

12 March 2023 Creation

Is it acceptable for the established Church to discuss current events? Is this an appropriate time and place to consider Global Warming? Or is it the role of the Good Christian to keep the commandments and study the Bible?

Let's start by looking at scripture. The Bible begins with the most beautiful account of God's creation of the world and everything in it, as our first reading recounts. It is glorious and awesome. God creates a magnificent environment for Adam and Eve to live in, a gorgeous garden for them to tend and enjoy. In Genesis 1:26-28, mankind is created to be blessed, to be fruitful and fill the earth, subdue it and rule over all living things.

In Exodus the Israelites are given clear instructions on how to work and enjoy, how to tend the crops, leaving the land fallow every seven years, (Exodus 23:11), a proven way of allowing soil to recover after cultivation, and tithing every three years so that there are supplies for the poor and needy.

The psalms sing God's praises, in terms of the physical world:

<sup>3</sup> For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods.

<sup>4</sup> In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. <sup>5</sup> The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. Psalm 95

Clear instructions from God.

Obedying God comes with a multitude of blessings and fruitfulness of every variety, family, livestock, crops; disobedience, brings disease, misery and death.

Deuteronomy, 28:23-24, And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust; from heaven shall it come down upon thee until thou be destroyed.

This is striking. How many people in sub-Saharan Africa are experiencing powder and dust when they hoped for rain? How many are trying to cultivate land so dry it feels like iron? Is this God's punishment for their sins? Can we look on with complacency? Our lives are comparatively comfortable; therefore, God must be pleased with us.

My soul cries out 'NO! it can't be!' Didn't Job suffer terribly even though he was a true believer? There has to be another explanation.

Is this the beginning of the end times, as described in Matthew 24? 2 Peter 3:10 says that the heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

Is it big business? Those enormous international companies striving to fulfil the needs and whims of developed nations?

Whose sins have led to this horror? Whose greed, selfishness, heartlessness? Where should we lay the blame?

We must turn to Jesus for advice.

Jesus calls us by name and asks us to follow him. He comes with a message of heavenly salvation for each one of us.

He doesn't seem to be interested in politics. His first followers expect him to lead a rebellion against the Romans, but he makes it clear that he is not here to overthrow governments, however tyrannical they may be. Indeed, he recommends cooperation: 'render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's'. (Mark 12:17)

His is a spiritual freedom, based on loving God and each other, humbly and generously.

So should we be keeping any consideration of Global Warming separate? Is there a clear divide between secular and religious? Is there no place for activism in the everyday life of a 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian?

Surely no one doubts that our world is suffering. Not just the people, the flora and fauna, the very fabric of our world is melting, crumbling, suffocating.

Will God intervene to make things right? Of course he can! Jesus is sleeping through the storm, in our reading. His disciples wake him, overcome with fear for their lives. When we call on him, he *can* calm the raging seas in a moment. So can we just leave it to him to sort things out?

I was struck by an interview with Diann Black Lane, the Director of the Department of Environment of Antigua and Barbuda. This was just after the devastating storms when Hurricane Irma struck the island of Barbuda in 2017 and everyone had to be evacuated. For all her important position in her nation she acknowledged that their islands can have little impact on the developed countries of the world, whose carbon output is a significant cause of the storms. She made a powerful declaration:

“We pray. We are God-fearing people, and we believe in forgiveness, and we believe in praying. And we believe that God will intercede on our behalf. I’m telling you; prayer is powerful.”

Now let’s examine our own hearts. How many of us has a fancy American style fridge?

That fridge uses more electricity in a year than the average person in Sub-Saharan Africa.

How many of us have an automatic watering system, so that we can irrigate our garden when the summer is dry? Children in some countries have to collect water in plastic drums from dirty wells.

How many of us buy blueberries from Argentina, avocados from Peru?

We have a duty as Christians to care for creation. Let’s take action, starting now. We don’t have to stand for parliament or wield placards outside Waitrose. I’m not expecting everyone to go and join Greenpeace or personally help that child collect water.

*This is my challenge.*

First and foremost, we must put our trust in God. Pray for the world. Pray for help for suffering world and pray for freedom from greed for developed nations.

Next, go out into nature every day, even if it’s only for five minutes, gaze around. Breathe the air. See the grass and trees, listen to the birds. And thank God for our beautiful world. His hand is everywhere. Let’s kneel before the Lord our maker.

Lastly, think about what we really need and just use that. Shop at the farmers’ market. When we allow ourselves a coffee out somewhere, or an indulgent dinner in a restaurant, let’s try Match Giving. That is, whatever we spend on our treat, we give the same amount to a charity which focuses on creation. A drop in the ocean? And why not? Let’s do it!

**Fleur Pelly, 12 March 2023**