked at the land, they said it doesn't look like it's the kind of land that we're used to.

It's not being farmed the way that we, as Europeans, think it should be farmed. So, you know, it's kind of free for the taking. That led to another concept in Australia, something called terra nullius.

Terra nullius basically means that the land is empty. And it was a legal doctrine in Australia that said a similar sentiment of, the land is unoccupied. There's nobody here.

There's nothing here. Now, Aboriginal Australians would disagree with that because they have had hundreds of thousands of years of being there. And Indigenous people in the U.S.

[22:17] would also disagree with this statement because their way of being in place was different. One of my professors kind of put it this way. She said, it'd be kind of stupid for me to watch my plants grow when I could go for a walk and come back and they've grown.

This mindset of, instead of being in one place, building a town, building a city, staying there forever for a very long time, there are more nomadic ways of living.

There was more of a circular, cyclical way of living and being in relationship to the land. It was a way of being that European settlers literally could not understand.

They could not comprehend it. They had no concepts for it. Their only reaction to it was, this can't really be a way of being in place, so this is going to be ours now.

I think another way that we could put this is that the doctrine of discovery and settler colonialism build a white way of being in place, a way of being in place that is white, that is focused and predicated on owning the land, exploiting labor, all these other forms of injustice that we see when we look at the history of this country.

[23:41] And I want to just kind of note that I'm speaking right now predominantly from my lens as a white American Christian, but this sort of walkthrough from Habakkuk is something that in 2019 I heard Brooke Prentiss, who is an Australian Aboriginal, do with her history as an Aboriginal woman talking through the ways that Australia also experienced some of these.

And so all of that doesn't leave me feeling very good. I think, you know, as I walked out of the first sermon and the second, third, and fourth, I sort of walked out of those with a sense of hope, of we can form a city that is full of equity, we can form a city that is a good place to live in, we can learn our neighbors' names, we can reconnect with the land.

And as much as I love that hope, and it's very important, and we are going to end on that note, I think it's also important to name these theologies of place that have contributed to the need for that hope, that need to push back on these theologies of place.

And so I want to shift to another prophet who gives us a bit of a similar picture as Habakkuk, but from a different lens.

So if you can go to the Isaiah scripture, this is from Isaiah 11, 6 through 9, it says, The wolf will live with the lambs, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion together, a little child will lead them.

[25:23] The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play next to the cobra's den, the young child will put his hand into the viper's nest.

They'll neither harm nor destroy on my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

I think Isaiah and Habakkuk are talking about the same thing here, but from two different angles. Isaiah is talking about this concept of shalom.

And shalom is something that Chris mentioned. It's something that I know is mentioned a few times here at the table. I really like how Walter Brueggemann kind of talks about shalom, saying that the central vision of world history in the Bible is that all of creation is one, every creature in community with every other, living in harmony and security toward the joy and well-being of every other creature.

When I think about this picture that Isaiah paints, that's the picture that I see of mutuality, of the wolf living with the lamb, the child unafraid of harm coming towards them.

[26:47] It's a beautiful picture. I think that Isaiah is talking about the same thing as Habakkuk because Habakkuk is not seeing this picture right now.

He's seeing harm. He's seeing the wolf destroying the lamb. He's seeing Babylon destroying the land of his people. He's watched his neighbors to the north have their land taken from them.

And Habakkuk, I think, knows this vision. He knows the same picture that Isaiah knows. But he's saying, we can't get there without naming and saying no to this way of being in place.

We have to call out and acknowledge the way of being in place that Babylon has in the world. So both Habakkuk and Isaiah end with the same line.

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea. This is where we kind of want to lean into some of this prophetic tradition history.

[27:51] When I used to read this verse, I would sort of think in my head, okay, the earth will be. So like 10,000 years in the future or some point in time in the future, the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God. I don't know what that part means, but something will happen and the earth will be filled with God's knowledge sometime in the future.

But when we think of these prophets as people who know God's covenant with the land and with the people of Israel, I think that it can be interpreted a bit differently because when we go back from Genesis through basically every single book of the Hebrew scriptures, what we see is God saying, you can know me through the land.

You get to know me through the earth. We see this in Genesis where God creates the earth, says it's very good, and gives humanity a commandment to serve the land, to take care of the land, to maintain it.

We see this in Deuteronomy and in Leviticus with a young fledgling nation where their rituals, their religious life, their way of being in place was dictated by the relationship to the land where God says, your land will have a Sabbath just like you will have a Sabbath.

You will give it rest. And where if the people of Israel don't keep the promises they've made, the land itself speaks out against them.

[29:14] We see this in Job where as Job is being questioned by his friends, one of his retorts back to them is basically saying, you don't know anything.

Go talk to the plants. Let them teach you. Talk to the birds. They'll teach you. Talk to the fish. They'll teach you. And that's Job saying that to his friends and we see at the end of Job that God reveals himself ultimately to Job through creation, through God, the creator's relationship with creation.

We see this throughout the prophets, throughout the way that they describe that the way to know God is to act justly, to do mercy, to walk humbly. And for every verse that says, take care of the poor, love the widow, it's connected to the land as well.

