

USPG CLIMATE SUNDAY SERMON. 21st February 2021.

ST. Mark 1:9-15

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Dear brothers and sisters, I greet you all in the name of God- the Creator, the Liberator and the Sustainer. Today, we are called to reflect on the topic 'Ecological justice from Indian context'. The text is from St, Mark 1:9-15,

In an Anthropocentric world where human beings claim to be superior and other creation are marginalized as objects that can be exploited, abused and controlled, As Christians are called to recognize the voice of the creation, to realize and repent from our sinful activities against Nature.

A Call to recognize that creation can actively voice out:.

During Jesus baptism (St.Mark 1:10,11) various symbolic events occur namely- Heavens split open, the spirit descends like a Dove, there was voice from heaven, and in the wilderness Jesus was with the wild beasts (1: 14,15). Here we see that the elements like Water, heavens, wilderness and wild beasts actively participates as subjects and not remain as mere objects. The Creator God and the creation together voices out for Jesus the "first fruit" of all creation.

Jesus at his baptism,(1) expresses his solidarity with the sinful humanity (2) was also empowered by the spirit of God to liberate not just humanity alone but entire creation which is groaning(Romans 8:21,22).

A Call to realize our sins committed against creation: In John's baptism of repentance, he powerfully calls people to realize and turn from their sinful ways. we all tend to treat the sin that we commit against fellow humans as sin, and are very casual with the sin which we commit against the nature and fail to realize it as a sin. Though we are dependent on the creation for our existence and survival yet we tend to exclude ourselves from nature and never understand that we are part of creation.

In the present Context where industrialization, urbanization, development... are influencing our lives, we are trickily driven away from our natural way of living and gradually attracted towards destructive way of life. By polluting Air, water, and poisoning the land with pesticides, by our emission of greenhouse gases, by deforestation and depletion of ozone layer, we have largely contributed towards global warming and left the earth to suffer.

With few incidents that happened in India in the year 2020 which challenged the people in all possible ways, let us listen to the voice of the groaning earth.

COVID 19 Pandemic: We all are aware of the dreadful impacts of COVID 19. People became jobless. daily waged laborers and their families under poverty were severely affected. As the lockdown extended for several months, there was a *Mass migration/ Exodus*. Interstate migrants were left with no food and shelter. They had to go back to their own places walking hundreds of kilometers. They walked and slept on railway tracks and high way road sides. some even died on their way due to starvation.

Locusts attack: As India was battling with the pandemic, In April 2020, the Northern and Central states namely Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan were attacked by the swarms of locusts devastating hectares of farm land, which threatened the food security in India. Climate change has provided a favorable temperature for the breeding of these locusts that their increased number in millions completely destroyed the crops.

Floods and Cyclones: In the month of May, June and July, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Kolkata and Maharashtra were frequently visited by floods and deadly cyclones namely Amphan, Nivar, Buviri making people's lives tragic with waterlogged homes. People spent sleepless nights. As the water sources were converted into buildings and apartments, the waters could not find its space to be accumulated and thereby finds its way into the houses.

Farmers protests: As India was struggling with all these issues. The government in the name of development came up with three Farm laws, which would stop the Minimum Support Price for the farmers, Price assurance will be controlled by corporates. Poor indigenous farmers will become landless. Therefore, thousands of farmers with their farm unions from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh sieged the outskirts of New Delhi from November 2020 to protest and seek justice. On Republic day the 26th of January 2021, Tractor rally was organized to strongly make known their request to the prime minister to repeal the deadly farm laws. Latticharge and tear gas were shot at the farmers. Despite all the hinderances from the government, the agitated farmers are struggling till today for justice to uphold the food sovereignty of our country

A Call to repent and restore God's creation: Hearing these groaning voices, we are called to realize that, we have intensely wounded the earth by our greedy and abusive activities. We have provoked its anger which ferociously roars back to us, in the form of floods, plagues, pandemic and cyclones.

In verse 15, Jesus says the 'Kingdom of God is at hand'. By knowing the severity of life-threatening situation around us, we are cautioned to quickly repent from our destructive lifestyle and be transformed to live an ecofriendly life by conserving nature, planting trees minimize the smoke emissions, voice out for justice on behalf of the suffering Earth and put an end to all our disastrous activities and subside the wrath of nature.

let me conclude with Desmond tutu's Quotation- *"People of conscience need to break their ties with corporations financing the injustice of climate change"*

As we begin this lent, May the same spirit of God which descended on Servant lord provoke our hearts and minds to become responsible stewards that we may be accountable in our dealings with nature, and inspire us to be liberated in our thoughts and actions, and empower us to liberate the groaning creation and thereby please the Creator God that we are tapped on our shoulders with the same voice from heaven which echoes 'You are my beloved daughter or son in whom I am well pleased'. Amen.