

TALK BY RUTH JARMAN FROM THE GREEN CHRISTIAN GROUP



Shall we pray.

'Lord, it can be difficult to listen to the cry of the earth and its people without turning away. Give us the courage to face what is happening to your beautiful world, and guide us to respond with faith, hope and love.'

So, look at this weather. Lovely, but we know it's not right, don't we? The critically endangered species, the climate denier, has cleverly evolved into the climate delayer. They have the same stripes and are perhaps more dangerous.

But let's think about what it has to do with us as Christians and how we might want to respond.



Why us? Why should Christians nurture and protect the natural world?

Our scriptures have a lot to say about this. I'm here now because one verse hit me one day when I was in my 30s walking down the street. 'In the beginning ...' It was a complete revelation to me, a Christian all my life, someone who gave money to environmental charities – I had never until that moment made this connection between the two. And I was struck with this awesome question: how does God feel to see what we are doing to what he has made? From that moment, it became my life's work to help other people of faith see this connection, to understand how we are failing God and how we might respond.

And there are plenty more calls from our scriptures that speak to us on this.

But I think the best reason is love. 'For God so loved the cosmos,' 'Love each other as I have loved you': Jesus' commandment isn't to be nice to people – this is sacrificial love he is asking of us. It's the way to know God. What better motivation?

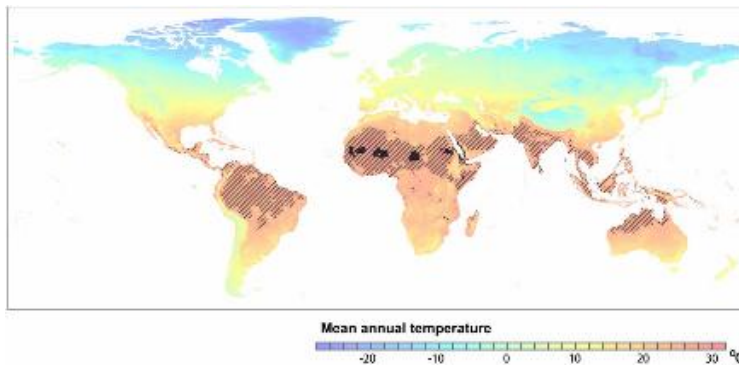


And then there's our gospel reading today: Jesus' practical example of what it means to love. As well as being involved with Green Christian and Operation Noah, I also co-founded Christian Climate Action, a group that takes nonviolent direct action on the climate. I have often been given the privilege of explaining to judges and juries why I have taken action that appears to be against the law of the land and I refer to this parable. I explain that, for me, not taking peaceful, direct action on the climate is tantamount to walking by on the other side of the road.



Because when we passively allow the climate to be messed up, we disturb the viability of God's beautiful earth to sustain abundant life.

Floods are rising, fires are raging, crops are failing and these are not natural disasters. We know that they are caused by climate change. And we know that climate change is caused by the burning of fossil fuels. And we know that, going about our ordinary lives, we are burning those fossil fuels. How can we carry on our lives embedded as we are in a fossil-fuelled economy and, at the same time, live with love?



Just one more slide before I try to answer that question. So, any ideas what the black areas are? Yes, that's where it is too hot for people to live. And the next darkest area? Yes, that's where it will be too hot for people to live at just 3° global warming – which is where we're heading if we don't

get our act together.

Look at West Africa. Think about where the Amazon rainforest is. The Amazon should be the lungs of the earth, absorbing carbon dioxide for us. Beyond a certain temperature, it will burn up and become a source of carbon dioxide, raising temperatures still further. This is just one of the many temperature-escalating feedbacks/tipping points that we must not cross.

This is why we must act out of love, because it's not about stopping dangerous climate change any more. It's simply about loving our neighbour – whether that's a child in the tropics now, or someone in the future in this country – and responding to their suffering with solidarity.

And next time someone tells you, 'It's too late, there's nothing we can do,' think about that Good Samaritan – did he know the man he rescued would survive? If he thought he might not, would he have left him by the side of the road? I don't think so. Whatever happens, it will never be too late to love. And who knows what God can do with that love?

