

# Appended Resource 4: Season of Creation Themed Lectionary Notes

September 5<sup>th</sup>

Proper 18 / 14<sup>th</sup> after Trinity

**OIKONOME: A JUST HOME FOR ALL PEOPLE**

Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23

<sup>1</sup> A good name is more desirable than great riches;  
to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.

<sup>2</sup> Rich and poor have this in common:  
The LORD is the Maker of them all.

<sup>8</sup> Whoever sows injustice reaps calamity,  
and the rod they wield in fury will be broken.

<sup>9</sup> The generous will themselves be blessed,  
for they share their food with the poor.

<sup>22</sup> Do not exploit the poor because they are poor  
and do not crush the needy in court,  
<sup>23</sup> for the LORD will take up their case  
and will exact life for life.

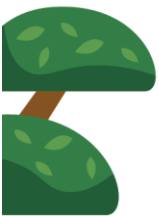
Psalm 125

<sup>1</sup> Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion,  
which cannot be shaken but endures for ever.

<sup>2</sup> As the mountains surround Jerusalem,  
so the LORD surrounds his people  
both now and for evermore.

<sup>3</sup> The sceptre of the wicked will not remain  
over the land allotted to the righteous,  
for then the righteous might use  
their hands to do evil.

<sup>4</sup> LORD, do good to those who are good,  
to those who are upright in heart.



<sup>5</sup> But those who turn to crooked ways  
the LORD will banish with the evildoers.

Peace be on Israel.

### James 2:1-10, 14-17

<sup>1</sup> My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favouritism. <sup>2</sup> Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. <sup>3</sup> If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, 'Here's a good seat for you,' but say to the poor man, 'You stand there' or 'Sit on the floor by my feet,' <sup>4</sup> have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? <sup>5</sup> Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? <sup>6</sup> But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? <sup>7</sup> Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong? <sup>8</sup> If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbour as yourself,' you are doing right. <sup>9</sup> But if you show favouritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as law-breakers. <sup>10</sup> For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

<sup>14</sup> What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? <sup>15</sup> Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. <sup>16</sup> If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? <sup>17</sup> In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

### Mark 7:24-end

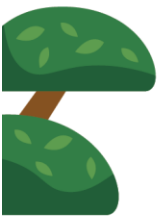
<sup>24</sup> Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. <sup>25</sup> In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. <sup>26</sup> The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

<sup>27</sup> 'First let the children eat all they want,' he told her, 'for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs.'

<sup>28</sup> 'Lord,' she replied, 'even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.'

<sup>29</sup> Then he told her, 'For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.'

<sup>30</sup> She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.



<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis <sup>32</sup> There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him.

<sup>33</sup> After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spat and touched the man's tongue. <sup>34</sup> He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, '*Ephphatha!*' (which means 'Be opened!'). <sup>35</sup> At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosed and he began to speak plainly. <sup>36</sup> Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. <sup>37</sup> People were overwhelmed with amazement. 'He has done everything well,' they said. 'He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.'

## NOTES:

- Oikos, the Greek word for 'home', is the root word for 'economy' – which, at a global level, is about planetary house-keeping. How far have modern understandings of the importance of the economy drifted from the root meaning of creating a secure and just home for all?
- Proverbs 22 and James 2 make clear that God will champion the cause of the oppressed, and that poverty and injustice are deeply linked to our economic behaviour and systems.
- In a world of climate injustice, where careless use of fossil fuels leads to insecurity, disaster and suffering for the world's poor and marginalised, what is the 'good news' (the Gospel)? Can there be good news without addressing such injustice?
- James 2:6 "Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court?" Is this passage aimed only at the 'super rich' or also at the many Christians who live comfortable lives, acting as if they (we?) are ignorant of the links between that comfort – built on exploitative and unsustainable economic practices - and the suffering of the poor?
- In Mark 7:28-29, Jesus commends the Syro-Phoenician (a woman and a Gentile) for arguing with him, and heals her daughter! Are there issues of injustice, where God seems silent, that drive us to wrestle with God in prayer?

