

Traditional Home service Sunday 7th Nov

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty and eternal God,
you have kindled the flame of love
in the hearts of the saints:
grant to us the same faith and power of
love, that, as we rejoice in their triumphs,
we may be sustained by their example
and fellowship; through Jesus Christ
your Son our Lord, who is alive and
reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy
Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Let us admit to God the sin which always
confronts us.

Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole
heart. We have not loved our neighbours
as ourselves. In your mercy
forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly,
love mercy, and walk humbly with you,
our God. Amen.

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the
name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to
God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms,
hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts.
Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (O Lord my God)

READINGS - Genesis 2:15-20
1 Timothy 2:1-8

TALK

CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth. I believe in
Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who
was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of
the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius
Pilate, was crucified, died, and was
buried; he descended to the dead. On
the third day he rose again; he ascended
into heaven, he is seated at the right
hand of the Father, and he will come to
judge the living and the dead. I believe in
the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness
of sins, the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

*Spend some time praying for our nation,
our community and our families.*

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your
name, your kingdom come, your will be
done, on earth as in heaven. Give us
today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver
us from evil. For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours, now and for
ever. Amen.

HYMN 2 (For the beauty of the earth)

CONCLUSION

The love of the Lord Jesus
draw you to himself,
the power of the Lord Jesus
strengthen you in his service,
the joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you
always.
Amen.

HYMNS TO USE

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed:

Refrain

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:

How great thou art! How great thou art!

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:

How great thou art! How great thou art!

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze:

Refrain

And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin.

Refrain

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration,
And there proclaim, "My God, how great thou art!"

For the beauty of the earth,
for the glory of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies.

Refrain:

*Christ, our Lord, to you we raise
this, our hymn of grateful praise.*

For the wonder of each hour
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale and tree and flower,
sun and moon and stars of light,

Refrain

For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth, and friends above,
for all gentle thoughts and mild,

Refrain

For yourself, best gift divine,
to the world so freely given,
agent of God's grand design:
peace on earth and joy in heaven.

Refrain

Sermon - Adrian Morton
Faith and its relationship to climate change.
Gen 2:15-20; 1 Timothy 2:1-8

As we are in the middle of the UN COP26 conference I thought it timely to talk about the relationship between our faith and the current climate crisis.

Some might question is there any relationship at all?
Is being concerned about the climate part of the Gospel message?

I'm also aware that there is a certain Evangelical Christian viewpoint which is that we are entering the end times talked about in Scripture, so the world will end soon.. and maybe climate change is even Gods way of bringing the world to a close... before he establishes a new heaven and earth?

I don't agree with that, but it is a viewpoint.

I'm grateful to Audrey Scott who brought some resources to my attention.. resources that encourage the church to engage with all this, particularly at the moment, during the COP26 conference.

I was tempted to simply show a 9 minute talk by Pete Grieg, of 24/7 Prayer fame, who gives a great talk about faith and climate change...

But decided against that but I am using some of his material and thinking...

I actually don't feel particularly well qualified to speak on this subject.

One, I don't understand the issues around the climate crisis very well, and they seem quite complicated to be honest.

Yes, there are actions, changes of behaviour, we can take in the industrialised West.

But the current main contributors in terms of harmful emissions are countries like China and India who are simply wanting to progress to a standard of living that we currently enjoy.

And we enjoy a certain standard of living because we have heavily polluted the planet in the past by industrialisation.

So the issues of how all that can be untangled are complex.

I also don't feel particularly well qualified to speak on it, because secondly I feel a bit of a hypocrite.

I own three vehicles, one is diesel, one isn't very fuel efficient, and the other I probably don't need.

I live in a big house, with an inefficient gas boiler, which probably heats up the village of Wollaston as much as our own home.

I also like red meat and can't imagine a life without at least eating some red meat!

But having said all that, as a church leader, I felt it was a subject I ought to address.

I came across some recent research into Christian young people's views on climate change.

It showed:
9/10 teenage Christians are concerned about the climate crisis.
But only 1/10 think their church is doing enough.

It seems young people are learning so much about the climate crisis at school; they are then reading their bibles, reading how God cares for the earth.

Then they are going to church and not feeling there is any connection between their faith and what they are learning elsewhere...

Maybe because the church is often led by old duffers like myself, and it points to a need for more young leaders to emerge...!

So what I want to do this morning is lay out three theological 'streams of thought', if you like...

To show that there is a relationship between our faith and the climate change crisis.

The first stream is fairly obvious but is this:

1. That we all have a duty of care for the planet..

Genesis 2:15 says:

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

One of the first things God asks us to do is to take care of the world he has made.

The original Hebrew word here is 'abad' ('*or-bad*'), which means to tend the garden, to cultivate it, even to serve the land.

So we are not to exploit the earth but to nurture and serve it.

The earth is not there to serve us, we are there to serve it.

The great theologian Thomas Aquinas argued that we should never think of creation as just a one-off event with a before and after - God did it and now we've got it.

Instead, Aquinas said that creation is an ongoing process, its continuous.

God has made today.
He's constantly renewing, remaking, sustaining his creation, and importantly, he has chosen to do so in partnership with us.

He asks us to tend the garden.

And we can get involved in doing that locally.

There are many local environmental groups that, for example, clear litter, ensure beauty spots are maintained etc etc...

That sort of thing..

We can't just say, China needs to get their act together.

Or we can't just moan at our politicians to make the decisions that are needed.