How do we live with love at this time? I would suggest we pray, we look at our personal lives and we take on a prophetic role.

And under prayer, I want to include repentance. My generation, through our 'walking by on the other side of the road' is responsible.

So, let's thank God for God's forgiveness expressed so beautifully in our Psalm today:



'It is God who forgives all your guilt ... As a father has compassion on his children, the Lord has mercy on those who revere him. For God knows of what we are made, and remembers that we are dust.'

And then we must pray. We must pray as Jesus taught us: 'Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' Not just for God to do stuff, but for hearts to be changed: the hearts of oil company CEOs, yes, but even more for our hearts to be open to who God is calling us to be at this time. What is God calling us to do – as Jesus' body on earth?



We may find this brings us to look at our personal lives. The priest and the Levite delegated love to the Good Samaritan. Living lovingly on earth is not something we can delegate to the Green Team in our churches.

We all make choices every moment of the day that will either nurture creation or aid its destruction. If we make these choices out of love, we add so much joy to our lives.

So, resist the adverts telling us to fly off to far-flung places, to buy the next bigger house or car. Resist the crazy idea that we shouldn't make sacrifices of money or comfort for the sake of God's creation and future generations. If it costs more to take the train than fly, either take the train anyway or holiday somewhere closer. Or take the coach: I'm going to Paris in August for £19. Risk upsetting people – make veggie burgers the default at your next BBQ. Live with love for the children and their future. Find joy in enough and live gently on God's beautiful earth.

There's one more thing you can do that could have a huge impact. The Big Bank Switch is mobilising Christians all over the country to switch their bank account to one that does not fund fossil fuels. Climate change isn't just happening, it's being funded: let's make sure it's not being funded by us Christians! Please join this – there are flyers at the back.



But you know, the most impactful thing, so perhaps the most loving thing, we can do is nothing to do with our own lifestyles. We live in a democracy – we have an unshirkable duty to fill this democratic space with Christian values. This is something else we cannot walk on by and delegate to 'people who do this sort of thing'.



The Old Testament is full of prophets speaking uncomfortable truths to their generation. I believe God is calling the Church to be a prophetic community at this time and do the same.



One way of being prophetic is to participate in disruptive nonviolence. Green Christian does not do this, but Christian Climate Action does, although often, this simply involves praying in unusual places: on the street, in lobbies of oil companies, singing or simply holding a banner in AGMs.



This was the CC AGM last Thursday.



Even if this is not for you, please speak up in support of us against the sometimes toxic media.

After all, we do follow someone who didn't always make his point through legitimate and popular avenues. But we can speak truth to power through traditional campaigns.



There are so many different and laudable campaigns out there, but this one – Zero Hour's campaign for the Climate and Nature Bill – encompasses everything. It's really simple to support: go to their [website](#) and stick in your postcode, where you can sign the open letter as individuals and also as a Faith Leader and as a church. My dream is for church logos to fill the pages of all constituencies up and down the country, witnessing to the Church's desire to see the UK protect God's creation.

89% of people worldwide think governments should be doing more on climate. But governments consistently under-estimate support for climate action. So, of course, they are not doing what they must know they should be doing.



We can and must change this. There's a mass lobby of Parliament on Wednesday 9th July: please come – all the info is on our [website](#).



And do you know, if you're thinking you're not the sort of person who does this sort of thing, then you are exactly the sort of person we need here. We need people who do not see themselves as environmental activists standing up for God's creation – that is when change will come.

Sign up for our newsletters at the back of church and I will personally let you know how you can do that every two or three weeks.

"Go and do likewise"

- **Pray.** So how do we love? Let us commit to pray.
- **Personal lives alignment.** Let us live gently – take this leaflet and this flyer.
- **Be prophetic.** Let us be bold: let's spread godly values into the political space and call for the protection of God's creation.

Let us pray.

'Lord, thank you for the multitude of opportunities we have to show love to one another. Give us the courage, the time and the wisdom to throw ourselves into loving you, your world and your people. Amen.'