**Resilience to Climate Change Service 12 Sep 21 Revd Graham Phillips**

(Most of the following has been taken from the Tear Fund and Christian Aid Resources for Harvest 2021)

Ecclesiastes 4.9-10

Psalm 104.1-4,10-19,24

Matthew 22.34-40

Hanwood Tear Fund video introduces Loyara

<https://vimeo.com/589750106>

Christian Aid video on baobab tree cooperative

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zgqwEbAtZD0

[Reboot – take action on the climate crisis - Tearfund](https://www.tearfund.org/campaigns/reboot-campaign)

Ecclesiastes reading

First talk

I want to tell you about Loyara

Loyara is a farmer in Burkina Faso, West Africa.

To farm, Loyara needs seeds, she needs tools such as a trowel and a rake, she needs soil – and she needs sun and rain. But over the past few years, the land in Burkina Faso has become drier and drier as the rain has failed to come. Loyara’s crops haven’t grown, and her family is hungry.

The climate in Burkina Faso, and around the world, is changing. Droughts are becoming more common. And it’s the people who have done the least to cause the changes in our climate, like Loyara and her family, who are being the worst affected by it.

Tearfund has worked with local church partners in Burkina Faso to support Loyara and other families to farm more efficiently while caring for the environment. They have taught them farming techniques to take better care of the land, like using natural fertiliser from chickens and covering the soil with mulch which helps retain the moisture - so necessary in times of drought. Simple changes that mean they have food on the table.

There has also been another change in Burkino Faso. Many years ago farmers did not respect trees or see their value. In the 1980s an Australian, called Tony Rinaudo, worked with local farmers, and helped them identify useful species of trees in the stumps in their fields, protect them, and then prune them to promote growth. Farmers grew other crops around the trees. They also built *zai*, a grid of deep planting pits across rock-hard plots of land that enhanced water infiltration and retention during dry periods. They built stone barriers around fields to contain runoff and increase infiltration from rain.

They passed this knowledge on to others and 30 years later there are swathes of trees where previously there was desert. The trees provide fuel for cooking, fodder for livestock, food, and soil improvement as well as jobs for people. A simple respect for trees has greened the land.

There is a similar project of planting trees across the Sahel called The Great Green Wall Project which aims to replicate this and stop the Sahara desert spreading south. To date they have planted over 24 million trees, restored and protected an area the size of 265,000 football pitches of what was degraded and infertile land. Similarly there are indigenous people collecting seeds and planting them in the Amazon to reverse the devastating deforestation that has taken place there. As the trees grow, the diverse animal, bird and insect life is returning.

Christian Aid are also at work initiating and supporting projects to help those most affected by climate change. In Malawi, the combination of gender inequality, energy poverty, financial exclusion and the impacts of climate change - cyclone Idai in March 2019, one of the worst tropical cyclones to affect Africa, caused floods that destroyed homes - makes life especially challenging for rural women. Women face constraints including lack of assets, limited income and restricted access to finance and credit.

The Christian Aid ‘Breaking the Barriers’ programme running from Feb 2018 - March 2022, is supporting women to establish their own sustainable energy businesses and promote gender equality. In Makande in Malawi, they have helped women form a baobab juice cooperative. The Baobab tree is common and has a fuzzy green rugby ball fruit. It is truly a tree of life, being a source of water, food, vitamins, medicine, fibre, shelter, and more. Individual trees can live over a thousand years. This gives them a special place at the heart of African mythology and culture. The fruit has a light, citrusy taste which makes an excellent juice. The Makande women’s cooperative produces 6000 bottles of baobab juice a month, providing jobs for 188 people. The whole project hopes to reach 1,189,113 people in the three districts with access to jobs and markets where they can sell their products and increase their income. They have really taken hold of the promise in Ecclesiastes chapter 4 “Two are better than one, because they have a great reward for their toil”

It is another example of people being enabled to use local resources to better their lives, helping them survive climate change.