September 12<sup>th</sup>

Proper 19 / 15<sup>th</sup> after Trinity

**OIKOLOGIE: WISDOM FROM OUR HOME PLANET**

Proverbs 1:20-33

<sup>20</sup> Out in the open wisdom calls aloud,  
she raises her voice in the public square;

<sup>21</sup> on top of the wall she cries out,  
at the city gate she makes her speech:

<sup>22</sup> 'How long will you who are simple love your simple ways?  
How long will mockers delight in mockery  
and fools hate knowledge?

<sup>23</sup> Repent at my rebuke!  
Then I will pour out my thoughts to you,  
I will make known to you my teachings.

<sup>24</sup> But since you refuse to listen when I call  
and no one pays attention when I stretch out my hand,

<sup>25</sup> since you disregard all my advice  
and do not accept my rebuke,

<sup>26</sup> I in turn will laugh when disaster strikes you;  
I will mock when calamity overtakes you –

<sup>27</sup> when calamity overtakes you like a storm,  
when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind,  
when distress and trouble overwhelm you.

<sup>28</sup> 'Then they will call to me but I will not answer;  
they will look for me but will not find me,

<sup>29</sup> since they hated knowledge  
and did not choose to fear the LORD.

<sup>30</sup> Since they would not accept my advice  
and spurned my rebuke,

<sup>31</sup> they will eat the fruit of their ways  
and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.

<sup>32</sup> For the waywardness of the simple will kill them,  
and the complacency of fools will destroy them;

<sup>33</sup> but whoever listens to me will live in safety  
and be at ease, without fear of harm.'

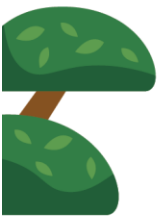
## Psalm 19

<sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

<sup>2</sup> Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they reveal knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> They have no speech, they use no words;  
no sound is heard from them.

<sup>4</sup> Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,  
their words to the ends of the world.



In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

<sup>5</sup> It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,  
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

<sup>6</sup> It rises at one end of the heavens  
and makes its circuit to the other;  
nothing is deprived of its warmth.

<sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect,  
refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple.

<sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right,  
giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant,  
giving light to the eyes.

<sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD is pure,  
enduring for ever.

The decrees of the LORD are firm,  
and all of them are righteous.

<sup>10</sup> They are more precious than gold,  
than much pure gold;  
they are sweeter than honey,  
than honey from the honeycomb.

<sup>11</sup> By them your servant is warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.

<sup>12</sup> But who can discern their own errors?  
Forgive my hidden faults.

<sup>13</sup> Keep your servant also from wilful sins;  
may they not rule over me.

Then I will be blameless,  
innocent of great transgression.

<sup>14</sup> May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart  
be pleasing in your sight,  
LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

### James 3:1-12

<sup>1</sup> Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. <sup>2</sup> We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

<sup>3</sup> When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. <sup>4</sup> Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. <sup>5</sup> Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. <sup>6</sup> The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup> All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, <sup>8</sup> but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup> With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. <sup>10</sup> Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. <sup>11</sup> Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? <sup>12</sup> My brothers and sisters, can a fig-tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

### Mark 8:27-end

<sup>27</sup> Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, 'Who do people say I am?' <sup>28</sup> They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.' <sup>29</sup> 'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?' Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah.'

<sup>30</sup> Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

<sup>31</sup> He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup> He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup> But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. 'Get behind me, Satan!' he said. 'You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.' <sup>34</sup> Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. <sup>36</sup> What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? <sup>37</sup> Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? <sup>38</sup> If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.'

### NOTES:

- 'Oikos' is also the root word for 'ecology', the science of relationships of organisms (including us) to each other and their surroundings.

