

Year C Proper 23, Creation 1, 7<sup>th</sup> September 2025  
Deuteronomy 30:15-20. Philemon 1-21. Luke 14: 25-33

### **Creationtide; awe leads to (hopeful) action**

I want to start with asking you to reflect on a time when you have felt a sense of awe at the wonders and miracles of God's creation. I have seen a young child find awe in a blade of grass, or the petals of a daisy's flower; seeing things for the 'first time' and in that moment, caught up in focussing on it, the rest of the world seems to come to a halt. There is fascination and awe at just one small aspect of nature's beauty and complexity. It is a significant spiritual moment, even if a child can't name it as that.

I, too can find myself caught up with wonder at small things, for instance resting against a stone wall early one morning on el camino Frances and listening to the dawn chorus interspersed with the calls of two cuckoos. But for me, sitting on a mountain top, on a clear day, with stunning views, is a place where I have most often been in awe of God's creation. It can be on top of a high Munro such as Beinn Eighe in Glen Torridon, or on top of the much more humble Dun I on the Isle of Iona.

Where have you experienced such a sense of awe of God's creation and thankfulness in this world. Please take a minute and let your mind take you there... feel the peace that may have washed over you, the sense of God's presence, too.

Hold on to that feeling, we shall come back to it.

With some relief when I read the readings for today, they do help lead into a sermon on creation.

We don't need to look further than the first line of our reading from Deuteronomy: 'See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. ' It goes on to say that if the people obey the Lord's commandments, by loving God and walking in his ways, then the people will live and become numerous. It goes on to warn that not following the commandments, but being led astray by other gods, will lead to the people to death.

Creationtide is a time to celebrate and acknowledge the wonder, the beauty, the complexity, the inter-connectedness of all of God's creation. As we profess

to love our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength each Sunday morning, I hope we can see that loving and caring for God's creation is just one part of meeting that profession of faith.

Our gospel reading continues on from last week's theme of disputations between family members based on those who accept Jesus and those who reject him. Jesus is very clear that there is a cost in following him – He said; "Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple". Jesus goes on to say that the most careful and logical people will do a competent calculation of the costs before embarking on a project – in this case building a tower.

The examples Jesus cite are to help people realise the true cost of discipleship, of loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. We are not asked to take the easy and cheap way out. It is never the best option and often proves to show how quickly we can ignore an inconvenient or costly aspect of our faith, and in so doing, move away from the narrow path of following the ways of Jesus. The cheap and easy way becomes performative Christianity; we have not been transformed by following Christ.

Also, in following the ways of Jesus we can come into conflict with others. In terms of our actions to reduce our harm to the planet we may encounter people who may argue that:

- ✝ There is no such thing as human-made climate change
- ✝ There is no point taking any action to reduce their personal CO<sup>2</sup> or equivalent emissions because others aren't doing anything or are emitting more CO<sup>2</sup> or equivalent than ever before.
- ✝ There is a personal inconvenience, that is, some sort of cost of time or money, in reducing their personal carbon footprint, and for that person, they decide it is not worth it. A total focus on self, not all of God's creation and fellow humans.

In situations, if you do care about God's beautiful creation, how do you respond? Do you get into conflict with the other person, or let it go? Do you have an internal conflict, debating in your own mind about the merits of taking personal responsibility for your own carbon footprint? And outside of the family, maybe in a community setting, maybe even in a church family, do we find a range of opinions that reflect our society that we find hard to reconcile with our faith?

The other day, a friend mentioned to me that they overheard someone saying Creationtide no longer focussed on God's creation, but it had been taken over by a focus on the climate crisis. I have thought about it since, and having reflected, I think that person may not have good grounds for complaining. Surely, as Christians, we know we are accountable for our actions, and despoiling God's creation is one way of showing that we are not following God's laws, and shows we are in love with our ways of life, our comforts, our money, rather than a deep care and concern for all of God's created order, the flora and fauna, let alone our fellow humans already greatly suffering due to man-made climate change.

This year we have seen the detrimental effects of global warming in the UK. Yes, we have enjoyed more hot and dry, sunny weather, but many of the crops grown by farmers have not done so well, and we don't yet know the cost to wildlife.