Psalm 104 reading

Matthew reading

Second talk

God’s love for his creation

In creation season, we make time to be thankful for all that God provides us with through the natural world.

For many of us in the UK, it can be hard to link the food we eat with the land around us – more often than not, we link our food with the local supermarket. For people like Loyara, though – a farmer in Burkina Faso – the surrounding land is everything.

The psalmist in our reading today also clearly has a huge appreciation and understanding of creation: where the birds nest, where the mountain goats live, the skill of a lion as it hunts its prey, and the vast array of creatures living in the water.

As a result of how nature fits together, the psalmist is inspired to worship the creator God. And, in verse 31 of the psalm, we read that God too rejoices in his creation – in all things being as they were meant to be. The beauty and variety of all he’s made brings God joy!

But it’s not just that nature is glorious to behold. The Verses of Psalm 104 that we heard, describe how God provides through nature – for plants, for animals, and for humankind. Verses 13 and 14 declare that from His lofty abode ‘God waters the mountains; the earth is satisfied by the fruit of his work. He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use— to bring forth food from the earth’.

God thinks so much of his creation that he even became a part of it when he sent his Son to earth in human form. During his time on earth, Jesus immersed himself in creation – using it to illustrate God’s kingdom (Matthew 13:3-9, Luke 12:24), benefitting from its provision (John 21:5-9) and living and teaching within it, including from mountains, shorelines and lakes.

Nature is designed to work in harmony – land and water, earth and sky, humans and animals – all have their part to play in the natural order of things. And all is held together by a creator God who is happy with the world he has created.

(**How we have damaged creation, and how that is impacting people in poverty**.)

But we don’t have to look very hard at the world today to see that this perfect balance that God created is out of kilter. Too often, the land isn’t satisfied but is parched or flooded. Grass is sparse and dried out, and plants do not grow.

Rather than taking care of the earth, as God instructs us in Genesis 2:15, the way we live, work and consume has pushed creation to breaking point.

Whether it’s plastic pollution littering the seas and the poorest communities, or species going extinct at record rates, or the climate crisis causing more droughts, floods and storms, we’ve damaged this beautiful world which is a gift from God. We are feeling some of the effects in the UK, but it’s people living in poverty – who have done the least to cause the problems – who are being hit the hardest, as we have heard with Loyara.

Loyara said ‘We have no other source of income than agriculture. We know what it means to go without.’

Around the world, millions of people like Loyara are being pushed back into poverty because of climate change. In 2016, world hunger started to increase for the first time in a decade and has continued to increase every year since. And that’s because of climate change, conflict and disease – with climate change exacerbating the risk of conflict.

The science is clear: the climate crisis is being caused by us, especially us in developed nations, and the impacts are accelerating. We are running out of time to prevent the worst effects. We have to act fast and change the way we live, and governments have to be much more ambitious.

Right now, we have a unique window of opportunity. This year, the UK is hosting the UN climate talks in Glasgow in November. How our governments throughout the UK choose to rebuild after the pandemic will not only shape our own economies, but also influence other nations as we host these talks. This is a crucial moment for our leaders to take climate change seriously.

In the Bible, Jesus tells us the most important commandments are to love God and to love our neighbours (Matthew 22:37-40). Tackling the climate crisis is vital to both of these – honouring

God by protecting his creation and loving our global neighbours who are hit first and worst by what is now a climate emergency.

(**The hope we find in Jesus)**

Colossians 1:19–20 says: ‘For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Jesus], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.’

Because of Jesus’ death on the cross, all things can be made new; everything sin has broken and corrupted is being restored and reconciled to God. That includes us as well as the rest of creation.

What’s more, we’re invited to be a part of God’s ministry of reconciliation – inviting people to be reconciled to God through Jesus, but also reconciling people to the creation we’ve been given to care for, and seeing it restored. This is the fullness of the gospel.

So how can we respond?

