



## Our Common Home: Treasure in Heaven

A sermon by Revd Katherine Hedderly

### Readings: Amos 5.6-7, 10-15; Mark 10. 17-31

This week we have paused for *Creationtide*, beginning with our Harvest service last Sunday and ending today. In our services and prayers we have focused on *Our Common Home* and what that means for us and our world, the ways in which we are linked by the common bond of responsibility and care for our earth and for our neighbour. We have raised £750 to help those affected by floods in Malawi. In our Sacred Space worship and midweek Bread for the World discussion groups, we've explored what a true change of heart in our care for the environment would look like, and what transformation might bring. Some of us have observed a tech-fast, fasting from e-mails, mobiles, ipods – intentionally at least for a few hours. Some went to 'Baked Alaska', a play looking at the realities of climate change and yesterday the St Martin's Urban Nature Walk set off along the Thames Path, looking out for different plant species. Others have been reading Walter Brueggemann's book 'Sabbath as resistance – saying no to the culture of now.'

We have endeavoured to be more intentional about the way we act, speak and pray about the environment, our place within it, and our responsibility towards it. Richard Carter, who spoke vividly about the Solomon Islands last week and the real effects of climate change there, is now in the Solomons leading the retreat for their Great Conference and community. Today with the baptism of India we think of the future of our earth and *Our Common Home* we share with her, and this newest generation.

In Walter Brueggemann's assessment we are being encouraged to live in a 'no Sabbath' environment. Ours is a "24/7 society of consumption" he says; "a society in which we live to achieve, accomplish, perform, and possess. We want more, (to) own more, use more, eat more, drink more."<sup>1</sup> He encourages us to explore the alternative of God's Sabbath to see "How to break this restless cycle and focus on what is truly important. God, other people, all life. So that we might have "a more fulfilling and simpler life."

Being attentive to God's Sabbath in our lives, means being aware that we do have *A Common Home*, that we are all in it together, and share responsibility together for our earth and for one another. Sabbath changes our relationships with others as we are called to live in God's time. A God who sets rest at the heart of creation.

Rather than a restless acquisitive spirit - where we are compelled to treat both things and people as commodities, in our endless desire for consumption and production - we are encouraged to live from a place of rest, to walk softly on the earth, with a spirit of generosity and of neighbourliness, especially towards those in need of our care.

In both of our readings today we have that urgent call to care for others. To treat them not as objects, through whom, or at the expense of whom we get what we want, but as true neighbours in our common home.

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<sup>1</sup> "Sabbath as resistance: Saying No to the culture of now", Walter Brueggemann, WJK Press, 2014

Amos's prophetic words of justice speak to the oppressive and corrupt rulers and social elite of Israel, whose indulgent lifestyles are propped up on a system of acquisitiveness and dishonesty. A way of life that means that the poor 'are pushed aside' and 'trampled on' in the city gate, the place of justice. Amos portrays a people totally obsessed with luxury, self-indulgence and narcissism. A world where 'things' take priority and the corrupt economy operates to trample and ruin those who are most in need.

For Amos, God's righteousness exposes the limitless consumerism and drivenness of the market and offers a just alternative. He calls them back to a faithful covenant relationship with God, not based on empty rituals and hollow worship, but generous living with their neighbour.

It is not difficult to see how our own systems – the limitless pursuit of consumer goods, desire for status, educational advantage, wealth, possessions, our hunger for 'likes' 'retweets' or followers on twitter - have a similar restlessness, competitiveness and lack of attentiveness to the needs of individuals and of our earth.

In our Gospel reading the rich man is invited by Jesus to live differently; to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor; to let go of things. To make just relationships with people rather than possessions, treat them as neighbours in a shared life, attentive to their needs. And so come into a deeper relationship with him.

As we contemplate *Our Common Home*, Bruggemann's calling to Sabbath rest, is an inspiration to live differently. To make space in our lives for compassionate, attentive relationships. This is where our treasure lies.

'Sabbath is not just a pause,' Bruggemann encourages us, 'but an occasion for reimagining all of social life away from coercion and competition to compassionate solidarity. Such solidarity is only possible when the drivenness of acquisition is broken.'

That is our invitation today - to carry this 'Creationtide' with us – all of the time so that we make space for our relationship with others, with our earth and with God.

To live all seven days differently, not just one - to 'Seven our lives'. I wonder what that might mean for you, to allow God's Sabbath, or rest, to find a consistent place in your life.

In today's Gospel the rich man who comes to Jesus is invited to live differently.

He is caught up in a life driven by the desire to accumulate, to own, to possess, even though in so many other ways, as he is keen to point out, he is following the commandments to the letter.

He comes to Jesus asking what he should do.

And Jesus tells him. His answer is unequivocal – 'Sell, give, come, follow me.' It is stark, bold, simple and costly. Jesus gives him what he believes he is asking for. He asks what he should do and Jesus, loving him, tells him.

But the man goes away, because he can't, or deep down, doesn't want to do these things - give up his possessions, embrace God's Sabbath living, turn others into recipients of his care and generosity. This kind of living requires a change of heart and life.

And perhaps this is the same with us. What do we truly want? Do we really want to care for our planet, address the effects of climate change, or are we like the man with so many possessions, we

just say that's what we want, and when it comes down to it we can't, because we value our current way of life more?

Do we want to really be in relationship with those whose lives are already damaged, who've had to leave their island because of rising sea levels, or we just say we want to? Are we really prepared to embrace this ethic, this transformed way of living?

The rich man is invited to give up his possessions and be in right relationship with the poor. And he is invited to come and follow Jesus and be in right relationship with God.

Today as India has been baptised and begins her new life with God, we have been reminded of our own call to come and follow. To turn to Christ and embrace the life of freedom that he offers us. To be transformed by his life, coming alive in us, and to live differently.

In Baptism we find our true identity as the people of God, liberated from slavery from all that oppresses us into a life of freedom. Today as we come to the end of this pause of Creationtide. I invite you to see that call into freedom with Christ, as a call away from the oppression of a driven life, to generous Sabbath living, for India, for our neighbours and for our earth.