



The Church's prayer for Sunday 27th June

Treasure

God of all energy and life
Give us such a love for all your Creation
that we may delight in it with our eyes,
Nurture it with our hands
And enrich it with our love
For our world is not our world, but yours.

Bible readings and reflection for Sunday 27th June

A New Testament reading from Colossians 1:15-20

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by^(a) him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

A Gospel reading from the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 4:35-41

Jesus Calms a Storm

³⁵ On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." ³⁶ And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. ³⁷ And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. ³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹ And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" ⁴¹ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

LORDSBRIDGE TEAM OF CHURCHES



A reflection from Revd David Newton, lead minister in Caldecote, Comberton and Toft

Treasure

To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

We continue with our series on the 5 Marks of Mission. And – slightly out of order (to tie in with some local outdoor services) – we turn our attention today to the 5th mark – To ‘Treasure’ the earth. Or in full ‘To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.’ Quite a jargon-laid mouthful.

With this mark we turn to the faddy, to the trendy. Most people outside of the church will not be concerned with proclaiming Jesus Christ, but increasingly they are concerned about caring for the earth.

Which, for some Christians, makes it an automatically suspicious activity. I was on a conference call the other day as part of a team presenting the work of the ‘Diocesan Environmental Task Group’ and was rather blindsided by the remarks of one person who suggested that a focus on caring for creation might undermine our hope of the ‘new heavens and new earth’.

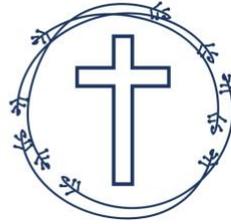
But the Gospel tells us that God came amongst us, took on flesh, and so makes matter, matter. It tells us that God did not come to get us out of this world, but to bring the kingdom of God into it, and so we pray each day ‘your kingdom come, on earth as in heaven’. The Gospel tells us – as Colossians puts it and as the story of the calming of the storm shows us – that all things are created through Christ and hold together in him; that God’s Spirit is infused in and through all creation.

As opposed to some philosophical flight from the real material earthy stuff of life, Christianity (and indeed Judaism) celebrates and finds God’s Spirit in the stuff of the earth.

And so, to care for creation, is not some adjunct to the Gospel. It is central to it. It is central to it because in creation we find God’s Spirit. It is central to it because our message of Good News will be found inauthentic and hypocritical unless we take caring for the earth seriously. It is central because it is intimately tied up with justice and mercy, for the poor and for future generations.

All this though probably sounds rather banal, old hat even.

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So let me push on to say something I have been thinking and learning in recent times, and it is something I think the church can gift to the world in our common cause.

Let me put in the form of a question. Do we 'care for creation' out of love or fear?

For there is clearly huge fear in our day. So-called 'Climate Anxiety' is rife. Apocalyptic claims are easy to find.

The situation is serious. A casual glance at anything that comes out of the IPCC shows us that! Yet acting from a place of fear is never the answer – it leads to forgetting the journey and thinking only about the destination, and so we end up sacrificing some for the so-called 'greater good' of others.

In our global common cause, the task of the church is to call us to care for creation – to fight climate change and the collapse of biodiversity – with love, not fear.

And perhaps the clearest expression of 'love' for the natural world is found in that attitude called 'wonder'.

I have always loved a big vista, straddling a ridge in the Lake District looking out on the valleys below. But recently I have been brought back to wonder at the small, at the flora and fauna, and not just the more abstract and general 'landscape'.

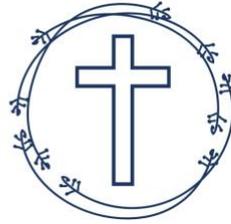
Kids are extraordinary at this. A few weeks ago, we were rushing out of the door, herding the kids to the car, when they got distracted by a worm! We watched it as it burrowed underground. It pulsed in this rhythmic dance, pushing soil through its body. I forgot about rushing and was left in wonder.

Again, dropping the kids at Playgroup the other day, Toby excitedly pointed out caterpillar eggs on a runner bean leaf. I'd never seen them before. These neat rows of eggs all nestled together, evoked wonder.

Or again, on a walk the other, the kids stopped me to look at a snail. It had just been raining, and once we stopped, we saw more and more. We counted 50 in about 10 metres along a hedge!

Some of you will know of Rick Nelm's recent artwork. Much of this, if I read it well, is designed to evoke wonder. In the face of biodiversity collapse, he paints of the abundance of the rain forest, the coral reef, or even Bourn Brook.

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So before we do anything, we need to stop, and re-ignite the 'wonder' that seems built in to little kids. And through such wonder we find love. And love, so we are told, drives out fear.

So may we care for creation out of wonder, out of love, and may we do so in such a way that we draw all people away from fear, in our common cause to care for this earth.

Amen.