



Climate Change and the Purposes of God

Session five: What can I do now to cherish God's earth?

The life and ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus catches us up into a story of self-giving, betrayal, suffering, new life and new hope. It is a story about God's engagement with the world – a story in which our own personal stories have their place and in which they find their meaning.

1. The meaning of climate change

Various stories are being told to try to give meaning to the facts about climate change. The science is increasingly clear: what are the implications? Are either of the following your story?

A story about management and greed? For some people, the earth is a resilient place. Whatever we do to it, it will grow back. All that is needed to combat the damaging results of climate change is better technology. We should use the earth as we want for our benefit.

A story about fear? For some people, the earth is a very fragile place. We have already damaged its precarious systems beyond repair, and are making things worse by the day. Rising temperatures around the earth will lead to devastating consequences, and we can do virtually nothing to prevent catastrophe. Be afraid - be very afraid.

In contrast to both these, Climate Change and the Purposes of God invites us into a story that is not blind optimism, nor dark despair. It is rooted in a realistic hope in God:

ACT WITH HOPE!

'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.' (Romans 15:13)

Hope in God motivates us to take action that can lead to transformation, for by God's power at work within us, God is able to accomplish more than we can ask or imagine. Despite the strong probability of very serious effects from global warming, for Christians despair is not an option. It is when we follow Christ and the way of the Cross, in response to his grace, that we experience the God of hope who gives us joy and peace. We are called to faith and action in trusting response to the God made known by the Holy Spirit in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Lord of all life. As Christians we can live in hope, despite the dangers that threaten us.

Through God we hope for new life for all creation (Romans 8:19-25). Our planet, made new by the meeting of heaven and earth, will have an abiding value in the purpose of God (Revelation 21:1-5). We are called to live and work with hope in response to God's gift, and in the light of God's future: the promised coming of Christ's reign over all.

2. What are your concerns about the future?

? After reading the above extract, which of the following seems to address your concerns about the future most closely?

- God motivates us to act
- God's power at work in us
- Despair is not an option
- Follow the way of the Cross
- Trust in the God of resurrection
- Live in hope despite danger
- Live in the light of God's future.

3. Who are today's prophets?

At different times in the history of God's people, different prophets have had different messages.

In the 8th century BC, Isaiah interpreted the abandonment of God's will and God's ways in terms of the earth withering and lying polluted (*Read Isaiah 24:4-5*). Two hundred years later when God's people were in exile another prophet wrote a vision of a new future, a new heavens and a new earth. (*Read Isaiah 65:17f.*)

? Who are the prophets about creation-care for today? What do you think God's message is for us today?

4. Read Romans 8:18-25 (*The leader has a copy of Tom Wright's translation*).

? What is St Paul saying about God's world now? What about God's purpose for creation's future? How does he understand 'hope'?

5. What can I be doing now to cherish God's 'groaning' creation?

? Are you in the same place on the spectrum that we looked at in the first week, or have you moved? Can you say why?

? What decisions for practical action have you reached throughout this course?

You could end again with Percy Dearmer's Prayer.