

**ADDRESS****4 September 2022****Creation Sunday**

Exodus 16.1-4, 11-24    YHWH provides quail and manna  
 Psalm 148                Praise for God the Creator  
 I Cor. 3. 4-17            Growth in the church  
 Matt. 10.24-31            God's care for creation

Help us O Lord to see your handiwork  
 in the beauty of your Creation, and to  
 hear your voice in your holy word and  
 in the silence of our hearts. Amen

Creation Sunday is becoming an important celebration in many churches, as more and more countries feel the impact of climate change – including droughts and floods and forest fires.

This is this year's call to arms from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby –

**SHOW**                <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bovWrpqWcqY>

The latest report from NASA confirms that climate change is real, and has always been happening, but that humans are largely responsible for the current higher levels of climate change. The report says,

*Earth's climate has changed throughout history. Just in the last 650,000 years there have been seven cycles of glacial advance and retreat, with the abrupt end of the last ice age about 11,700 years ago marking the beginning of the modern climate era — and of human civilization. . . .*

*The current warming trend is of particular significance because it is unequivocally the result of human activity since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and proceeding at a rate that is unprecedented over millennia.*

There's a link to the full report in *Connections*.    <https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/>

So, yes, there is a problem, but Christians aren't called to succumb to climate hysteria, to block the streets or disrupt rail traffic to draw attention to the issue or to themselves. We can focus our minds on the generosity of the Creator. What God has created is good, but humankind has created potentially-fatal problems through exploiting His creation.

The Scriptures show us that God's people have always been confident that God cares for His creation and provides for everything that has the breath of life. He provided food for his people in the dry desert on the way to the Promised Land, he was responsible for the growth of the infant church. He constantly renews the earth.

Many climate change enthusiasts worship the Creation rather than the Creator. People of faith can make a distinct contribution to solving the problems humankind has caused. We are called to Praise God for His creation. To Care for His creation. and to Be creative in His service

When we **praise God** for his creation, as the Psalmist does time and again, we acknowledge that the created world is one of God's gifts to humankind. *Let all creation praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted.* (Psalm 148).

Every grandparent knows the joy of receiving a hand-made gift from their grandchildren, perhaps a drawing, or a hand-woven bracelet or an apron with their handprints, whatever they make for us. We treasure them, not because they are great works of art, but because they are gifts of love.

In the same way, we should thank God for the world we live in; praise God because Creation is part of his love-giving to us from the beginning. And we should treasure the world, its beauty and its plants and animals, just as we treasure the gifts we have been given by people who love us, and those whom we love.

We love Creation more when we give more love to the Creator, the God who saw that all that he had made was very good. *Let all creation praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted.*

A man was showing a visitor around his garden. The visitor said, *What a wonderful job you and God have done together.* The owner said, *You should have seen it when God had it on his own!*

To preserve Creation, we need to be **partners with God** in caring for it, leaving our part of the world better off for our enjoying it, not worse off.

We do not fully understand the relationship between the Being we call God, and the force we call Nature, or personify as Mother Nature. So we pray for rain when we need it, but we don't blame God when we have too little or we have too much.

We despair when houses fall into the sea during a storm, or when they become uninhabitable during floods, but, in developed countries, we don't do enough to stop greedy developers and greedy local councils from allowing houses to be built on these vulnerable lands.

We despair when farmers walk off their land after a long drought rather than asking whether their land can sustain agriculture long-term or is only suitable for grazing. Farmers often need to be protected from their own greed – including making sure they leave suitable trees on their land as homes for wildlife.

Christians should be leaders in encouraging everyone to care for Creation, and not imply wait for God to renew what has been destroyed. The level of climate change has become a problem only politicians can solve, and we need to keep pressing governments to include a moral dimension in their decisions about how they spend taxpayers' money; to present an ethical cost/benefit analysis of each key issue to help them make loving choices.

For example, we could ask about some of the huge amounts of money being spent in the race into deep space. Do we spend \$2 billion, two thousand million, to send cameras to Pluto and beyond, which may have no benefit to anyone on earth, or do we use that money to help threatened environments, or threatened species, or threatened people?

Christians are called to love their neighbours, and can help authorities to define their priorities and so help protect Creation.

Thirdly, we need to follow God in **being creative** in serving him and serving his creation.

The Bible praises the craftsmen who built the first tabernacle, which the children of Israel carried with them across the desert to the Promised Land. And those who built and adorned the first temple, the temple of Solomon.

The book of Exodus says: *The LORD spoke to Moses: See, I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with divine spirit, with ability, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft.* (Ex. 31.1-5)

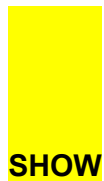
The Bible has similar praise for writers of poetry and musicians and singers, most of them unnamed. For many centuries God has inspired men and women of faith to create great works of art and architecture and music and literature, to honour Him or to display the beauty of the world he has created. Churches were built to the glory of the most beautiful God; they were places of beauty that were richly adorned to inspire us to worship with reverence and awe, as the writer of the letter to the Hebrews urges us to do (Heb. 12.28), and they were filled with the sound of great music.

Today many churches are just functional spaces, about as inspiring as a university lecture theatre. -- meeting places for us, rather than beautiful spaces to the glory of the glorious God. Their music may have more complex and assertive rhythms but it is often minimalist and repetitive in both its melodies and its lyrics.. We can do better.

Yet, outside the churches, creativity is becoming more and more evident and varied. God has given us the intelligence to use the earth's resources to improve human lives. And we are. Our cities are becoming more beautiful and more functional, and we constantly hear of new discoveries in science and medicine. We read recently that CSIRO scientists have discovered how to turn a type of red seaweed into cattle feed. This could massively reduce methane emissions from cattle and sheep. God provides the red seaweed, CSIRO provides the know-how – a creative partnership in minimising climate change.

On the other hand, humankind is often tempted to make wrongful use of the materials God's earth provides. The book of Genesis has an ancient story condemning this —the building of the Tower of Babel. Men took bricks and bitumen to build a tower with its top in the heavens, purely to make a name for themselves. (Genesis 11-1-9)

A lot of human activity happens for the same reason, and large corporations keep trying to sell us convenience, time-saving, which usually involves using more and more packaging, contributing to the waste of natural resources and to climate change. This is an example:



three layers of packaging, and dozens of recipe cards probably cost more than the food. Yes, you save time shopping and cutting up the meat and veges, but you still have to cook the meal -- and wash up afterwards. Maximum waste, minimum benefit.

**SLIDE OFF**

The Bible is an old book, but it is always contemporary, because it keeps showing us that, with God's help, human beings are always able to choose between good and evil. The symbol of Creation Sunday this year is the burning bush of Mount Sinai, which burned without being consumed. (Exodus 3.2) This is a reminder that humankind should always use the resources of the earth in ways which do not damage it.

So let us on this Sunday, and every day, commit ourselves to **Praise God for His creation. Care for His creation** and **Be creative in His service** and encourage others to do likewise. For God's earth's sake, and for ours.

*Lord God, we praise you for giving us this earth to sustain us and to delight in; forgive us when, we abuse its beauty and waste its resources through our greed or indifference. Empower us, through your Spirit, to love the world and to care for it, and teach others to do the same, so that all creation may proclaim your glory. AMEN*