



Morning Worship

Season of Creation

*"The Earth is the Lord's
and all that fills it"*

Psalm 25:1

20 September 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our Morning Worship here at the Parish churches of Coxley with Godney, Henton, and Wookey. Although we are once again meeting together physically in our church buildings we understand that some people might not be able to attend for any number of reasons. It is hoped that following this liturgy, knowing that others in the benefice will be doing so at the same time, might help provide a spiritual connection between us and bring about a sense of community between the followers of Jesus Christ.

It is suggested that alongside this liturgy you have a means to listen to the suggested hymns which have links to videos with lyrics within this document. There is a mixture of traditional hymns and contemporary worship songs. If you do not know the tune then why not listen to the hymn/song and worship through reading the words alone.

The service is designed to be used easily by one person. If there is more than one person participating, either one can lead with others joining in with the responses in **bold** OR everyone present may join in with all the words.

The sections in *red italics* are rubrics: these explain what needs to happen at various points.

Materials in this booklet are drawn from *Common Worship: Times and Seasons* which is copyright © The Archbishop's Council of the Church of England 2006; *New Patterns for Worship* copyright © The Archbishop's Council of the Church of England 2002. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version.

MORNING WORSHIP

GREETING

Praise God! For even though we are apart the Lord is in our midst!

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him the glory.

CALL TO WORSHIP

The Lord is here!

His Spirit is with us!

Though we find ourselves isolated
in homes, apartments, and residential places,

**we look out our windows and remember,
the heavens declare the glory of God,
all creation rejoices in our creator.**

Psalms 19:1

Though we cannot be present with our church community,

**we rejoice that Christ is in our midst,
he is with us always, until the end of the age!**

Matthew 28:20

Though we have to stand at a safe distance from others,
giving space to those who pass us by,

**we recall we are all made in the image of God,
connected to one another,
connected to God.**

Genesis 1:27

HYMN: CREATION SINGS

[Listen here](#)

CONFESSION AND WORDS OF COMFORT

The Spirit of the Lord fills the world
and knows our every word and deed.
Let us then open ourselves to the Lord
and confess our sins in penitence and faith.

Father, we have sinned against heaven and against you.

We are not worthy to be called your children.

We turn to you again.

Have mercy on us,

**bring us back to yourself as those who once were dead
but now have life through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

A period of silent reflection follows

Hear the words of comfort, our Saviour Christ says to all who truly
turn to him:

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son,
that whoever believes in him should not perish
but have eternal life.*

John 3:16

COLLECT

Let us pray.

A period of silent prayer is kept.

Almighty God,
you created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them,
you created humankind in your own image, and it was very good:
grant us the courage to recognise our failure to maintain your
creation and by your grace do all that we can to halt the
degradation of this world;
through Jesus Christ our Lord
who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit
one God, now and forever.
Amen.

HYMN: ALL HEAVEN DECLARES

[Listen here](#)

THE WORD OF GOD

Hear what God is saying to his people according to the gospel of Matthew.

5¹³ “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

THE SERMON

By Revd Guy

THE ‘SEASON OF CREATION’

In case you haven't realised yet, this month here in the Benefice we have been celebrating the season of creation, a celebration of the world in which we live and of God, our creator. We have looked at the topics of the land and the water, seeing how they are a blessing to us but also examining our responsibility as Christians to be stewards of God's creation.

Why should we be good stewards, caring for the world around us? Because when we do, God is glorified. When we tend to creation people see God's power and creativity as they ponder how such something as beautiful and complex as a flower or tree could come into existence. When we help those who do not have access to clean drinking water or we seek to prevent our green spaces being abused, doing so in the name of Christ, then we reveal God's justice and love for the world. When we care for the world God is glorified.

CREATION AND MISSION

God's glorification through our stewardship of creation means

that there is a connection between creation and mission. In fact, the two are so closely connected that one of the Church of England's 5 marks of mission is "To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth." With such a link it should come as no surprise to hear that all of the gospels take time to mention the natural world either in their description of events, or in the words of the parables of Jesus, in fact, according to a recent study there are over 2300 references to the environment in Matthew's gospel alone. So it should come as no surprise that the Bible has something to say about one of the biggest environmental issues of our time - climate change.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE GOSPEL

With unseasonably warm weather and the increase in extreme weather events like flooding and droughts, the wildfires in Australia earlier this year and in the United States right now, the impact of climate change on this world is hard to ignore. God's creation is hurting after years of neglect and abuse at the hands of humanity. Christians have not been good stewards of creation.

