



**Reflections & Prayers for Sunday
6 June 2021**

World Environment Day



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Readings for this Sunday

You may want to find your Bible and read the lessons set for this week:

Genesis 1:26-31

Psalm 130

Romans 8:18-30

Matthew 6:25-34

Waiting for Divine Redemption

A Song of Ascents.

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.

Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive

to the voice of my supplications!

If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,

Lord, who could stand?

But there is forgiveness with you,

so that you may be revered.

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,

and in his word I hope;

my soul waits for the Lord

more than those who watch for the morning,

more than those who watch for the morning.

O Israel, hope in the LORD!

For with the LORD there is steadfast love,

and with him is great power to redeem.

It is he who will redeem Israel

from all its iniquities.

Reflection by Anne Edwards

As the song in 'The Sound of Music' puts it: 'Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start ...' – so today, World Environment Day, this is where our readings begin – the book of Genesis.

The word 'Genesis' means 'beginning', and it seems at first glance that what the Bible is dealing with in this book is the story of the beginning of everything. Actually the Bible is dealing with something much more profound. It is concerned with theology, that is, it is a book about God and his dealings with humanity. The Bible does not stand or fall by the accuracy of its information, because it is not a textbook of science, or history, or archaeology. It stands or falls by what it has to say about the purpose of life, the meaning of the world we live in, and the reality that lies beyond it. It claims to provide the clue to the mystery that surrounds our existence, to tell us who we really are, where we should be going, what we ought to be doing, and how we can do it.

We believe that our universe and everything in it is God's handiwork, that God is the origin of everything. Therefore all things, including this planet, Earth, on which we live, belongs to God. The book of Genesis tells us that God thought it was "good".

We know now, if we didn't before, that the state of our world, our environment, is no longer as healthy as it was, and our ways of living affect it as much as they do us and our health. Our environment has changed dramatically during my lifetime, and today there is much information telling about the changes over the decades, which now seem to be gathering pace and threatening not only our way of life, but actual lives.

We are taking the opportunity today to look at and be challenged by how the ways we live are not only affecting the world's environment, but offending God.

Archbishop Justyn Welby has said: "We believe that responding to climate change is an essential part of our responsibility to safeguard God's creation. Our campaign exists to enable the whole church to address, in faith, practice and mission, the issue of climate change. Reducing the causes of climate change is essential to the life of faith. It is a way to love our neighbour and to steward the gift of creation."

In February 2020 the Church of England's General Synod set new targets for all parts of the church to work to become carbon 'net zero' by 2030 – and that is just nine years away!

If we go back to the Old Testament, we discover that in giving his people the Ten Commandments, God commanded a day of Sabbath Rest – for everyone and their animals

(Deuteronomy 5:12). Today we can – and in some cases are more or less expected to – work seven days a week, 24 hours a day – it is no longer easy for everyone to take a Sabbath Rest every week, whether that is actually Sunday or one other day. Keep Sunday Special was a campaign in 1985 to stand against the introduction of Sunday trading. Business prevailed, and now the hustle and bustle of the High Street is virtually no different on any day of the week. Was this greed, the desire for profit, more, more, more?

In Deuteronomy 8:11-20 God warns his people that “when you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them” you are likely to forget God, and in verse 19: “If you do forget the LORD your God and follow other gods to serve and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you will surely perish.” To us today that might seem extreme, but we are seeing just that – around the world people are dying from too much rain, too little rain, too much food, too little food. Crops are failing, animals are dying. In London recently the Court decided a contributory factor to a little girl’s death was the pollution from traffic.

Human sin disfigures the whole creation – the laziness that has bits and pieces floating in outer space; that leaves tons of rubbish on Mount Everest by climbers whose climb depended on the food, the oxygen, and who will celebrate their success, but are also mountaineering litter-louts; the plastic pieces contaminating the seas, and indestructible for decades, even hundreds of years. On the whole, our laziness, selfishness and greed are the underlying sins creating today’s mess.

The tipping point for this wonderful world of ours is, in the grand scale of things, only a few years away when drought, floods and storms, rising sea levels will be making life for humanity in some parts of the world no longer viable. Here in the UK we may feel we’re ‘okay’ – but the unrest and movement of populations that could result would be quite capable of turning life upside down for us here too.

In various places in the Old Testament we read: “Then the Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the LORD ... and they abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors ...” And time after time their lives became really difficult for them until, may be years later, others woke up to the need to turn to God once again, to repent of the lives they had been leading, seek God’s forgiveness and change their ways.

I believe we have come to such a time, and we need to repent and seek God’s forgiveness for our part in the piles of plastic sent across the seas for other countries to dispose of, for the cheap clothes meaning others barely get a living wage, for the food we respect so little that we buy more than we need to sustain us so that tons of it get thrown out weekly. When food is lost or wasted, all the resources that were used to produce it – water, land, energy, labour and capital – go to waste. In addition, the disposal of food loss and waste in

landfills leads to greenhouse gas emissions which are contributing to climate change. Richard Rohr, an American author, spiritual writer and Franciscan friar who died last year, suggested that the arrival of the fridge/freezer put a stop to the sharing of food. Instead of passing on any surplus, we put it in our fridges and freezers, and now if we forget the food, it goes off in the fridge!

