

Creation is our neighbour

He asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?” *Luke 10:29*

In January’s ‘in touch’ I wrote about the parable of ‘The Good Samaritan’. I suggested that Jesus is challenging us today, too, to open our minds to a new and much bigger idea of the ‘neighbours’ we must love, to include all the people who are suffering or at risk from climate change.

But is there an even bigger challenge? What about our *non*-human neighbours? The other living creatures with whom we share the world? And the land, the seas, the plants? The earth itself? Are we called to love them too?

The character of life on earth is changing dramatically. Over half of the habitable land on the planet has been converted to agriculture. The extent of the world’s forests, wetlands and grasslands is smaller than ever before. In just the last fifty years, the quantity of wildlife on earth has declined by a scarcely believable 70%. Eco systems on which life depends are in danger. And the nature crisis and the climate crisis are making each other worse.

Have you ever asked yourself, *why* did God create the world and the universe? It can only have been an outpouring of God’s infinite, unstoppable love. In the first chapter of Genesis, God delights in



the beauty and diversity of everything he has created. It is all equally good: nothing is better or more perfect than anything else. On the sixth day of creation, humans are created along with all the other creatures who live on the land.

The only thing that is special about humans is the role which God gives to us. We are made in the ‘image of God’; that is, we are made not to *be* God, but to reflect God’s love to the world, in the same way that a mirror will reflect the image of your face.

So when the Bible says that God gives us ‘dominion’ or power over the rest of creation, it means that we are expected to use *our* power in the same way that God uses *his* power; with unconditional love for everything God has made. *In short, we are put on this earth to love it and take care of it on God’s behalf.*

It was a lightbulb moment for me when I realised this. It makes so much more sense if we go through life with an attitude of love towards the whole of creation, instead of loving our human neighbours while ignoring or exploiting the rest, as people have done too often in the past.

And such all-encompassing love brings joy and purpose to our lives. We can share God's delight in the sun, moon and stars, the landscapes, seascapes and skiescapes, the abundance of living creatures, the infinite variety, beauty and splendour of God's glorious handiwork, from the tiniest ladybird to the most spectacular snow-covered mountains.

Taking care of the world with which God has blessed us, can bring us the fulfilment, and the peace, which come from knowing that we tread gently on this earth, hand-in-hand with our ever-loving God.

Who is my neighbour? Whom should I love? Here is God's glorious answer: the whole of creation.

This is the second of a two-part article based on a sermon by Roger McFarland during the Season of Creation in September 2024. The first part appeared in January's 'in touch'.

To find out more or to share your ideas on Eco Church please go to the website www.allsaintsspringfield.org.uk/church-life/eco-church or speak to one of the Eco Church Group – Roger McFarland, Nicky Morecroft, Chris McFarland, Ian Poston, Dave Gauld, Beth Cornish, Ann Salmon.



This month's eco suggestions

- How can we **improve our environmental footprint?** Find out at footprint.wwf.org.uk or at climate-calculator.climatehero.me
- Use **re-fillable water bottles and coffee cups** instead of buying plastic bottles or disposable cups