SCRIPTURE:
The Lord put A’dam in the garden of Eden to sh’mar and a’bad the garden. Genesis 2:15

For God so loved the Kosmos that He gave his only son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. –Revelation 22:1–2

MEDITATION:
As we meditate during the season leading to our commemoration of the resurrection, we can consider past, present, and future. The first thing to consider is that the Lord made humans "from the dust" (a’dam), meaning we are made from the earth, but breathed with the Spirit. We are given a calling very early in Genesis to "protect and serve." Each of these words speaks to our calling in terms of caring for God's creation and also for the creatures: we are to protect God's creation, learning to work at caring for what God cares about. We are to serve God and others as we care for God's creation.

Scripturally, Adam failed to keep this covenant, and the result has been sin and death for all humans. However, Jesus brings hope, in that "whoever believes in him shall have eternal life." This acknowledgment of our falling short of the glory of God was answered in the person of Jesus, who in his incarnation lived in an earthly body like us, and was a perfect sacrifice on the cross for our sins. Jesus makes a way for sinful humans to be reconciled to God and each other. The body of Christ is viewed in scripture as “from every tongue and nation,” and we are called to share this good news and invite others into relationship with the Lord. John 3:16 acknowledges that “God so loved the world …” that he sent his son Jesus. We are individually to trust in Jesus, but the word Kosmos invites us to “think bigger.” God is redeeming and restoring the whole world, indeed, the whole cosmos to himself. By extension we are invited to participate in that redemption, reaching out to other humans in love; and caring for creation as God does.

In Revelation 22, we get a glimpse of the future God has planned in a restored earth. There is some mystery in exactly how this may happen but there is no doubt that this vision is for us as believers to look forward to, and participate in. God will bring it about, and we will experience this amazing vision of a city with a river down the middle of the street. The tree of life, which was lost when Adam sinned, is there, “yielding its fruit every month.” What a beautiful vision of God’s provision! The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations, another amazing vision of God’s healing and restoration.

REFLECTION:
This side of paradise we see a world that at times gives glimpses of beauty and fruitfulness, but at other times is weighed down by sin and death. Yet we are called to believe in the hope of life, and to continue to faithfully steward the world God provides. As we remember Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross and wait for his second coming, we can faithfully love God and others, faithfully care for his creation in preparation for a fully restored cosmos of provision, light and love.

- If the world will be restored in a renewed heavens and earth, should we practice restoration of God's creation now?
If the answer is that we should practice restoration now in preparation for a new and restored earth, how do we do this? How can we restore relationship with other believers from "every tongue and nation"? How can we "protect and serve" God's garden (creation) now?

- How can we love others? What practical ways can I share God's love in word and deed this week? How can I share the hope I have even when walking through difficult things?
- How can we care for God's creation (the world/planet) this week and in preparation for the new life of Easter?

PRAYER:
Creator God, thank you that you care for your earthlings in all places and times. Help us to care for others as you do, loving well across boundaries of language, culture, race and ethnicity. Help us to have a vision for your restored earth and for restored relationships now as we pray for a renewed earth and fully restored relationship with you. Help us to “sh’mar and a’bad,” protect and serve your creation and each other, to your glory and by your grace. Grant us humility and wisdom to serve and to love as you would have us. Thank you for your grace in saving us by your life, death and resurrection. Help us to share this hope of restoration and new life as we love God and others.

In the name of Jesus our Savior and Redeemer, Amen.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
Steven Hall, ASA Fellow, has degrees from U. Buffalo; UC Davis; Cornell; was the first Sustainable Agriculture Postdoctoral Fellow at McGill University; and has served as professor at the Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies, Louisiana State University, and North Carolina State University. He currently edits the journal Aquacultural Engineering, directs the Marine Aquaculture Research Center and serves in teaching, research, and extension capacities. He and his wife Becky have been blessed with seven children and many chickens and fish. They enjoy gardening and restoring edible and native species.