- In Proverbs, Wisdom is personified as a woman, present at and involved in creation (8:22-31). Theologians differ as to whether Wisdom is simply a literary device, or represents the Holy Spirit, or possibly even the pre-incarnate Christ.
- Whichever view we take, Wisdom is clearly from God, and accessed both through study of nature / God's world (eg. 1 Kings 4:29-33) and of scripture / God's word. Psalm 19 beautifully outlines God's 'two books': nature (vs.1-6) and scripture (vs.7-11). How can we ensure we gain wisdom by studying both of these means of God's self-revelation?
- How do Proverbs 1:26-30, about how disaster (often ecological) will overtake those who ignore God's Wisdom, speak to our situation today? Are there examples in your context?
- In James 3:7-12 vivid imagery contrasts the untameable human tongue with other aspects of nature. Is there a sense in which humanity's increasing separation from nature leads to us speaking and behaving in more unnatural, and harmful, ways?
- In Mark 8:34-35 Jesus asks his followers to take up their cross and follow him. How can we 'take up our cross' and follow Christ as Lord of creation in an era of ecological trauma? Why not share stories of environmental campaigners, eg in Latin America, who have lost their lives in challenging powerful vested interests that are destroying God's world.
- In Mark 8:36-37 Jesus asks what good it is to gain the whole world but forfeit our souls. Is this verse calling us to focus only on the 'spiritual' gospel, or is it rather a challenge to the materialism that hardens our hearts against God, and against true Wisdom?

September 19<sup>th</sup>

Proper 20 /16<sup>th</sup> after Trinity

**PEACEMAKING AS HOME-BUILDING**

Proverbs 31:10-end

<sup>10</sup> A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.

<sup>11</sup> Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.

<sup>12</sup> She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.

<sup>13</sup> She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands.

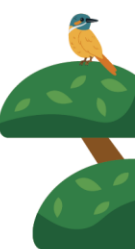
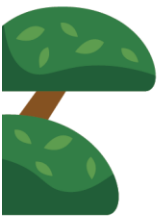
<sup>14</sup> She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar.

<sup>15</sup> She gets up while it is still night; she provides food for her family and portions for her female servants.

<sup>16</sup> She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.

<sup>17</sup> She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.

<sup>18</sup> She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.



- <sup>19</sup> In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.  
<sup>20</sup> She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.  
<sup>21</sup> When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet.  
<sup>22</sup> She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple.  
<sup>23</sup> Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.  
<sup>24</sup> She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.  
<sup>25</sup> She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.  
<sup>26</sup> She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.  
<sup>27</sup> She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.  
<sup>28</sup> Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:  
<sup>29</sup> 'Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.'  
<sup>30</sup> Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.  
<sup>31</sup> Honour her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

## Psalm 1

- <sup>1</sup> Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked  
or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,  
<sup>2</sup> but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,  
and who meditates on his law day and night.  
<sup>3</sup> That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers.  
<sup>4</sup> Not so the wicked!  
They are like chaff that the wind blows away.  
<sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.  
<sup>6</sup> For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

## James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a

- <sup>13</sup> Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. <sup>15</sup> Such 'wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. <sup>16</sup> For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil



practice. <sup>17</sup> But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. <sup>18</sup> Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

4:1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? <sup>2</sup> You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. <sup>3</sup> When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

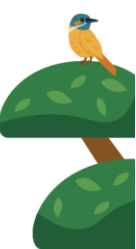
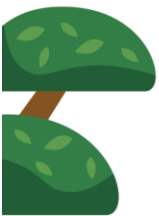
<sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Come near to God and he will come near to you.

### Mark 9:30-37

<sup>30</sup> They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, <sup>31</sup> because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.' <sup>32</sup> But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it. <sup>33</sup> They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the road?' <sup>34</sup> But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. <sup>35</sup> Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, 'Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.' <sup>36</sup> He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, <sup>37</sup> 'Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.'

### NOTES:

- 'Peace' is at the heart of the Christian gospel. We live in a fractured world, where relationships between people, nature and God are deeply broken. In Christ, God comes to bring 'peace', not only spiritually through the forgiveness of sins, but to restore all these damaged and broken relationships.
- The Hebrew concept of 'Shalom', often translated as 'peace', reflects restored relationships in every dimension: with God, self, neighbours near and far, and with the earth and its creatures. It is an integrated vision of 'the good life' that combines faith, justice, and peacebuilding – as summarised by the idealised wife of Proverbs 31. Note how she ensures everyone and everything can flourish: her family, the poor, the land, the economy! This is a lovely example of being a peacemaker / home-builder / shalom-spreader in very practical local terms!
- Building on last week's theme of 'Wisdom', James 3:17-18 states, "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is **first of all pure; then peace-loving**, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. **Peacemakers who**



**sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.**” Jesus said ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God’ (Matthew 5:9). The phrase ‘children of God’ is often applied to those who believe in Christ – the church. How can we, as the Christian community, be peacemakers both globally and locally, particularly in a context of inequality and unsustainable lifestyle choices?