But these events do not only affect the world in which we live but also the people who live within it. For example, droughts lead to food shortages which lead to the increase in the cost of living which has the greatest impact on the poorest among us; or take floods as another example, floods lead to the pollution of water supplies which lead to waterborne diseases which lead to illness and loss of income. A lack of care for creation means a lack of care for others.

The events that have been brought about because of climate change have had the effect of increasing the disparity between the worlds richest and poorest. Whereas droughts, floods, and fires, occur across the world and are devastating no matter your wealth or status the wealthy have the advantage of being able to rebuild homes more quickly and to buy in food from other places to replace a poor harvest, those without that wealth or who live in countries without the infrastructure to help those most affected,

will be feeling the damaging effects of climate change for a much longer time. As someone said recently, we are all in the same storm, but we are not all in the same boat, some are in a better position to deal with the effects of climate change than others.

That is why caring for the world and climate change is a gospel issue. If care for the environment reflects on how well we love the lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind (Mt 22:37) as a response to creation being a gift from God to us, then taking climate change seriously reflects on how well we love our neighbour as ourselves (Mt 22:39). These are described by Jesus the greatest commandments and so to follow them is to be a witness to Christ.

SALT, LIGHT, AND CREATION

This brings us nicely to our gospel reading this morning. It is a very familiar passage to us all I am sure, Jesus' declaration that we are 'the salt of the earth' and 'the light of the world.' It is a fairly straight forward passage to understand, calling on us to be noticeably different to the world in such a manner that the world can come to know who God is. But we often miss how wide-reaching this call to be salt and light is and the extent to which it affects every aspect of our lives. I wonder if you have ever made the connection between this passage and our care for the environment? Given that the words 'earth' and 'world' are used within the passage it is amazing how often we miss the connection between being salt and light and our stewardship of the environment.

Part of our being the salt of the earth and the light of the world is found in our care for creation. It makes sense really doesn't it? Being salt and light means witnessing to the love and grace of God through our words and deeds to others so that they can taste and see the goodness of God. As I mentioned earlier, caring for the world and addressing climate change is a working out of Jesus' summary of the greatest commandments, an act of witness to God's love for the world, and so our treatment of

creation is directly connected to how we are salt and light.

The sacrificial work of Jesus Christ and the teachings he left us show that part of the expectation of being his followers is to care more for others than for ourselves and that includes the environment. So when we do not care for rivers and oceans, we lose some of our saltiness; when we do not stand against the driving of animals towards extinction, our light dims; when we ignore the impact climate change and do not change our lifestyles accordingly, we hide our light under a basket.

I am not saying that caring for the environment is the only way for us to be the salt of the earth, but what I am saying is that all of our actions as Christians reflect on our saltiness. If we share God's love by caring for the homeless or the hungry in his name then we are being salt of the earth, but if we then pollute God's world through unnecessary driving, or littering, or leaving lights on all day then we damage all the work that we have done, we start to look like those who care for some of the things that God cares for but not others. That is not what Jesus has called us to and instead damages our ability to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We cannot ignore the warning of Jesus that salt which has lost its saltiness is 'no longer good for anything' (Mt. 5:13) and so in being salt and light we need to broaden our approach and this includes looking at the issue of creation care.

GOD IS ALREADY AT WORK

So what does being salt and light look like today when we think about creation? Regardless of our passion for the created world being salt and light has always been linked to the kingdom of God. The passage we heard today comes immediately after the beatitudes, which are in essence the manifesto of the kingdom of God. The role of Christians as salt and light cannot be detached from this. Jesus also declares that we should 'let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.' When we take these two items together then we cannot escape the fact that our actions

must overtly point people to the kingdom of God so that it brings him glory.

Our care for creation and our tackling of climate change needs to bring glory to God and so it needs to be distinct from the rest of the environmental movement that is sweeping the world right now for only then can we be salt and light. But although there is a need to be distinctive it does not mean we have to be doing something new. One way of looking at mission is to acknowledge that God is already at work in the world and that our mission is to go where he is already. This means that we can look at movements like Extinction Rebellion or people like Greta Thunberg and see God at work.

