

SERMON FOR CCWW HARVEST AND CREATION-TIDE

4th October 2020

IAN CHRISTIE

MAY I SPEAK IN THE NAME OF THE LIVING GOD - CREATOR, REDEEMER, SUSTAINER

A READING FOR HARVEST AND CREATION-TIDE - FROM THE BOOK OF DAVID:

“Our planet is home to a seemingly infinite variety of species. From ocean giants to the tiniest insects. We call this abundance of life - biodiversity. But today, it's vanishing at rates never seen before in human history.

It is worse than expected. This is happening much faster than we've ever seen before. Today, we are ... causing many, many species to go extinct...

The evidence is that unless immediate action is taken, this crisis has grave impacts for us all.

We're not just losing nice things to look at. We're losing critical parts of Earth's system.

...

Scientists have even linked our destructive relationship with nature to the emergence of Covid-19.

We are encroaching further and further every day into wildlife habitat, and that drives emerging diseases.

...

The decisions made as we rebuild our economies are critical.

Get it wrong and we will be in deeply dangerous territory.

Get it right and we still have the ability to pull back and rein in the collapse of biodiversity.

We have a moment when we can change our world and make it better. This is that moment.

Over the course of my life, I've encountered some of the world's most remarkable species of animals. Only now do I realise just how lucky I've been. Many of these wonders seem set to disappear forever...

It's never been more important for us to understand the effects of biodiversity loss, of how it is that we ourselves are responsible for it. Only if we do that will we have any hope of averting disaster.”

THAT OF COURSE, IS FROM THE BOOK OF SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH - NOT YET ST DAVID, ALTHOUGH HE MIGHT AS WELL BE.

THOSE WORDS ARE TAKEN FROM HIS RECENT BBC PROGRAMME ON EXTINCTION - THE FACTS - A FOLLOW-UP TO HIS EQUALLY URGENT AND CHASTENING PROGRAMME ON CLIMATE CRISIS.

LIKE GRETA THUNBERG - WITH WHOM SIR DAVID EVIDENTLY GETS ON VERY WELL - HE'S SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE OF THE PROPHETS. WE COULD EASILY TRANSLATE SIR DAVID'S LAMENT AND CALL TO ACTION INTO CHRISTIAN TERMS.

AND INDEED THAT'S BEING DONE - BY ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS, BY THE POPE, BY THE MANY CHRISTIAN AND INTER-FAITH ENVIRONMENTAL CAMPAIGNS IN THIS COUNTRY AND AROUND THE WORLD.

THROUGH OUR ECO-CHURCH PROJECT HERE IN CHRIST CHURCH, WE ARE LINKED TO THE INTERNATIONAL GREEN CHRISTIAN CHARITY A ROCHA.

AND WE ARE SUPPORTING THE INITIATIVE FROM TEARFUND, CALLED REBOOT - ABOUT REBUILDING OUR ECONOMIES AND WAY OF LIFE AFTER THE PANDEMIC SO THAT WE HAVE A FAIRER, CLEANER AND GREENER WORLD.

YOU CAN SEE MORE ABOUT REBOOT IN THE HARVEST FLYER IN CHURCH TODAY.

WHAT TEARFUND, A ROCHA AND MANY OTHERS ARE CALLING FOR IS ACTION BY GOVERNMENTS, BY BUSINESS - AND BY US AS INDIVIDUALS WORKING TOGETHER IN OUR CONGREGATIONS AND COMMUNITIES.

WE NEED ACTION TO RESPECT, RESTORE AND SUSTAIN GOD'S CREATION - OUR COMMON HOME, THE GOOD EARTH, WHICH IS GOD'S IRREPLACEABLE GIFT TO US, AND WHICH WE REMEMBER ESPECIALLY AT HARVEST.

INCREASINGLY, WE SEE THE PROTECTION, CONSERVATION AND RENEWAL OF GOD'S CREATION, FOR THE GOOD OF ALL, AS FUNDAMENTAL TO CHRISTIAN MISSION AND WITNESS IN OUR TIME.

WHAT A TIME WE LIVE IN, AND WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES.

LAST HARVEST-TIME, THERE WAS UNPRECEDENTED ATTENTION BEING PAID TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND THE STATE OF THE NATURAL WORLD.

GRETA THUNBERG AND THE SCHOOL STRIKES SHE INITIATED PLAYED A HUGE ROLE IN ALERTING US TO THE TERRIBLE RISKS ARISING FROM THE DAMAGE BEING DONE TO THE NATURAL SYSTEMS ON WHICH WE ALL DEPEND.

NOW IN 2020 COVID HAS TAKEN OVER IN THE NEWS. AND IT IS A GREAT AND TERRIBLE EMERGENCY.

BUT THE MUCH BIGGER EMERGENCIES OF CLIMATE DISRUPTION AND LOSS OF NATURE HAVE NOT GONE AWAY. AND PERHAPS THE PANDEMIC CAN HELP US HERE.

