The Season of Creation 1: Climate Injustice

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Season of Creation 1 – Prov 22, Ps 125, Jas 2, Mark 7

Today we begin our Season of Creation. Creation astonishes me with its beauty, its incomprehensible vastness and its microscopic intricacy; with its tremendous age and inexhaustible energy. We experience Creation directly in Earth’s disinterested generosity; in the way Earth engenders and sustains a staggeringly diverse and balanced web of life in perfect balance, and yet in terrifying vulnerability– there’s a home for every creature under the sun. And when any creature confronts a barrier to its thriving, creation has endowed life with the gift of adaptation, evolution.

The more I learn of all this the more astounding it is. Creation teaches me about the divine Spirit who infuses, embodies and bathes all this; love and delight, weaving an ever more diverse web of interconnected mutual being, balance and life. This is reflected in the life of Jesus; in his way of building beautiful, healing, life-giving community. This isn’t to ignore the traumas and tragedies that are a part of life – and the witness of Jesus shows that God is no stranger to them. Death and suffering are part of life. God has entered all of this with us in Christ; that’s compassion.

For me, all this is what reveals our God whom we worship as Trinity. And yet, on this first Sunday in the Season of Creation, in the face of Creation’s generous provision for all, we are confronted by scriptures which speak to us about the breakdown in justice between people and peoples which produces obscene discrepancies of wealth and poverty; scriptures which speak to us about the greedy and the

dispossessed, scriptures which challenge those with the means to clothe and feed the poor or heal the sick – that we should get on and do so.

In world terms, I am being addressed here personally as one who has those means, and so what I might say about these things can hardly have a ring of authenticity about it. So I'm going to share part of a sermon on today's scriptures from someone who speaks to us from the place of the dispossessed and the poor; Rev Sabelo Mthimkhulu, of the Diocese of Natal. Let's hear what he has to say.

Rev Sabelo says, "Jas 2.15-17 is a direct challenge to us in a world of climate injustice. It is not enough to send 'thoughts and prayers' to those impacted by drought or extreme weather events.

Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. James 2:15-17

In a world of climate injustice, where careless use of fossil fuels leads to insecurity, disaster, and suffering for the world's poor and marginalised, we can no longer send 'thoughts and prayers' to those who are victims of drought and extreme weather events. We must do something, take action, both in terms of our carbon footprint, but also to pressurize our church institutions, our politicians and our businesses to hear the cry of the poor and hungry.

1. 6 *Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court?*

For those of us who live comfortable lives, we can no longer live as if we are ignorant of the links between our comforts – built on exploitative and unsustainable economic practices –

and the suffering of the poor. … Many churches are involved in relief efforts, when we hear of a hurricane or drought made worse by climate change, in the face of media photos we give, we donate, and we pray. We must also support developmental projects assisting people to adapt to climate change (for instance water tanks in drought areas, agro-forestry efforts.) But we also need to challenge the structural injustices and root causes of climate change and environmental degradation. We need to re-activate the prophetic voice of the church, particularly by amplifying the voices of women and youth. And we must be willing to be converted ourselves, by the voices of the marginalised. Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, 'If you are being neutral in the situation of injustice, you have already chosen the side of the oppressor.'" (I'll include Rev Sabelo's full text on our website)

Back to me. Today's readings speak about injustice; about shamefully unequal sharing in the good gifts of Earth which God has provided. They expose the way the celebration and joy and thanks we want to offer to God in this Season for Creation's wonder, intricacy, beauty and bounty are mocked and thwarted by the injustices they name and denounce. These are injustices which are instrumental in sustaining *our* lifestyle. The readings remind us that injustice is the product of greed, which is self-worship. And in the Season of Creation, we become especially mindful of this greed being so out of control now that it threatens the existence of life on Earth within the lifetimes of our own children, if not our own lives.

The materials I attached to my weekly newsletter offer suggestions for strong action that we can take to make a difference. Over the coming weeks of this Season, let's think about how we as individuals and as a community can make changes to the way we live, and how, together, we can amplify the call for justice. Amen