

2021.09.12. Sermon NOTES Eco-Justice ©Gyllian Daviest†

Eco-Justice. This is our focus for this week in the Season of Creation. Eco-Justice. What does it mean? For us we might say Eco-justice is God's justice for all of Creation! For some it means the righting of wrongs done to marginalized people through the environment. Ending the location of heavy industry next to low income housing - that would be eco-justice for those who have no power or voice to defend themselves. Think about some of the stories we all know: the Love Canal in New York State polluted by a chemical company dumping their waste and 33% of people living in the neighbourhood suffer chromosomal damage. The Bhopal Gas tragedy in India - the most devastating chemical accident in history, where over 15,000 people die due to accidental release of toxic gas. The poor people who didn't have cars to escape. The seven year old's working in the heavy metal mines in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, exposing their growing bodies to the cobalt that powers our phones and causes their hearts to sicken and stop.

Yes, Eco-Justice would be stopping these things from happening. How does Jesus put it?

*'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.
Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'*

There's some other familiar lines about this, from the English poet and fellow Anglican, John Donne. (I'll change the pronouns because I believe John Donne if he lived today would use inclusive language.)

*No-one is an island entire of itself; everyone
is a piece of the continent, a part of the main;*

....

*Anyone's death diminishes me,
because I am involved in humankind.
And therefore never send to know for whom
the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.*

He's talking about six degrees of separation, I think. Six degrees of separation - the idea that for everyone in the world there are only six relationships separating us. Or you could say connecting us. Simply, if you were to sit down with a complete stranger in a different world than yours - culturally, geopolitically, spiritually - you could with some delving discover that you actually were connected to each other through the ever expanding ripples of relationships.

Yes, I do believe Eco-Justice is when the captives are released, the blind see, and the oppressed go free. It's when we recognize that our living affects others' choices in

less obvious ways. Or maybe I should say less obvious to us but crystal clear to those who live with the impacts of our way of life. For example, perhaps you've heard of Tuvalu? Listen to this:

“On the hottest days, Leitu Frank feels like she can't breathe any more. The housewife and mother of five decamps from her airless concrete home to catch the breeze in a simple wooden shack by the water's edge. She folds washing and stares out at the unsettled turquoise sea, its moods and rhythms increasingly unpredictable, as its rising proximity threatens to strangle her family. “The sea is eating all the sand,” she says. “Before, the sand used to stretch out far, and when we swam we could see the sea floor, and the coral. Now, it is cloudy all the time, and the coral is dead. [Tuvalu](#) is sinking.” Many of her country-people speak of nightmares disturbing their sleep, nightmares that the sea will soon gobble them up for good. They look around - porous, salty soil has made the ground almost totally useless for planting, destroying staple pulaka crops and decreasing the yields of various fruits and vegetables. Since the rising ocean contaminated underwater ground supplies, Tuvalu is now totally reliant on rainwater, and droughts are occurring with alarming frequency. Even if the locals could plant successfully, there is now not enough rain to keep even simple kitchen gardens alive. - the fruit on the trees - breadfruit, bananas and pandanus - fail to ripen, and fall to the sandy ground, inedible and rotten. The fish too, the stuff of life here, are poisoned by chemicals given off by the bleached coral reefs. Eating this traditional source of food causes an immediate and sometimes severe illness: vomiting, fevers and diarrhoea.

What is causing this terrible situation? Global warming. The Climate Crisis, already experienced by many. But you know Eco-Justice is more than how our actions affect other people. It's also about how our choices and actions touch the planet itself. We hold in our hands a painful responsibility for the ignorance and arrogance of those who came before us. We embody a terrible history of ignoring our own impact on the ecosystems and creatures of our planet. On the radio I listen to Q. Tom Power is interviewing Sean Penn about his activism. Penn says, “there's something we're going to have to learn to live with, something ancient and unfamiliar to us - sacrifice.”

Are we ready for that? A sacrifice of love? Love for all living things. Love for all of Creation. A love without limits or conditions, a love that empowers us to willingly sacrifice what we've come to take for granted. A sacrifice of love to bring God's Jubilee, the 'year' or era of God's favour into the realm of reality. And we all know - sacrificial love entails actions. And we also know, 'ain't none of us are free till all of us are free.' It can be a hard love, a demanding love. We'll know it when we find it...

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;

righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

*¹¹ Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,
and righteousness will look down from the sky.*

We'll know it and we will be known by our love. And by our righteousness, people. The people of God, the people who love. Even when it's hard. That will be us. When we get there. Amen.