

21 February 2021

Lent 1 – on Climate Change

'Your children will rebuild the deserted ruins of your cities. Then you will be known as the people who rebuild their walls and cities.' Isaiah 58:12 (New Living Translation)

Opening Prayer

O God who is love
Let love empower our compassion
Let love embrace each and everyone
Let love unite humans and non-human
In restorative co-existence.

O Jesus, love come down to earth
May we honour the earth
May we honour all that dwells in the earth
May we be reconciled with the earth
Become what we are, of the earth.

O Spirit of love
Grant us a spirit of humility
Grant us a spirit of carefulness
Grant us a spirit of friendship
For the earth and all that dwells with us here.

Toni Bennett

Bible Readings Isaiah 58.6 - 13; Romans 8.21 - 25

Reflection

The three Rs on our green box in the church office are: reduce, reuse and recycle. I would like to add to these: repair and renew.

This is the first week of Lent, the beginning of our journey following Christ's journey toward the cross. It is a time when we are encouraged to take an honest look at our lives, what do we spend time and energy doing? What part does prayer play? How are we following Christ in our words and actions? The global ecological crises call us to rethink the way we understand God and God's love for us and for the whole creation. Our Bible readings today remind us of God's concern for the well-being of our world as a whole.

Isaiah was a prophet and unlike that of priests, the ministry of prophecy was not based on heredity - God calls certain people to be prophets for a particular message in a particular situation. In most cases, with their God-given messages, prophets risk their lives to challenge those in authority: kings and priests alike. In the case of Isaiah, he gave a call to

rebuild, to repair and to restore. The question is, 'Why should we rebuild, repair or restore something that is already ruined? Wouldn't it be easier just to start again and build from scratch? Yet in our throw away world, we waste so much that could be repaired. Think of the wonderful show Repair Shop and how so many have been watching it during lockdown.

God cares for our world that is broken and ruined in the process of so-called progress. After Noah and the flood, God promised that he would never cause the whole world to be flooded again. Instead through Christ, God is renewing the world from within by changing our hearts.

On Christmas Eve the road behind us flooded for the first time in over 35 years – according to neighbours who had never seen it flooded in the whole time they lived here. The new McDonald's, Costa, Fish and Chips and Tesco were flooded. I couldn't help thinking that it was because they had built on a flood plain and cut down the trees on the far side of the brook. It was also because they had not dredged out the water ditches, so they had clogged up. Do we need fast food outlets when we should be eating more healthily? And the rubbish from the packaging? Is there a better way we could have served our growing population?

So, what is to be rebuilt, restored, or repaired? Surely, we should replace any trees cut down where we can. Regularly dig out drains. Use our land to grow healthy nutritious food that can be sold at our Farmer's Market and teach and encourage cooking of decent meals for households. Should we be thinking more about where we build houses? What about rebuilding empty shops in towns rather than encroaching ever more our green spaces?

The Isaiah passage clearly mentions that rebuilding and restoration are the foundation for a new generation, the borders and the streets that need to be repaired. These terms refer to our environment, for instance, the rivers in our towns and cities, the waste on our roadsides and so forth. In addition, the word 'repair' means 'making something new out of what is there already.' God called the world 'good' at the time of creation – it was designed to provide for the needs of its inhabitants, and so it must be preserved and cared for.

Being called the children of God by His love and grace, we should respond to God's call for action. God's heart breaks when people suffer loss in natural calamities. God suffers with nature which is ruthlessly destroyed to satisfy human greed and pleasure. Instead, we should try to live more simply and healthily and work with nature for the good of all. To love God is to do His will and to do His will is to care for creation. Let us renew our world!

Show the Love Blessing 2021

May our loving God,

who created the world and all that is in it,

Inspire us to delight in our beautiful home,

And to live in wonder, peace and joy.

May our living God keep our hearts turned to loving our neighbour and to respecting the creation we share.

May our merciful God help us to live this week in goodness and hope,

And fill us with God's peace.

Amen

Ash Vale Chapel Poetry Group (Prayers from Green Christian)