In the gospel reading Jesus has no quibble with the person who calculated the full costs of doing something and weighing it up against the likely outcome. So, shouldn't we be doing that with our lives in terms of the climate crisis?

We tend to look at the immediate costs to us of something, but ignore the costs to the environment. We tend not to consider the whole-life costs of something, but often just the immediate up-front costs.

When I was deciding to move to a fully electric car, I did do some whole-life costs calculations. Yes, the one-off capital cost of an electric car was higher than for a diesel or petrol engine car, but the running costs and services costs were much lower. I had to make some assumptions about future fuel prices petrol, diesel and electricity, but it became clear fairly quickly that the investment in an electric car would repay me in about three years, as running costs are so much lower. If I then also added in a notional cost to the planet of my annual CO<sup>2</sup> equivalent emissions from driving, the planet was also far better off. I know there are arguments about the detrimental impact of mining for minerals to make the batteries, and it is hard for a lay person to account for all of those, but in listening to well-informed academics on the subject, the 'cost' to the planet per car of mining is actually well outweighed by using green electricity to charge the car.

At today's diesel and petrol prices<sup>1</sup>, the cost per mile is slightly over 12p. That is not including the cost to the environment in CO<sup>2</sup> equivalent emissions. At today's electricity prices for charging a car<sup>2</sup> the cost per mile is 1.6p. Driving a petrol or diesel car costs seven and a half times more per mile than an electric car! You can see why, even if you don't drive many miles, it doesn't take long to recover the costs of a more expensive electric car. Now, I know that not everyone can afford to purchase an electric car, but many who think they cannot, do not do the whole life calculations, to see that in fact the cost is far less after not many years. And that is a cost saved for the individual and also even more importantly, for God's creation.

Part of the cost of us not drastically cutting our carbon equivalent emissions is the prospect of the warm sea currents diverting away from our west coast, resulting in winters with minus 30° C. What will be the cost to us of that, I wonder, let alone to the flora and fauna of Scotland?

So, the good news is that Jesus sounds like my Procurement Officer colleague when I worked at the University – don't solely look at purchase price, look at whole life costs. For Christians, those whole life costs are not just the tangible costs to us as individuals, but the costs and damage that will occur to God's wonderful creation and cause untold suffering to our neighbours elsewhere in the world.

Our children's children will wonder why we didn't take decisive action when we knew the facts. If we were like other animals without our intelligence, I could understand why we would only change our behaviour once the change happened. But, we have that knowledge now. We need to change now, knowing it may 'cost us' personally in some respects, but we will be saving the planet.

We can definitely change the things we have control of, so I invite you to follow what Jesus taught in his parable, and consider the whole life costs of things, and include the costs to the planet.

I believe I can only challenge others and ask our government to do so much more than it currently does, when I have taken action myself. Action taken prayerfully, with hope for God's creation surviving humankind's selfish actions, that we may change in time.

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<sup>1</sup> equivalent to about £6.11 per gallon (£1.33 per litre), with a car capable of 50 miles per gallon

<sup>2</sup> Charging overnight of 8p/kWh, and driving a car to achieve 5 miles per kW,

I also recognise that preaching, or maybe some would see it as pontificating, about climate change and environmental issues isn't going to change some peoples' minds. But doing a small practical step may be the starting point. With that in mind, today we are starting a congregational consumer exercise. I have four volunteers willing to consumer test six different laundry detergent sheets. There are two environmental issues here: i) liquid detergent has a high carbon footprint because it is heavy and uses a lot of energy to transport it, and ii) it comes in a plastic container, and despite our desire to recycle plastics, the reality is that much of it gets exported to poor countries and pollutes their rivers and countryside and much of it ends up in the sea. There the packaging kills animals that mistake it for food, or just cover the sea surface in massive areas. I have one additional package of detergent sheets for anyone else willing to do the consumer tests and report back.

I wonder what one action can you take this creationtide, that shows a love of God's creation?

PS: Email me with examples of the small things that can make a difference, as well as the big things you may have done. We shall put together a presentation of them for later in October, to help others decide to take an action themselves. Also, remember that reducing use of plastics is important, because it derives from oil and plastic pollution is a major environmental maritime issue.