

## SERMON – 26 February 2023

### A Reflection on Lent and Climate Change

Today is the first Sunday in the season of Lent.

Just to refresh you:

Lent is a time of grace when the people of Christ reflect on their mortality and sin, as well as on the creative and re-creative power of God by which women and men are saved. You can't have one without the other!

Now, on the subject of sin, [I'm an expert in the field!] we are currently, and for the foreseeable future, all caught up in a very significant SIN. A SIN against the created order. It is a sin we are all a part of. It is a sin involving the whole of humanity. A sin which we cannot ignore, and which, on this first Sunday of Lent, we are urgently called to reflect and act on.

Climate Change. Yes, Climate Change. OUR Sin!

So, before we have a heart to heart about our Climate Change sin, let's muse a little on the readings for today, starting with Romans, where Paul states at the end of the reading:

*<sup>18</sup>Therefore just as one man's [Adam's] trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's [Jesus'] act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. <sup>19</sup>For, just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.*

Bishop Tom Wright has this to say about Paul's writings on Adam and Jesus in this passage from Romans:

*“The point of the Adam/Christ comparison is to emphasize that the human project begun in Genesis, the key part of the Creator's project for the whole creation, has been put back on track. Paul doesn't*

*offer a full 'doctrine of sin' here but merely summarizes what he had said [earlier.] Enough to know for the moment that sin involves disobedience, failure of loyalty, a fracturing of the creator's intention, which, because it is a turning away from the source of life, cannot but bring death."*

I like that phrase: *'a fracturing of the creator's intention.'*

Climate change is literally a source of death, even now and when we get to 2-3 degrees centigrade rise, we will be seeing and experiencing death's hell, in all its forms, like never before. AND not only devastation for the planet and for humanity, but of God's intention of Heaven on Earth. Yes, it is true that intention has already been fulfilled through the life, death and resurrection of God's son Jesus, BUT our continued disobedience and denial of God's gracious gift of new life, frustrates and delays that fulfilment.

And what a cost! The longer we fail to act decisively in regard to our collective sin, especially in regard to the defilement of the created order, the more pain and suffering we inflict on the Saviour of the world as he bears our sin on the cross, over and over and over again!

How long!?! How long!?!

One other comment from Matthew's story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness before we get up close and personal with Climate Change.

Tom Wright again:

*'Jesus offers God not merely the obedience Adam refused but that redeeming obedience which Israel refused in the wilderness. Jesus faced the 'if...'* of the tempter with courage, with Scripture, with loyalty to the one who had called him.'

Because of his unfailingly obedient love he had to accept death on the cross – the death, through which, the Father’s gracious gift of new life for all was freely given – including the entire created order!

THUS, how, then can we, his children do anything other than challenge sin and death in all its forms, including that of Climate Change, when confronted by with this extraordinary love and grace of God??!!

Climate Change.

It is a global challenge that affects every aspect of our lives, from the food we eat to the air we breathe. As I suggested above, Christians have a responsibility to care for God's creation and to take action to address climate change.

So, let’s explore the Christian understanding and approach to climate change, including actions we can all take to mitigate its impact.

In the book of Genesis, we read that God saw everything he had made, and it was good (Genesis 1:31). The whole created order is a gift from God, and we are called to be stewards of his creation. As stewards, we have a responsibility to take care of the world around us and to protect it from harm.

Unfortunately, to put it mildly, we have not always been such good stewards of God's creation. Human activity, such as burning fossil fuels and deforestation, has led to a significant increase in the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This increase in greenhouse gases has led to global warming, which is causing changes in weather patterns, rising sea levels, and the extinction of species.

In the book of Isaiah, we read that the earth is God's footstool (Isaiah 66:1), and we are called to care for it as an act of worship and obedience to God.

So, a big part of our Christian calling in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century must be to take action to address climate change. This means that as individuals, communities, nations and as a world community, we need to take steps to reduce our impact on the environment and to protect vulnerable communities that are most affected by the climate crisis.

Let's get practical.

Here are some actions that ALL of us can do to help mitigate the impact of climate change.

1. Reduce our carbon footprint.
  - a. As noted previously, one of the most significant contributors to climate change is the emission of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. These gases are emitted by human activity, such as burning fossil fuels and deforestation. To reduce our carbon footprint, here are some actions we can take:
    - i. Use energy-efficient appliances: Use appliances that are certified as energy-efficient, such as refrigerators, washing machines, and light bulbs. These appliances use less energy and emit fewer greenhouse gases.
    - ii. Drive less: Consider carpooling, biking, or taking public transportation, instead of driving alone - or walk more. If you need to drive, consider using an electric or hybrid vehicle.

- iii. Eat a plant-based diet as much as that is a possibility for you: The production of meat, especially beef, is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. By reducing your meat consumption or eating a plant-based diet, you can reduce your carbon footprint.

2. Support Policies that Prioritize Environmental Protections and sustainability.

- a. Governments and businesses have a significant role to play in addressing climate change. We as citizens can support policies and initiatives that prioritize environmental protections and sustainability. Here are some actions that we can take:

- i. Vote for candidates who prioritize environmental protections: Research the candidates running for office in your area and vote for those who prioritize environmental protections and sustainability.

- ii. Support businesses that prioritize sustainability: Look for businesses that have a sustainable business model and support them by buying their products, even if it costs a bit more.

- iii. Advocate for policies that prioritize environmental protections: Write to your elected officials and advocate for policies that prioritize environmental protections, such as regulations on greenhouse gas emissions and investments in renewable energy.

3. Care for vulnerable communities.

- a. We also have a responsibility to care for the most vulnerable members of our society, including those who are most affected by the climate crisis. In the book of Isaiah, we are called to "defend the oppressed" and to "take up the cause of the fatherless" (Isaiah 1:17). This includes those who are impacted by climate change, such as indigenous communities and low-income populations.

Let me conclude.

As Christians, we are called to care for God's creation and to be good stewards of the earth. This means taking action to address climate change and reducing our impact on the environment. Let us pray for the wisdom and strength to do what is right – that is, to do what reflects the truth of the gospel, that Jesus has already made all things new and when that is not the reality we see before us in the created order, our calling is to challenge and change our fractured selves and world by means of the transforming love and wholeness of the recreating Christ.

Let our expressions of his love be our Lenten calling!

Let us pray.