We all have a responsibility to care for our planet.
To act in a way that looks after it.

Now whilst we all have a responsibility to care for our planet.

We can also urge our governments to make the right decisions.

And Yes, there is a place for protest..

Though I really don't think blocking roads is the way forward.

But people like Greta Thunberg are I think important.

I saw a recent programme about her and actually I was hugely impressed.

I really don't know whether she has any faith or not.

But you know God has a track record of raising unlikely people up to be His voice of justice.

And I sometimes think it would be just the kind of thing that God would do.

To raise up an unknown small, teenage Swedish girl, who has Asperger's syndrome, OCD and an anxiety disorder... to speak to the leaders of the nations and influence the world.

Its so unlikely... I just wonder whether its a God thing?

And as well as urging or politicians to act rightly, we can also pray for them.

We can petition our politicians to make decisions that contend with human selfishness and greed at a structural level.

The Apostle Paul urges us, in 1 Timothy 2:1, when we gather to worship we should offer, petitions, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving for all those in authority over us, that all may go well with us in the land.

And Jean will lead us in this shortly....

So firstly, our faith says that we all have a duty of care for the planet..

Secondly, **we have a duty of care for the poor.**

For most of us in the West climate change, if we are honest, doesn't affect us greatly.. yet.

We may be having some extreme weather, but on the whole our daily lives aren't affected... for most of us.

Yet for some of the poorest people in the world the climate crisis is real and immediate.

So in places like Fiji and Papua New Guinea, some communities are already losing their homes and livelihood to the rising seas.

Summer temperatures reach up to 51 degrees in parts of India and Pakistan..

Crops are failing in Guatemala...

So across the world people in poorer countries and communities are facing the brunt of the crisis.

Research by Oxfam shows that the world's richest 10% of people cause 50% of emissions.

The world's poorest 50% of people contribute to about 10% of global emissions and receive about 8% of global income.

In other words, the actions of the rich are causing suffering for the poor.

So there is a call for Climate justice, which will try and balance the scales.

And let's remember, the current climate crisis has been caused by the developed West and industrialisation built largely on the burning of fossil fuels.

In Matthew 19, we hear about a Rich young ruler who came to ask Jesus what good things should he do to inherit eternal life....

And Jesus says obey the commandments. Which it seems the young ruler did.

Then Jesus said there is still one thing you lack.
"Sell your possessions and give to the poor."

And the rich young ruler went away sad because the cost was too high.

One thing we can take from this story is that Jesus' heart is for the poor.

And there is an expectation that those with wealth will use it for the poor.

We know that by the end of this decade 132 million people will be pushed into extreme poverty by the climate emergency.

I was watching a BBC report this week whereby they interviewed an illegal logger in the Amazon who was cutting down protected trees.

And he said, he had to make a living to support his family.

What was he supposed to do?
And I had sympathy with him.

Those of us in the wealthy West can't just expect those in poorer countries to make sacrifices if we aren't.

If we are petitioning our government to help fund poor countries not exploit the earth, which I think we should be.

Then at some point, it will probably mean we have to make sacrifices ourselves.

How much stuff do we really need?

Maybe we will need to sacrifice a level of comfort, a standard of living to ensure climate justice happens?

So secondly, **we have a duty of care for the poor**

And finally thirdly **we have a duty of care for those coming after us.**

Particularly in this country, many of us won't live to see the full effects of the climate crisis if we continue the way we are living.

Many of the forecasts talk about the earth getting dangerously warm by the end of this century.

I'll be 135 years old by the end of this century.
Actually, I'll be long dead.

My eldest son, will be 111 years old.

Louise and I became grand parents last year - our first grandchild will be 80 by the end of this century.

In all probability He will be affected by the climate crisis.

His children, if he has any, will certainly be affected.

It's certainly a Godly quality to want the best for others.

But it's also a Godly quality to want to leave a good legacy to our children and our children's children.

Even the Queen, I think, mentioned this in her address to the COP 26 conference.

Proverbs 13:22: *"A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children."*

The Psalmist in Psalm 78 says: *"we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done."*

There is this principle in Scripture that what is good is passed on to the future generations.

And that has to be so when it comes to the state of the earth.

We have to pass on a well cared for planet to our children, their children and their children...

It's a Godly thing to do.

We can't be content to selfishly say, as long as we are ok, I don't care what state the planet is in when I die.

Lets sum up...

three theological 'streams of thought', if you like which show that there is a relationship between our faith and the climate change crisis.

i. we all have a duty of care for the planet

ii. we have a duty of care for the poor.

iii. we have a duty of care for those coming after us.

I'm conscious this talk is light on what practically can we do...

In the end if people are motivated about this subject, then they will find out what can be done practically.

There are many websites giving advice, including the good old BBC.

But practical action can include:

the way we shop, do we need to buy so much new,
reducing waste food,
how well we insulate our homes,
how we travel,
whether we are able to buy an electric car,
cutting down on eating red meat...
plus many others...

Pete Greig encourages those in the West to repent first...

He says the worst culprit of environmental destruction for most of the past three centuries has been the supposedly 'Christian worldview' west.

And so it is time for us to repent of our sinful exploitation of the garden that we have been commissioned to serve, to tend, to cultivate, to care for.

And he says the real root of the problem here is not political, its human greed.

The heart of the human problem.. is the problem of the human heart.

Change begins not just with the G7, but with me, with the way I shop, the way I travel, the way I care for that tiny little bit of the world with which I've been entrusted.

Amen.