This has proved to be a difficult reflection to write - step by step I've found myself having to turn to God asking him to forgive me as I realise that I've lived in many ways what I'm now condemning. Being a member of St John's Eco Group for the past couple of years has brought me up short and I'm now trying to live differently, with a softer, gentler, less selfish footprint, reflecting on God's generosity.

Last week I took my 'most days' walk across the Common and golf course and for once became aware of how few insects I saw – just three butterflies, one bumblebee, one woodlouse and one small beetle walking along the road ahead of me. I remembered that years ago the windscreens of our cars used to be black with dead insects after a car journey, and now I can't remember the last time I had to clean the glass before going out again – an indication of how things were, and how they are now.

The first verse of a hymn from Fred Pratt Green:

“God in his love for us lent us this planet,
gave it a purpose in time and in space:
small as a spark from the fire of creation,
cradle of life and the home of our race.”

Its third verse reads:

“Long have our human wars ruined its harvest;
long has earth bowed to the terror of force;
long have we wasted what others have needed,
poisoned the fountain of life at its source.”

He died in 2000, so this was written before the crisis of climate change was being considered seriously by most of us. And Pope Francis, in his Encyclical “Laudate Si” wrote: “We have forgotten we are dust.... “

Whether we call ourselves Christian or not, we all have a responsibility to live lives that do as little damage to our environment as possible, to do as much as we can to bring hope to

God's suffering creation, and encourage the return of the glory of God in the abundance of our environment.

Prayers

Eternal God,
whose Spirit moved over the face of the deep bringing forth light and life;
by that same Spirit, renew your creation, and restore your image in your people.
Turn us from careless tenants to faithful stewards,
that your threefold blessing of clean air, pure water and rich earth
may be the inheritance of everything that has the breath of life
and one generation may proclaim to another the wonder of your works;
through Jesus Christ, your living Word,
in whom the fulness of your glory is revealed.
Amen. *(Rt. Revd. Libby Lane, Bishop of Stockport)*

God said,
"Let the waters be gathered together, and let dry land appear".
We thank you for the beauty of the earth,
for the diversity of the land and sea,
for the resources of the earth.
Give us the will to cherish this planet
and use its riches for the good and welfare of all.
Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit
who hovered over the waters of creation
and formed the world from chaos,
form us in the likeness of Christ
and renew the face of the earth.
Amen.

Parish Prayers for the week ahead

In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	The Church of the Province of Myanmar (Burma)
Monday	The Diocese of East Carolina – The Episcopal Church
Tuesday	The Diocese of North Carolina – The Episcopal Church
Wednesday	The Diocese of South Carolina – The Episcopal Church
Thursday	The Diocese of Upper South Carolina – The Episcopal Church

Friday	The Diocese of Western North Carolina – The Episcopal Church
Saturday	The Diocese of Cashel Ferns & Ossory – The Church of Ireland

In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	Parish of Weston (Deanery of Buntingford)
Monday	Parish of Broxbourne with Wormley (Deanery of Cheshunt)
Tuesday	Parish of Cheshunt (Deanery of Cheshunt)
Wednesday	Parish of Goff's Oak, St James (Deanery of Cheshunt)
Thursday	Parish of Hoddesdon (Deanery of Cheshunt)
Friday	Parish of Northaw and Cuffley (Deanery of Cheshunt)
Saturday	Parish of Rye Park, St Cuthbert (Deanery of Cheshunt)

For the homes and families in:

Sunday	Meadow Walk, Meadway
Monday	Mons Close, Nairn Close
Tuesday	Netherfield Road, Newton Close
Wednesday	Oak Way, Oakfield Road
Thursday	Oakhurst Avenue, Oakley Road
Friday	Paddock Wood, Parva Close
Saturday	Pendennis Court, Pennycroft

The Sick:

Claire, Sue, Christine, Hermione, Karen, Chris and all whose names are entered on our St Luke's Cell Prayer List.

For the recently deceased:

Sheila Tilbrook

On their year's mind:

John Mason, Sheila Griffiths, Derek Giddings, Nicky Combe, Charles Whitlock, Geoffrey Lane, Gwen Hollington, Judith Jarman, George Satchell, Roy Awbrey

Church Opening times

Other services / in Church congregation

- Evening Prayer on Wednesdays at 5.00pm
- Sunday 9.30am Parish Eucharist
- Short family service on Sundays 20 June & 18 July at 4.00pm

Private Prayer

- Saturday opening (in addition to Sunday), 11.00am – 4.00pm

A reminder... of this phone service:

Daily Hope – dial 0800 804 8044 for prayer, reflection, music and worship services from the Church of England. A weekly service is available from 9 am every Sunday.