



ST ANDREW'S EPSOM
AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

All Regions 

Sermons > Sermons 2015

Home

Marriage, Ordination,
Hope

Christmas Pageant
2015

Sermons

Sermons 2015

Sermon 20 December
2015

Sermon 13 December
2015

Sermon 29 November
2015

Sermon 22 November
2015

Sermon 15 November
2015

Sermon 8 November
2015

Sermon 1 November
2015 - All Saints Day

**Sermon 25 October
2015**

Sermon 11 October
2015

Sermon 4 October
2015

Sermon 13 September
2015

Sermon 16 August
2015

Sermon 26 July 2015

Sermon 19 July 2015

Sermon 12 July 2015

Sermon 5 July 2015

Sermon 28 June 2015

Sermon 21 June 2015

Sermon 14 June 2015

Sermon 7 June 2015

Sermon 25 October 2015

Like Share 0

Here last Sunday, as the dogs yapped and the fish swished, I remembered another Blessing of the Animals Service some years ago. It was at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in Manhattan. Lynn and I were living in New York at the time but we hadn't gone to the service. Reading about it the next morning in the New York Times, we wished we had.

The reporter dwelled at length on one man and his glass jar. The man held it reverently in front of him as he processed up the cathedral's long central aisle for it to be blessed. The jar's murky water seemed to host no life. When asked what was inside deserving of blessing, he replied: "Amoeba". The amusement of congregation and writer rang out in the news story. Indeed, we humans, the most complex life form in God's creation, are always careless and dismissive of the simplest.

Far worse, we are massively destructive of all forms of life in our ecosystem, and increasingly so as our population, appetites and technology soar. This is the Anthropocene, the first geological era in which the dominant force shaping the life systems of the planet is humankind itself. Such is the havoc we wreak, the rate of species extinction is more than 100 times the natural rate, and accelerating fast. Some 50% of the species alive today will be extinct by 2100, scientists estimate. That seems far away. Yet the youngest members of our congregation today will be alive then.

With each species we kill, even with each species we drastically reduce, we snip more threads in the web of life, weakening the ecosystem...and its ability to support us. This, then, is the planet's Sixth Great Extinction. The previous five over the past 500m years or so were caused by natural phenomena, such as asteroids hitting the Earth, or massive volcanic eruptions. Since the previous extinction about 30m years ago, it took eons for new life forms to evolve. Finally, and very late in the piece, we arrived -- only to cause the next great extinction.

We have been tracing the threads of this crisis during our Season of Creation this month. In last week's Blessing of the Animals Service we sought to revive some faint sense of connection with God's creation. The Sunday before, Emily preached insightfully of the work of Lynn White, the US historian and theologian. He said Western Christianity bears responsibility for the current ecological crisis. Because we believe God created the Earth for our benefit, we seek to exploit and dominate nature, thereby destroying it. Ours is the most anthropocentric religion the world has ever seen, he reckoned. More science and more technology are no answer to this ecologic crisis, White argued. Rather, since the roots of the crisis are largely religious, the "remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not".

And on our first Sunday in this season, Richard explained how Augustine took the story of Adam and Eve and "developed a theology that suggested that the earth was broken and flawed, and that this life was something to be endured." But it was St Francis, Richard told us, who "discovered that creation was not flawed and broken, but was enriched with life. By engaging with creation Francis rediscovered the presence of the divine life in all things. He responded to that experience by affirming the innate goodness of creation."

So, how might we rebuild such right relationship with God's creation? How will we let the ecosystem recover so God's creation can care better for us? After all, the word ecosystem comes from the ancient Greek word oikos, meaning home.

Sermon 31 May 2015 -
Trinity Sunday

Sermon - Sunday 24
May 2014 - Pentecost

Sermon 10 May 2015

Sermon 26 April 2015

Sermon 19 April 2015

Sermon 5 April -
Easter Day

Vicar's Annual Report
2015

Sermon 8 March 2015

Sermon 1 March 2015

Sermon 15 February
2015

Sermon 8 February
2015

Sermon 18 January
2015

Sermons 2014

Sermons 2013

Sermons 2012

Sermons 2011

Sermons 2010

Sermons 2009

The Resistance

Special Services

The St Andrew's
Soapbox Lectures

Services

Saint Andrew's Choir

Parish Groups and
Events

Contact

This is very difficult, as our current day Francis, the Pope, expressed so deeply and eloquently in his recent encyclical *Laudato Si'*, *Praise Be: On Care for Our Common Home*. The encyclical "should unsettle every non-poor reader who opens its pages," wrote Bill McKibben, the scientist and climate campaigner, in the *New York Review of Books*. He added: "It turns out to be nothing less than a sweeping, radical, and highly persuasive critique of how we inhabit this planet — an ecological critique, yes, but also a moral, social, economic, and spiritual commentary."

Last month Pope Francis took his message right to the benighted heart of American politics – to the US Congress. He told its members who we could be as individuals, as a society...as a species.

Who we have to be, if we and the ecosystem are to survive.

Here is the response of one politician in the audience, but typical of many:

"I don't get economic policy from my bishops or my cardinals or my Pope. [Religion] ought to be about making us better as people, less about things [that] end up getting into the political realm."

So said Jeb Bush, son of one president, brother of another, and possibly president himself one day.

In five weeks' time the political leaders of the world will gather in Paris. They will attempt once again to agree a climate change treaty, one that would give us half a chance to limit temperature rises to 2C. Even if they succeeded, and their nations subsequently delivered on their promises of deeper sustainability, the climate would still change, leading to more natural disasters and human suffering – although less than without a treaty. Seeking to stiffen politicians' resolve, some of the world's great faiths have published declarations on the importance of this treaty to people and planet.

Pope Francis's is by far the best, striking fearlessly at the heart of the spiritual and moral failures causing our wanton destruction. But given spirituality these days is largely lost to people and society, it's hard to be hopeful enough people will respond, whether they are poor and helpless, or rich and powerful.

Yet, if ours and the other great faiths of the world could rekindle a profound connection between people and creation through theology, liturgy, and service in the community...and a sense of wonder and mystery of God's limitless, unfathomable creation...then perhaps we humans would give creation a chance to heal itself.

These are just the sorts of sparks Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop of the US Episcopal Church, described on All Saints Day 2006.

"Let the pain of the world seize us by the throat. Listen for Jesus calling us all out of our tombs of despair and apathy. May the shock of baptismal dying once more set us afire. This place we call home is meant to be a new heaven, a new earth, a holy city, a new Jerusalem. It is the sparks in the stubble that will make it so."

- Rod Oram

Like Share 0