

*Care of Creation*  
*Why should we ?*

*A reflection from Psalm 8*

We are very blessed to be part of an international family of faith in the worldwide Anglican Communion that although it is like all human organisations – far from perfect – it has since 1984 committed to 5 marks of mission as the call of the Gospel. They are to *TELL – TEACH – TEND – TRANSFORM* and *TREASURE*<sup>1</sup>. It is the 5<sup>th</sup> that is the focus of this talk – Care of Creation.

I imagine the writer (David) arranging his thoughts on a shelf and holding them together with bookend that burst out with the shout –

*O Lord our Lord – how majestic is your name in all the earth*  
(vs 1 & 9)

The importance of that is in the fact that our faith must be relevant to our reality – earthly reality, and not some other reality. To be saved by embracing the gospel means that

---

<sup>1</sup> They are formally expressed as –

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

God's transforming grace should flow through our lives to change the relationships that we have in our earthly reality. That is – we are to live in a way that shows God's love through the relationships that God gives us. There are two main relationship realms that we are saved to save. First, our relationships with humanity - people, and second – our relationship with nature/creation. Our earthly behaviour should glow with the grace of God in all that we do to people and to nature. That makes our faith authentic and attractive. Having begun with the front bookend grounding him to earthly reality – the writer then steps out to reflect on another realm beyond the earthly - the realm of the universe – prompted by the glorious night sky with it's dark and infinite distances and mysterious endless depths filled with millions of sparkling lights, big and small near and far – each which has it's own story that is known only to the Majestic creator of all.

Turning his gaze into the sky like that David finds very humbling. The realization that the earthly reality that means so much to him is but a drop in the bucket or a tiny pinpoint in the universal reality, begs the question ...

*Who is humanity that you are mindful of us - human beings that you would care for them* (vss 3 &4)

He senses the work of a creator – an artist. The Artist is not to be confused with the art. The art is a window into knowledge and understanding of the character of the artist and who the artist is. What slips from the tip of the artist's brush onto the

canvas or the sculptor's chisel into the stone, is an insight into the heart of the artist, and so to look at the art that God has created tells us something about the heart of God. David is awestruck by the grace that he feels of God's presence on earth, and that the great artist of the universe has blessed him with a special visitation of beauty in creation that tells him that the finger of the Almighty God has touched this tiny spot with love.

Gazing into a clear summer night sky throws us into wonder and leaves us with the only authentic response – humility and worship. To the David, this response is a no brainer, so he thinks – how can people not believe ?

He reflects upon the attitude of the cynic and the enemy of faith. Even such a person has to accept the beauty that there is the universe like the beauty of the innocence of a child.

*From the lips of children and infants you have  
ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the  
foe and the avenger* <sup>2</sup> (vs 2)

The most sceptical person can't deny that when they are in the presence of a child the child's innocence and willingness to

---

<sup>2</sup> Verse 2 has been problematic for commentators because it is curiously unexpected after the initial positivity of verse 1. Looking at other paraphrases is helpful eg.:

NIRV - You have made sure that children and infants praise you. Their praise is a wall that stops the talk of your enemies.

The Message - Nursing infants gurgle choruses about you; toddlers shout the songs that drown out enemy talk, and silence atheist babble.

CE-V - With praises from children and from tiny infants, you have built a fortress. It makes your enemies silent, and all who turn against you are left speechless.

trust is real and can't be measured in a laboratory. Everyone feels softened and humbled by it. Gazing at the summer sky makes David feel like a child in the presence of greatness. – softened and humble. Even the cynic will have felt the such influence in the child's readiness to trust. If we are honest cynics – we ought to recognise the gentleness that speaks into our feelings – deeply personal – even moving one to joyful tears by wonder of the new child given to us, or equally by the serene voice of something powerful but affirming out of the silence of the clear night sky. At some points in our awareness – cynical or not - we all know that we should put our hand in the hand of God as a child does to the parent, in complete surrender and trust.

So he realises that we who are so small and tiny in the universe are blessed with the marvellous attention of the Creator, a loving artist, beyond our station in the big picture. Why us ?

But then he realises that God's grace is not only all around us in the gifts of creation, but is even more amazingly in us in a more intimate way.