The non-violent protests and marches of Extinction Rebellion are somewhat reminiscent of Christ's work in exposing oppressive societal laws through assertive non-violence. For example later in Matthew's gospel we have the famous phrase 'if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.' At first reading this would seem to imply passivity, but it is actually an act of defiance. You see, at the time of Jesus the Jews would only strike with the right hand, (as the left hand was only to be used for unclean tasks), this would make striking the right cheek next to impossible except for a derogatory backhanded slap. This context reveals that those who were being struck in Jewish society were usually those who were oppressed and thought less of such as slaves or women or children. When Jesus says to "turn to him the other also" it forces the attacker to use their fist rather than the back of their hand. In doing this the attacker has no way of asserting their dominance any more, they cannot put the individual back in their place with a derogatory slap. The slave is standing against the master forcing himself to be treated as an equal in an act of assertive non-violence. If a whole crowd of people started doing this then there would have been a social revolution as the powerful could no longer belittle or dehumanise the other. Such behaviour brings those in power to a point of reflection as they are forced to think about their actions and once

they are thinking there is a chance for change.

This is what Extinction Rebellion and other peaceful environmental activists are doing, in protesting in a way that disrupts daily life, that forces those in power to listen and reflect, and hopefully make lasting change that saves our planet.

SHOW THEM GOD

But we can only see Christ in these actions and God working through them because we already know him and can see his power at work. We know that our creator cares for his world, that he cares for the rivers, the land, the animals, and those who are affected by climate change, but others do not. They see Extinction Rebellion as a secular movement and Greta Thunberg as a social and environmental activist. If we acknowledge that God is working through these people and movements then our role is to make sure people see that God is in them too! We need to shine a light on God's role in all of this.

So yes, go to an Extinction Rebellion march, (in fact research shows that acts of non-violent protest such as these marches are by far and a way the most effective way of making lasting change), but go with a group of Christians from your local church or meet up with those who are part of Christian Climate Action, a group of Christians who support Extinction Rebellion. Make banners that instead of saying "11 years to save the earth" say something like "God cares for this world, let's care for it too" or "God's creation is crying out". Be salt and light at these events and show the world God and his people care about his creation. Who knows, with the environment being such a high profile issue across the nation you may even be able to help bring others who do not know God along to such an event and share with them God's love for creation and God's love for them.

As those who love God and love our neighbour, let us take climate change seriously and act before it is too late. But in all the acts we do on behalf of God's creation, let us make sure that God is

glorified so we can be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Amen.

HYMN: O CHURCH ARISE

[Listen here](#)

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

INTERCESSIONS

Use the silence to bring before God your own concerns around that topic.

Jesus, our exalted Lord, has been given all authority.

Let us seek his intercession that our prayers may be perfected
by his prayer.

Jesus Christ, great high priest,
living for ever to intercede for us,
pray for the Church and its leaders, your broken body in the world...

Silence is kept.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus Christ, King of righteousness,
enthroned at the right hand of the majesty on high,
pray for the world and its leaders, and make it subject to your gentle rule...

Silence is kept.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus Christ, Son of Man,
drawing humanity into the life of God,
pray for your sisters and brothers in need, distress, or sorrow...

Silence is kept.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus, pioneer of our salvation,
bringing us to glory through your death and resurrection,
surround with your saints and angels
those who have died trusting your promises...

Silence is kept.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus Christ, Lord over all creation,
through whose blood all creation is redeemed,
pray for us to be good stewards of your creation...

Silence is kept.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus Christ,
keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit
and in the bond of peace,
and bring the whole created order to worship at your feet;
for you are alive and reign with the Father
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

HYMN: O FOR A THOUSAND TONGUES TO SING

[Listen here](#)

DISMISSAL

God the Father,
who first sowed in your hearts the seed of eternal life,
bless you.

God the Son,
who nurtures you with the rain and sunshine of love,
bless you.

God the Holy Spirit,
who brings us all to fullness of life,
bless you.

The blessing of the one true God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with you always
and that you might be a blessing to others.

Amen.