And so I think that when Habakkuk and Isaiah say the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God like the waters cover the sea, I think they're saying the earth is filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea.

And because of that, woe to him who has unjust gain. Because the earth is filled with God's knowledge, the wolf and the lamb can sleep together.

[30:31] Because the earth is filled with God's knowledge, woe to those who take land that is not theirs. Because the earth is filled with God's knowledge, the little children won't have, can stick their hands into a, I hate snakes, so I don't like the power of the verse, can stick their hand into a cobra's nest.

So the earth is filled with the knowledge of God. The creator has chosen to express himself, herself, themselves through the created world.

And that is both a call to shalom, a call to Isaiah's vision of mutuality, of equity, and to Habakkuk's vision of woe to him who takes what is not theirs.

Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed. Both of those exist because the earth is filled with the knowledge of God.

So as we're ending this series, I want to present a couple of, I think, practical approaches to both of those perspectives, to both the woe to those who take, who steal, who push, and also that vision of mutuality and shalom.

[31:59] So one shift that I want to talk about is going from ego concaro to the community of creation. So we go from this place, this theology of place, that says, I conquer, therefore I am.

My sense of self, my sense of being is only here because I am in charge, I own, I accumulate, to community of creation. The community of creation is something I often think of as being a circle with three dots on it.

At the very top of the circle we have the divine community, the triune God, the God who is love, personified. Towards the left we have the human community and there's a line between the divine community and the human community, there is that relationship between humans and God.

To the right is the ecological community, the created world. And God has a relationship with the ecological community. We see that in the Psalms, we see that throughout Scripture, that independent of humanity, God loves the created world.

God loves the water, the mountains, the sheep, the chickens, you name it, God loves it and God created it in that triune image. church. And there's a third line between the human community and the ecological community and that's the community of creation.

[33:24] As I've tried to learn how to be a part of this place, the table, I've heard over and over again people talk about these phrases that we are a welcome and inclusive community, that we are explicitly anti-racist, and that we strive to be thoughtful and authentic followers of Christ.

I think one move from I conquer, therefore I am, to community of creation could be with that first value of inclusive and welcoming.

I think Pastor Toneta and others have done a great job of talking about what does it mean to be welcoming and hospitable. I think it's important for us to also think of that mutuality between us and others of being people who are welcomed, being people who are living in a good way to be welcomed and to be included.

When I moved to D.C. in 2015, I didn't know a single person here. I had never been to the city, I had never been to the East Coast actually, it was like blank slate, very embarrassing the things I did not know.

I learned my first day that D.C. has taxation without representation, I didn't know that, so my knowledge of the city was very, very, very low.

[34:43] It'd be a bit strange for me to have walked around the city with this attitude of I want to welcome and invite people into my place. I don't even know the streets' names.

I'm still calling Malcolm X Park Meridian Hill Park because that's the Google Maps name and I don't know the history of D.C. well enough to know that there's another name, Malcolm X Park. And so I wanted to be the kind of person who could be welcomed into the city, who could be welcomed into the stories and the lives of Washingtonians who have been here for generations.

So when I challenge us as we think about inclusivity, think about welcoming, to also think about how are we being people who can be welcomed. I grew up in a family where if I went to a friend's house and didn't bring a gift, my parents would be very upset with me and I would probably never be allowed to go back to that place ever again.

This mindset of being a good guest, saying this is not my home, but I'm going to treat it like it is. I'm going to honor and respect people whose home this is.

We talk about being explicitly anti-racist. When I think of being anti-racist, I think often of the city. That's where my mind often goes is towards this urban world.

[36:06] Bell Hooks, who is an incredible visionary author, has a book called Belonging, A Culture of Place. If you forget everything I've said, remember Bell Hooks, Belonging, A Culture of Place.

Go buy that book. Go read it. In that book, Bell Hooks traces her history as a black woman who grew up in Kentucky, who moved to the cities and then moved back to Kentucky.

She talks about how there's been a concerted effort by white supremacist capitalist America to cover up the efforts and contributions of black farmers, to cover up and not talk about and not acknowledge the history that black people have on this land and with this land.

If we talk about being anti-racist, I want to also think about that and expand my history beyond the history of cities but to land as well.

We are thoughtful and authentic followers of Jesus. Being part of a community of creation means having to think new things and be yourself, and I need new thoughts when it comes to place.

[37:20] place. And it's been so hard for me. I've been a part of my graduate program for five years now, and I feel like I can barely grasp the most basic things we talk about in our classes there because my mind, my thoughts are so caught up in this theology of place of settler colonialism and the doctrine of discovery.

discovery. And I need to be authentic as well. I have no idea what I'm doing most of the time when it comes to place. I'm guessing and I'm hoping. And within a community of creation, we can guess and hope together and guide each other along.

One other movement that I think that we can follow is from discovery to you were here, you are here, you will be here. So the doctrine of discovery basically says there was nothing here, there's nobody here until the Mayflower showed up, until the first Europeans showed up.

