

Session Five Church of the Holy Name 13th March 2024

Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth Matthew 5:5

Aim : to explore what attitudes might characterize a Christian approach to the environment

Gather

We meet in the name of God the Father

All: who made Heaven and earth

We meet in the name of God the Son

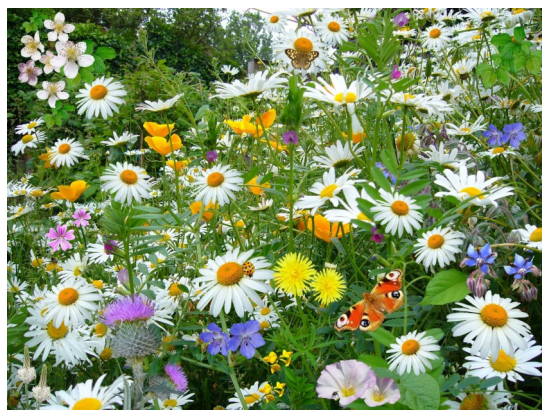
All: Who became a creature like us

We meet in the name of God the Holy Spirit

All: Who sustains all life on earth

We meet in the name of God

All: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen



Bible reading—Matthew 5:1-10

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him and he began to teach them. He said:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

You may like to read through this a couple of times with different voices, pausing between each reading. As you listen pay attention to any words or phrases which surprise you or anything which you hadn't noticed before.

Questions for discussion :

What do these familiar verses have to say about the attitudes that characterise Christian life? How might this relate to our relationship with creation?

The 'meek' who Jesus says will inherit the earth in verse 5 are those who do not live in an arrogant or oppressive way. How might we cultivate that attitude in our lives and our society?

Sir John Houghton writes that we need to 'repent for our abject failure as stewards in not caring for the earth...this is disobedience to God', concluding that 'our overall attitude as we address such complex issues must be one of humility' Do you agree?

What is the relationship between repentance and humility? What wisdom might Christianity have to offer on these attitudes that could benefit the wider environmental conversation?

Read out the following reflection

In her book 'Saving Us', climate scientist Katherine Hayhoe writes that *'increasingly, climate guilt is being exploited today less to promote societal good behaviour than as a way to shame people, to make ourselves feel better by pointing a judgemental finger at someone else'*.

She goes on to discuss the challenges for individuals of making environmental choices when the whole system in which we live is founded on the burning of fossil fuels, and the feelings of helplessness and guilt which come with that. This, she suggests, is one of the big reasons why people struggle to make changes, and why humanity as a whole is not addressing the problem of climate change fast enough.

For so long we have been told that it is our individual responsibility to be more eco-friendly, to recycle more, fly less, eat differently. These things are good and important but individual changes alone will not solve the bigger problems that we are facing. Those can only be solved if we work and think collectively rather than individually, humbly rather than judgementally.

Hayhoe concludes by saying *'God has given us a spirit of power, which enables us to act instead of being frozen or paralysed. We have been given a spirit of love, to have compassion for others, which means caring for others, putting their needs first as we act. And finally we have been gifted with a sound mind that we can use to make good decisions based on facts and data that God has given us and made evident to His creation'*.

Questions for discussion

- Do you recognise the temptation to point the judgemental finger at others in order to make yourself feel better? How can we resist that temptation?
- How might we make the shift to thinking and working collectively rather than individually, humbly rather than judgementally? Can you think of examples where you have seen that in practice?
- The final paragraph is a challenge for the Church to take action together in a spirit of power, compassion and knowledge. Who can you continue to work with, or learn from, to help you with this as this course draws to a close?
- Prayer
- Spend some time in prayer as you finish, praying for each other that you might be able to have the meekness and humility needed to make a difference in the world.

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer as you finish, praying for churches in your community and around the world in the work of caring for creation.