FOR WHAT THE AWFUL PANDEMIC CRISIS HAS DONE IS IN SOME WAYS DEEPLY INSTRUCTIVE FOR US ALL. WHAT IS IT SHOWING US?

IN ONE WAY IT IS A DIRE WARNING, AS DAVID ATTENBOROUGH POINTS OUT. VIRUSES SUCH AS COVID-19 ARE BEING RELEASED INTO OUR SOCIETIES AS WE ENCROACH EVER MORE ON WILDERNESSES AND DISTURB THE CREATURES LIVING THERE.

BUT IN ANOTHER WAY THE PANDEMIC HAS BEEN A REVELATION OF HOW WE COULD LIVE BETTER, AND HOW WE COULD MAKE THE WORLD BETTER.

IN THE LOCKDOWN, DURING A BEAUTIFUL SPRING, MANY OF US WERE LUCKY TO HAVE ACCESS TO OUR LOCAL COMMONS AND PARKS.

ALL OVER THE WORLD, PEOPLE HAVE FOUND CONSOLATION AND RESTORATION BY IMMERSING THEMSELVES IN NATURE.

WHAT WE HEARD WAS BIRDSONG, CLEAR AND VIBRANT AS WE'D NEVER HEARD IT BEFORE. WHAT WE SAW WAS A CLEANER WORLD - AND A MORE FLOURISHING LIVING WORLD, RECOVERING FROM THE PRESSURES PLACED ON IT BY OUR ECONOMIES AND LIFESTYLES.

SOME OF YOU MIGHT REMEMBER THE LATE PLAYWRIGHT DENNIS POTTER. WHEN HE WAS NEAR THE END OF HIS LIFE HE GAVE A TV INTERVIEW. IN IT HE DESCRIBED THE TREE IN BLOSSOM HE COULD SEE FROM HIS WINDOW. HIS SENSES HEIGHTENED BY THE CLOSENESS OF DEATH AND THE FEELING OF THE PRECIOUSNESS OF LIFE, HE SAID THAT THE BLOSSOM WAS THE 'BLOSSOMEST BLOSSOM' HE'D EVER SEEN.

PERHAPS MANY OF US HHAVE FELT SOMETHING SIMILAR IN THE EXPERIENCE OF NATURE DURING THE LOCKDOWN SPRING. SOME EXAMPLES OF THAT REVELATION CAN BE SEEN IN THE CREATION-TIDE PICTURES ON DISPLAY HERE AROUND THE WALLS - THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO CONTRIBUTED.

AS OUR BIBLE READINGS TODAY TELL US - THERE IS ABUNDANCE AND BEAUTY FOR EVERYONE IN THE CREATION, IF ONLY WE LIVE AS GOD INTENDED, AND SHARE THE GOOD THINGS OF THE EARTH.

WE CAN AND MUST MAKE DEEP CHANGES TO OUR ECONOMY, OUR LIFESTYLES AND OUR VALUES TO ENABLE THE EARTH TO SUSTAIN US AND GOD'S LARGER CREATION. WE NEED TO DO THIS IN A FAIR AND JUST WAY THAT LIFTS UP THE POOR AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD.

IT IS A HUGE TASK AND IT IS EASY TO FEEL DAUNTED. BUT - IT CAN BE DONE. WE CAN AFFORD IT. WE HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE AND TOOLS WE NEED. WE IN THE RICH WORLD, WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED SO MUCH TO THE PROBLEMS WE FACE WORLDWIDE, HAVE SO FAR LACKED THE WILLPOWER.

WE, PEOPLE OF FAITH, CONFIDENT IN GOD'S LOVE, HAVE A GREAT ROLE TO PLAY IN PROVIDING THAT WILLPOWER ACROSS OUR COMMUNITIES, AND THROUGH OUR ECO-CHURCH ACTIVITIES.

CREATION-TIDE IS NOT JUST FOR A MONTH IN AUTUMN. IT IS FOR EVERY MONTH, EVERY DAY.

THE TIME IS HERE TO DEDICATE OURSELVES TO THE GREAT CHRISTIAN TASK OF THIS GENERATION AND THE NEXT, TO SHOW GRATITUDE FOR GOD'S GIFT OF THE GOOD EARTH AND TO SUSTAIN IT, FOR OUR BENEFIT AND FOR THOSE WHO COME AFTER US.

A CLOSING PRAYER FOR HARVEST AND CREATION-TIDE : LET US PRAY

LORD OF LIFE AND GIVER OF HOPE
WE PLEDGE OURSELVES TO CARE FOR CREATION
TO REDUCE OUR WASTE
TO LIVE SUSTAINABLY,
AND TO VALUE THE RICH DIVERSITY OF LIFE.
MAY YOUR WISDOM GUIDE US,
THAT LIFE IN ALL ITS FORMS MAY FLOURISH,
AND MAY BE FAITHFUL IN VOICING CREATION'S PRAISE.
MAY THE COMMITMENT WE HAVE MADE BE MATCHED BY OUR FAITHFUL LIVING.

AMEN.