

The Climate Crisis and a 'Whole-life' Response to poverty - Ruth Valerio

The climate crisis is potentially the most urgent topic that we're facing and one that the church should be leading on. This Sunday Ruth Valerio (Global Advocacy and Influencing Director at Tearfund) spoke to us on this important topic, on how we can respond as Christians and why.

What is your initial reaction when discussing 'The Climate Crisis'? Why?

Read Psalm 146

This Psalm starts with God, and that's what we need to do when thinking about Climate change. It can be easy to start with the problems, with what's going wrong, but let's start and finish in God instead. This is not a secular topic or agenda; it's a God agenda.

What does this Psalm tell us about God?

God is the maker of heaven and earth and all things in them. We sometimes act as if our purpose is to live on this earth as short a time as possible before we're whisked off to heaven. We can inherit theology that leads us to separate out the physical world from the spiritual, and think that one is superior to the other. This is not the case!

What do you think this means? How would believing these things affect the way we respond as Christians to the climate crisis?

Why We Care

When God made the world he looked at what he had made and said it was very good. He takes delight in creation, and made it with his own breath, an act of intimacy. Sometimes we talk about God as if the world is over here and He's over there, but in reality He is intimately involved in His creation. God is so close to the natural world, he cares deeply for it, and the natural world is being decimated by the climate crisis. Ruth used the example of a young mum building a lego house with her son. She finished building hers and stepped back in appreciation. At that moment, her son came along and trampled and tore apart the house she was proud of, and she felt surprisingly upset at the action. She felt God saying to her "how upset do you think I am at how you're treating my house?"

When we treat the planet badly we are mistreating something that God loves so deeply, and disrespecting something that comes from the very breath of God.

Sometimes it can be easy to act as if the world is our house instead of God's. What difference does it make if the world is God's house instead of ours?

Psalm 146 goes on to say our God is the one who upholds the oppressed and feeds the hungry. He's a God of justice. If you were to rip out the pages in your Bible that talk about caring for the poor or needy or practising justice you would be left with something threadbare and full of holes. We cannot ignore those passages.

The Climate Crisis is also having a terrible effect on those living in poverty. We're seeing increased poverty due to rising food costs, and children are being sold into marriages at increasingly young ages because the parents can't afford to feed them. Frustrated partners result in higher domestic violence stats. Poverty is worsened by pollution and decreasing access to food. The climate crisis is not just one issue, but has devastating consequences for humanity. We cannot care for people in poverty without caring about the environmental crisis.

What does this mean for us as Christians? Does it change the way you view the climate crisis?

What can we do?

We can stand in the gap between the reality we see now and the hope we have for the future. We do this by giving, acting and praying.

Giving - a fundamental part of living our Christian faith. Jesus talked about money more than anything else other than the kingdom of God. Put your money where your mouth is on this issue.

26th November 2023. Emmaus Rd., Yvonne Arnaud, Guildford

Acting - take action today by contacting your local MP and ask them to push the government over this next fortnight to take steps to fulfil the promises they made at the Paris agreement. These promises included moving away from fossil fuels and investing in renewable energy, and these discussions are key with COP28 coming up.

We can also take action in our own lives, for our own carbon footprint and how we use the Earth's resources.

Praying - sometimes when faced with problems that seem this huge we just have to pray.

Where can I find out more?

For more information about Ruth Valerio and details of her books: <https://ruthvalerio.net/>

The link for getting involved with Tearfun plus email updates: <https://www.tearfund.org/get-involved>

The link to A Rocha UK, a Christian charity working for the protection and restoration of the natural world and committed to equipping Christians and churches in the UK to care for the environment. For more information and to sign up to emails visit: <https://arocha.org.uk/>

Would you like to join a special interest group to talk more about environmental topics? We are considering starting one, please email Sue Williams (sue.williams@emmausrd.com) to express your interest.

What do you think you can do off the back of this message?