In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus tells us that God’s greatest commandments are to love God and to love our neighbours. And, as the parable Jesus told about the Samaritan shows us (Luke 10:25-37), we are called to be good neighbours to anyone who needs our help

– whether they live next door or across the world. As those who have contributed the most to the problem of climate change, we can help share the load of the climate crisis with our global neighbours this creation season.

We can pray (Tearfund has some great prayer resources to help you pray, alone or with others, for our climate at [tearfund.org/PrayForClimate](http://tearfund.org/PrayForClimate)) and we’ll be doing this later in the service. We can give financially so that Tearfund and Christian aid partners can help farmers like Loyara adapt to the changing climate. But we can also take action to stop climate change from becoming even more devastating, and we can do this from the comfort of our own living room.

And this is where a smartphone becomes a very handy tool for farming!

Tearfund has joined with The Climate Coalition to call on our governments in the UK to help build a fairer, more sustainable recovery from the pandemic for our world and everyone in it – including farmers like Loyara.

By writing to our MP, by adding our name to The Climate Coalition’s declaration, we are joining with thousands of others, calling for greater support for people in poverty who are the most vulnerable to climate change, and for more investment in renewable energy around the world. We are at a turning point in history, and the decisions we make now will affect our economy, society and the climate for decades to come.

So do use your smart phone, your tablet, your pc to go to the Tear Fund reboot website, write the letter to our MP and to sign the declaration - the link is in the notice sheet and the email sent by Graham. Once you have done this, you can also click on the Wave of Hope link on tearfund.org/reboot and add a message of hope to the call for a better future for everyone.

So let us be still for a moment. Let us think of Loyara and others like her at the sharp edge of climate change. Let us decide that we want to do what we can, in prayer, in support, in action.

Let us pray (A prayer for the climate crisis)

God of justice,

We lift up people around the world who are suffering the effects of the climate crisis. We think of those in Bangladesh, the Philippines, Mozambique and Central America who have recently faced deadly cyclones and floods.

We think of those in Burkina Faso, Brazil, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe who are facing prolonged droughts.

Lord, it is not fair that those who have done the least to cause this crisis are suffering.

Lord, please provide for them, protect them and give them hope for the future.

Lord, we ask that you bless churches and charities who are responding to this crisis; equip them and give them wisdom.

Lord, you ask us to work with you to protect our neighbours; please shake us out of ourselves, so that as the church we can stand up for those in need, raise awareness and call

for change.

And Lord, when the issue feels too big or overwhelming, keep our eyes fixed on you who can do more than we can ask or imagine.

In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

Tear Fund giving: online at tearfund.org/donate or by giving to the collection for Tearfund at the end of this service. Share the load this Creation Season.

• £38 could provide a woman with the materials and training needed to start her own sustainable poultry farm to help feed her family and earn an income.

• £57 could help towards training an entire village on how they can protect themselves against disease and illness through sustainable waste management.

• £200 could contribute towards the cost of installing a solar water pump in a community vegetable garden to increase the chances of a successful harvest.

Prayers

Creator God,

We thank you for the gift that is creation – For the beauty of the earth and how

you have created us to care for it.

We are sorry for the ways we have neglected this, Help us to work together to repair the world.

Lord of Creation, hear our prayers.

Generous God,

We thank you for the gift of food –

For how it brings us together and nourishes us. We pray for those without, whose harvests and store cupboards are empty,

Help us work together to share the world’s resources so that everyone can be fed.

Lord of Creation, hear our prayers.

Sustaining God,

We thank you for the gift of those who farm

and prepare our food –

For their labour, their innovation and their care.

We pray that everyone will be able to work with dignity, that there will be no more poverty,

Help us work together to call for just and fair systems of pay and working conditions.

Lord of Creation, hear our prayers.

All-powerful God,

We thank you for the gift that is creation – For the beauty of the Earth and how

you have created us to care for it.

We are sorry for the ways we have neglected this, Help us to work together to repair the world.

Lord of Creation, hear our prayers. Amen.