

Sunday Service - Web
Avoch linked with Fortrose-Rosemarkie
Harvest Sunday – 3rd Oct 2021
God's creation and today's climate pressures –
helping the needy on the planet

Welcome / Gathering

The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it... 'He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate – bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart.' **Psalm 104: 14-15** ©NIV

1 CH4 231 For the fruits of his creation (Ar Hyd Y Nos CH4 562)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBXHDbesb7k>

Prayers of Approach – Harvest Sunday

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 the Harvest, 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 the Harvest, 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 the Harvest, 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 the Harvest, hear our prayers.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. AMEN

2 – CH4 227 O Worship the King (Hanover) – v1-v5

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wy1ahfW14M0>

Word of God

Bible Reading 1 – Psalm 104:1-13

- ¹ Praise the Lord, my soul.
Lord my God, you are very great;
you are clothed with splendour and majesty.
- ² The Lord wraps himself in light as with a garment;
he stretches out the heavens like a tent
- ³ and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters.
He makes the clouds his chariot
and rides on the wings of the wind.
- ⁴ He makes winds his messengers,
flames of fire his servants.
- ⁵ He set the earth on its foundations;
it can never be moved.
- ⁶ You covered it with the watery depths as with a garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.
- ⁷ But at your rebuke the waters fled,
at the sound of your thunder they took to flight;
- ⁸ they flowed over the mountains,
they went down into the valleys,
to the place you assigned for them.
- ⁹ You set a boundary they cannot cross;
never again will they cover the earth.
- ¹⁰ He makes springs pour water into the ravines;
it flows between the mountains.
- ¹¹ They give water to all the beasts of the field;
the wild donkeys quench their thirst.
- ¹² The birds of the sky nest by the waters;
they sing among the branches.
- ¹³ He waters the mountains from his upper chambers;
the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work. ©NIV

3 – CH4 259 Beauty for brokenness (Brokenness)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MO1G-o7Yj-c>

**A prayer for our neighbours
by Gideon Heugh**

All-loving, ever-present God,
We pray for our neighbours –
for the people we know and love,
and for the people we have never met.

We pray for our neighbours –
for the people across the street,
and for the people on the other side of the world.

We pray for our neighbours –
for the people who look and sound like us,
and for the people who couldn't be more different.

We pray for our neighbours –
for everyone who is struggling,
for everyone who is being marginalised
and oppressed.

Help us, God, to be good neighbours –
to look outward instead of inward,
to follow Jesus' call to take action.

Amen.

Word of God

Bible Reading 2 – Psalm 104:14-23

¹⁴ He makes grass grow for the cattle,
and plants for people to cultivate –
bringing forth food from the earth:
¹⁵ wine that gladdens human hearts,
oil to make their faces shine,
and bread that sustains their hearts.

¹⁶ The trees of the Lord are well watered,
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.

¹⁷ There the birds make their nests;
the stork has its home in the junipers.

¹⁸ The high mountains belong to the wild goats;
the crags are a refuge for the hyrax.

¹⁹ He made the moon to mark the seasons,
and the sun knows when to go down.

²⁰ You bring darkness, it becomes night,
and all the beasts of the forest prowl.

²¹ The lions roar for their prey
and seek their food from God.

²² The sun rises, and they steal away;
they return and lie down in their dens.

²³ Then people go out to their work,
to their labour until evening. ©NIV

Talk – “God’s creation and today’s climate pressures – helping the needy on the planet”

God’s love for his creation

At harvest, 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. Verses 10-18 of Psalm 104 describe how God provides through nature – for plants, for animals, and for humankind. Verses 13 and 14 declare that he ‘waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work. He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate—bringing 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’ve 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’re feeling some of the effects in the UK, but it’s the people living in poverty – who have done the least to cause the problems – who are being hit the hardest.

Video – Burkina Faso Harvest Film

<https://vimeo.com/589750106> (Click on the link to watch the film.)

Loyara is a farmer in Burkina Faso, West Africa. For years, drought has ravaged her land, which lies barren and empty. This is the effect of the climate crisis, which is already hitting people in poverty the hardest. It has led to more frequent and more severe disasters, such as prolonged drought. For Loyara and so many others, the harvest will be empty again this year. Another season of hunger looms. And, as the climate crisis worsens, it can mean life or death for many families like Loyara's. 'We have no other source of income than agriculture. We know what it means to go without,' says Loyara.

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.

4- CH4 God in such love for us (Stewardship)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4AeZoZatu8>

Response to the Word of God

An invitation to respond

So how can we respond? In what follows Tear Fund encourage us to do three things:

- 1) To consider signing up to The Climate Coalition (whose members include Christian Aid, TearFund, Fair Trade, and many others).
- 2) To watch a video on the Theory of Poverty.
- 3) To consider giving.

You may already have added your name to The Climate Coalition's declaration, which calls on our governments to build a fairer, healthier recovery from the pandemic. But there's more we can do. Just as Esther in the Old Testament speaks up against injustice – even at great risk to herself – so we are called to respond when we see injustice in our world.

Response – one practical way to respond

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 adding our name to The Climate Coalition's declaration, we're 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. For more information - see TearFund's Reboot Campaign <https://www.tearfund.org/campaigns/reboot-campaign> & The Climate Coalition website <https://www.theclimatecoalition.org/>

Video – The Theory of Poverty - <https://vimeo.com/451780056/841556a0a7>
(Click on the link to watch the film.)

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.'

Slide/ 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

Giving to help the needy

But we can also give – enabling Tearfund partners that live and work alongside families like Loyara's to help the poorest people adapt to the changing climate around them.

5 – CH4 229 - We plough the fields and scatter (Wir Pflügen)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccVEjKFkAV4>

As we come to the end of our harvest service – we're going to close with a prayer for the climate. And to encourage you, as you take practical action to care for this wonderful world we live in, to continue praying for it too.

Prayers for Others and Ourselves
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.

Sending

How many are your works, Lord!

In wisdom you made them all;

All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.

When you give it to them, they gather it up;

when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.® NIV

6 – CH4 798 The Peace of the earth (La Paz de la Tierra) – verse

<https://music.churchofscotland.org.uk/hymn/798-the-peace-of-the-earth-be-with-you>

Benediction

Bless to us, O God

The sun that shines above us

The rain that falls upon us

The earth that sustains us

The air that surrounds us

The love that binds us. Amen.

We are using materials from Tear Fund