I'm really grateful that in several sermons in the past, we've had people name the indigenous peoples whose land this is. The Anacostan, the Pamunkey, the Biscataway.

My grad school is primarily Canadian. And so land acknowledgments is something that is a bit more common within Canadian culture than within U.S. culture. And it's a very heated topic amongst many of my co-learners, especially many of my indigenous co-learners, who, and I've heard several people, including Mark Charles, use this illustration.

[38:56] If I walk up to somebody and I grab their wallet, I take it from them, and then I declare, this is your wallet. This wallet belongs to you. This is the traditional wallet of so-and-so.

And then I keep it and walk away, or keep it and do nothing. Yes, you know, I've named that that wallet belongs to someone else, but I haven't done anything to repair that fact that I took it, and I haven't given it back.

Think of movements like the Land Back movement, which was started by Canadian youth, by indigenous youth who looked across Canada and said, I want my land back.

I want to be able to have this connection to the land. There are some communities that practice something called a land tax, where they, as a form of reparations, monetarily pay a nation that land they're on.

There's the Biscataway-Conway tribe here in the D.C. area that asks for that from people who they have a relationship with. There are churches that have given their land back to indigenous peoples, and there are churches that refuse to.

[40:07] I know that that's something that, as I think about the table in our place, we've historically gone from church to church to church and not had our own land, but I think that raises some interesting questions for us.

I think, again, of our values of being inclusive and welcoming, you were here, you are here, you will be here, says that I know that there was a past before me, I know there's a present without me, and I know there's going to be a future as well.

So as we look at the city, as we look at this place, honoring the stories that have happened, the histories, honoring the current, but also so that we are committed to the future of this city as well.

We are committed to being able to say, you will be here, and when we say you will be here, we're saying that to Washingtonians that have been here for generations who are on the risk of being priced out. We are saying that to the Piscataway people whose population in the area dwindles and dwindles.

We're saying you will be here. That is our commitment to this place that you will be in this place too. I also think that in this particular context of D.C.

[41:25] and this church, it's important to talk about queerness, to talk about how D.C. in 1991 had the earliest official Black Pride event, how even before then there is a deep history in D.C.

of D.C. being a place where black people who were LGBTQ would come, have moments of connection and belonging.

And it's important for me as a white queer person who's new to the city, to say that that's a history here that I want to acknowledge and name and then orient myself towards respecting.

We are an anti-racist community and that does get, I think, kind of complicated and interesting in a place like Washington, D.C. because this is both stolen land. This is the land of the Anacostia and Piscataway and Pamunkey.

It's also Chocolate City. And so we have these histories here. I'm not going to go too much into that because there's going to be a book that we're going to read called Chocolate City in a couple of weeks as part of the learning cohort.

[42:29] I'd really encourage people that if you're able to join that, to learn about the history of the city. And then as thoughtful, authentic followers of Christ, Christ, this is another one where I don't really know how to do this.

I don't really know how to do this in a good way. And so I come to this community and to this place, to this land, asking for help, asking to guide me.

So we're going to wrap up here and I want to finish with just two more quotes. So we've talked a lot about this middle picture of, I feel a lot like Habakkuk of that when I look around, the place that I see is not the place that looks like Shalom.

I see inequity, I see rising rent, I see people who can't afford to live in their homes, I see economic injustice. But we do see that there is another way of being in place.

And Revelations at the very end gives us another picture of this. So Revelation at the end, The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

[44:16] because God's, the earth is full of God's glory and the knowledge of God. As we heal our relationship to place, we as people also experience healing.

If you've been trying to read what this shirt says, it says, heal the people, heal the land. It's from a fundraiser for the Wet'suwet'en First Nations. The Wet'suwet'en are a First Nations in what's now called Northern Canada.

Canada. They have never signed a treaty with Canada. They have never given their land in any legal way in any way whatsoever to Canada. It is their land. And for the last number of years, there's been a pipeline trying to be built through their land.

And they have resisted it, sometimes by stopping construction. But they also have a cultural center there, which is primarily for Indigenous peoples to come and practice land-based learning, to come and reconnect with the land.

It's led by Indigenous matriarchs. It's a place where people can connect with the land, connect with the people. So as we discover what it looks like to be healed by the Tree of Life, knowing that as that healing happens, it heals place, it heals people.

[45:40] from there, I think Bell Hooks takes us to the end of the series again. Bell Hooks, in the same book that I mentioned, says, to tend the earth is always then to tend our destiny, our freedom, and our hope.

When we love the earth, we are able to love ourselves more fully. I think that when we let the earth love us, we are also able to love ourselves more fully.

When we love the earth, we are able to love each other more fully, we are able to love our places more fully. So I ask that we end this time holding these pictures of Habakkuk and Isaiah, where we say woe to the ways of living in places that are unjust.

We acknowledge them, we name them, we repent of them, and we turn away from them so we can turn towards the vision that Isaiah set, that vision of peace and mutuality. That we love the place that we are in because we know that by loving the place that we are in now, we will be able to love ourselves and each other more fully.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.