



Welcome to the written worship for the week of the 5th of September.

Before we start let us spend a short time in quiet reflection

Hymn STF 102: For the Beauty of the Earth

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Before time began you were God, when you spoke light and life burst forth,
 You brought all creation into being, you placed us in your garden,
 Giving us a special place of honour being made in your image,
 With this place of honour came a special responsibility,
 Responsibility as stewards to watch over and care for the rest of your creation,
 But we have failed in that responsibility.

We love things more than you or each other. In our greed and consumerism, we have sought to devour your creation forsaking our duty as stewards.

As you did in the beginning shine your light,
 Open our eyes to see the damage we have done to your creation, open our hearts to turn from selfish desires that consume and destroy so that we can live harmoniously in the light of your creation.

You have invited us to partake in your mission to restore all of creation to yourself,
 Give us wisdom to seek to clean up the oceans of all pollution and put out the fires that destroy the land and poison the air.

As we are transformed by the love and grace we find in relationship with you, may we transform and restore the world around us to reflect the light of your glory in all creation.

We share now in the Lord's Prayer, common words said in many ways and in many languages.

Reading Proverbs 22:1-2, 9-9, 22-23

Reading James 2:1-10,14-17

Hymn STF 693: Beauty for Brokenness

Reflection

The sad truth is the poor are often victims of injustice perpetrated by those with wealth and power. This is a dynamic we can actually see with climate change, the pollution caused by larger counties and business is directly impacting poorer

Reflection by Chris Coleman prayers by Chris Coleman and Rev Jon Swales

communities particularly indigenous populations. In Kenya the Maasai and Oromo tribes are being forced out of their nomadic routes and into cities because climate change means that their grazing grounds are being overtaken by desert. While rising sea levels are causing areas in the arctic circle and the pacific islands inhabited by indigenous peoples to be flooded making their land uninhabitable as a lot of the wildlife and food sources they rely on are depleting. In Brazil deforestation by companies wanting to exploit the land for things like oil or building sugar cane plantations are driving indigenous tribes from their homes. Not only that but the deforestation is having a direct impact on climate change as around 20% of the Earth's oxygen is produced by the Amazon Rainforest. The plantations are also polluting the rivers in the rainforest and destroying wildlife. Pedro Casaldaliga who was a bishop in Brazil and an advocate for poorer communities and indigenous people in the Amazon Rain Forest said, 'without – apart from – the poor there is no salvation, without – apart from – the poor, there is no Church, without – apart from – the poor, there is no Gospel'.

While I may find this theological outlook difficult, indeed uncomfortable especially as I am not particularly poor myself. However, I also find it very difficult to disagree with. To understand this, we simply need to look at the life and teaching of Jesus. He was born into an area that while it wasn't particularly impoverished it also wasn't affluent either. The first year or so of his life was spent as a refugee. As an adult he was essentially homeless, and he was falsely accused and put to death for a crime he did not commit. In his teaching Jesus admonished people with wealth power and status for their treatment of the poor and the marginalised and then he would speak up for the poor and support and encourage them. When you look at his miracles, they are more than just a demonstration of the presence and power of God, in healing the lame, the leprosy, or those with any other ailment he was often bringing people whose deformities meant they had been marginalised but could now be brought back into their communities. Jesus stands with the oppressed and marginalised, and as a victim of injustice himself he stands with all victims of injustice.

In this passage in James, I wonder if James was trying to remind the readers of this as it seems that within their churches more preferential treatment was being shown to people of wealth and standing at the expense of the impoverished. By doing this James writes that they have dishonoured the poor as their neglect is a form of injustice, he also points out that the same people that they are giving the preferential treatment to are also the people who because of their power and influence are oppressing the church. In verse 5 James also seeks to remind them of Jesus teaching particularly the beatitudes in Matthew 5:3. It is interesting that given his criticism of the treatment given to the wealthy and influential that James actually

stresses partiality rather than saying the poor should receive the preferential treatment. Then again, he reminds them of Jesus teaching referring to the command to love your neighbour as yourself as the royal law. In the gospel of Luke this is followed by the parable of the Good Samaritan, and I would suggest that depending on the view you take your neighbour could either be the traveller who is beaten, broken down and left for dead, or the Samaritan who cares for him using his wealth to make sure he has a place to stay to recover and access to treatment. The neighbour is also the two religious leaders who refused to stop. Salvation is for all. We are called to reach the rich and the poor with the truth of the Gospel. The Gospel is that Jesus who is the Son of God died a victim of injustice and through his death brought us salvation. The call to love our neighbour is a call to share the love of God with the powerful and the weak. We share the love of God with the poor by lending them our voice and standing with them against injustice. We share the love of God with the powerful by showing them their need for love and mercy that is shown through Jesus. Then maybe they will show mercy in response by using their voice of influence to stand up for victims of injustice and create the change we need to see to combat issues like climate change.

Prayers of Intercession: Trinity of Love:

Father of Creation,
 God of Compassion,
 We thank you that you are a holy Trinity of Love
 Who rules and reigns with self-giving sacrificial love.
 To you, we give all praise, honour and glory.
 In this time of climate breakdown,
 we ask that we would be filled with your love.

For a love, which in a wounded world, makes a difference.

Trinity of Love, Fill our hearts.

For a love, which in a warming world, looks like something.

Trinity of Love, Fill our hearts.

For a love, which in a culture of denial, speaks truth.

Trinity of Love, Fill our hearts.

For a love, which in a world of oppression and indifference, challenges injustice.

Trinity of Love, Fill Our hearts.

Fill our hearts, O Lord, with love for
 Climate refugees
 Those caught up in climate-related conflicts
 Those suffering from extreme weather events
 Those who face drought and food shortages

Father of Creation,
 God of justice,
 We thank you that you are not indifferent to those who suffer injustice and oppression.
 In this time of climate breakdown, we ask that
 You would give us a holy rage,
 A righteous anger,
 Which seeks to stand up,
 Speak out and
 Oppose the machine of unrestrained capitalism.

Father, in the name of your son,
 Let us be those who rebel against Evil which tramples on the vulnerable.
 Father, in the name of your son,
 Let us be those who rebel against systems that put profit before people.
 Father, in the name of your son,
 Let us be those who rebel against economic forces that put pleasure before ethics.
 Father, Give us courage.
 Father, we ask that, like Jesus, our anger would come from a wellspring of Holy love.
 We ask that our righteous love and holy anger
 Will always be good and never turn itself into violence.
 We pray for an increase in peaceful truth-speaking, campaigning and protest.
 We pray that it would be made clear to our governments that we will not be silent
 until we have plans put in place that do not jeopardise our futures and the wellbeing
 of the world's most vulnerable.

Blessed are the peacemakers.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice.

Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy. Amen

(Prayers by Rev'd Jon Swales St George's, Leeds)

Hymn STF 704: In Labour All Creation Groans

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 the love of God
 and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
 be with us all, evermore, amen.**