*You have made humans a little lower than angels  
and crowned them with glory and honour (vs 5)*

Planted by God's will into our very being is a status that he gives to us – a status of royalty. We are crowned with glory and honour. God has given to us a dignity that separates us from the rest of the living order and has gifted us a touch of the immortal. Our nature is different from the rest of life in

that we are part of a community that dwells in the realm of the immortal. This realm and participation in this community is our inheritance by the gift of God.<sup>3</sup> That is how valuable and precious we are to God.

Having marvelled at what he has realised is God's loving relationship to us, he now thinks about our relationship to creation. What should that be like? We have a responsibility that comes with the status God has conferred upon us and this is as God's agent to care for creation. Usually connected with status is power and always connected with power – is responsibility. And so David now echoes the Genesis creation narrative – that humanity has a responsibility on God's behalf to care for creation.

*You made them rulers over the works of your hands;  
you put everything under their feet:  
all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild,  
the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim  
the paths of the seas* (vss 6-8)

He is careful to emphasise life forms, because in making clear that our guardianship is of “all the works of your hands”, he gathers up for special emphasis the realm of living things. Our status in relation to nature is not earned by us or deserved. It is a trust that God has in us to care for creation as he would care for it and so in trusting us in this way God is expecting us to be trustees on his behalf. Caretakers – curators – Kaitiaki<sup>4</sup> –

---

<sup>3</sup> See Eph 1 :15-23

<sup>4</sup> Carer, guardian, protector and conserver

guardians. It is the endowment of an immense privilege to be responsible for caring for the work of the artist. The artwork has been handed to us to look after. The responsibility given to us is an act of grace which God has gifted to us so that we could participate in the wonder of his creation – the artist is sharing with us the beauty of the art and expecting us to care for it as he would care for it.

Remember the 5<sup>th</sup> of the 5 Marks of Mission:

*To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth*

When we realise who we are, being of a higher order of life and entrusted with a royal responsibility, we should not be cavalier or self-serving and exploitative as we care for creation, but humble, respectful and grateful, always treating creation in a way that honours the creator.

Human history tends to throw up eras or epoch that are characterised by a dominant trait for the time and each of these presents a challenge for the church of the day. The community that stands for Godly life needs to provide a response and even guidance in such times. The challenge of the era stretching forward in this new year is almost certain to be about the growing evidence that the intrinsic, brilliant and beautiful capacities of nature to self-replenish, self-preserve and self-sustain, is creaking under the strain of human disturbance and dominance, but more so than disrupting the perfection of nature's systems, human dominance is also putting the future of humanity at risk. It seems we have used the status that God has given us to "pull rank" and use and abuse that which we

see as below us. We have not acted with the humility that is appropriate in the light of the grace that God has shown in making us who we are and giving us the privilege of being the curator and caretaker of God's art. Instead, we appear to have acted self-servingly as if there is no artist at all, and have blotched, poisoned, contaminated and defaced the majestic work of the creator.

Here are 3 takeaways that are non negotiables if we are sincere in our desire to live in Godly awareness regardless of where we stand on environmental issues.

1. We must understand is that as consumers of the gifts of nature we are always to be grateful and humble and express our gratitude to the giver of the gifts, the artist who blesses us with his work. What we do to and with the environment, and the uses we put it to, must sit comparably with the humility and worship that David senses is the only appropriate response to the Creator. That is the litmus test of our relationship to the Creator .
2. The litmus test of our relationship to the Created then must be respectful and tender in the way that we care for God's gifts so that we do not behave toward nature and our environment as if we have a sense of entitlement to do what we like. Remember – the trusteeship is to care for creation as God would care for it. Kaitiaki.
3. It is time that we ventured more deeply into the realisation that we are saved to show a new way to live not only in

our attitudes to our fellow man but also in our attitudes to creation. The Gospel of our salvation is inextricably linked with creation. The Saviour of our souls is not only the Jesus of human history – but more significantly the Christ of creation.

*Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (John 1:3)*

*For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

(Colossians 1:16-17)

We must hear the voice of the creator Christ more clearly in the era ahead. If we say we are disciples of Jesus we must start to understand in a new way that that means we are grafted in to the cosmic plan that is held by Christ the Creator whose spirit resides in us. We have a job to do.

So now for the bookend at the other end of the shelf !

*O Lord our Lord – how majestic is your name in all the Earth.*

\*\*\*\*\*

S.A.T

St Georges 5<sup>th</sup> Jan 2021