- In today’s Gospel reading, in Mark 9:36-37, Jesus tells us that in welcoming children we welcome God himself. Today, many children and young people suffer from climate anxiety and despair about the future. How can we welcome the Father, by listening more effectively to the voices of young people and changing our attitudes and behaviour in response?

**September 26<sup>th</sup>**

**Proper 21 / 17<sup>th</sup> after Trinity**

**PRAYING FOR OUR HOME PLANET & ITS PEOPLE**

Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22

<sup>1</sup> So the king and Haman went to Queen Esther’s banquet, <sup>2</sup> and as they were drinking wine on the second day, the king again asked, ‘Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.’

<sup>3</sup> Then Queen Esther answered, ‘If I have found favour with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life – this is my petition. And spare my people – this is my request. <sup>4</sup> For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king.’

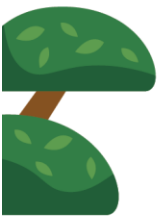
<sup>5</sup> King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, ‘Who is he? Where is he – the man who has dared to do such a thing?’

<sup>6</sup> Esther said, ‘An adversary and enemy! This vile Haman!’

Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen.

<sup>9</sup> Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, ‘A pole reaching to a height of fifty cubits stands by Haman’s house. He had it set up for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king.’ The king said, ‘Impale him on it!’ <sup>10</sup> So they impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king’s fury subsided.

9:20 Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Xerxes, near and far, <sup>21</sup> that they should celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar <sup>22</sup> as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and



their mourning into a day of celebration. He wrote to them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

## Psalm 124

- <sup>1</sup> If the LORD had not been on our side – let Israel say –  
<sup>2</sup> if the LORD had not been on our side when people attacked us,  
<sup>3</sup> they would have swallowed us alive when their anger flared against us;  
<sup>4</sup> the flood would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us,  
<sup>5</sup> the raging waters would have swept us away.
- <sup>6</sup> Praise be to the LORD, who has not let us be torn by their teeth.  
<sup>7</sup> We have escaped like a bird from the fowler's snare;  
the snare has been broken, and we have escaped.  
<sup>8</sup> Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

## James 5:13-end

- <sup>13</sup> Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you ill? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.
- <sup>17</sup> Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. <sup>18</sup> Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.
- <sup>19</sup> My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, <sup>20</sup> remember this: whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

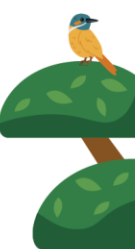
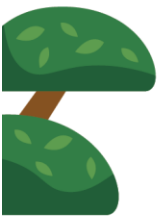
## Mark 9:38-end

- <sup>38</sup> 'Teacher,' said John, 'we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.'
- <sup>39</sup> 'Do not stop him,' Jesus said. 'For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, <sup>40</sup> for whoever is not against us is for us. <sup>41</sup> Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.
- <sup>42</sup> 'If anyone causes one of these little ones – those who believe in me – to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung round their neck and they were

thrown into the sea. <sup>43</sup> If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. <sup>45</sup> And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. <sup>47</sup> And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, <sup>48</sup> where “the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.” <sup>49</sup> Everyone will be salted with fire. <sup>50</sup> ‘Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.’

## NOTES:

- There is a danger that responses to climate injustice and environmental chaos are only about activism: campaigns and advocacy. Today’s readings encourage us to turn to God in prayer in times of crisis, recognising that activism needs deep foundations in a spirituality that sustains and renews us.
- James 5:13 states: “Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray.” The passage continues, “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (5:16b) and gives the example of Elijah praying for no rain and then praying for rain which led to fruitful harvests (5:17-18). Do we pray about the Climate crisis? Do we pray for God’s mercy for people and places suffering devastating and catastrophic drought or flood, storms or erosion? Do we also pray for the political processes, for COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021, and for God’s Spirit to change the hearts of world leaders, to give them compassion and embolden them to take unpopular but necessary decisions?
- The book of Esther is a story of a woman whom God used to bring justice and deliverance at the heart of the political process, at great personal risk. Can we intercede for those today who are strategically placed to speak truth to power, to challenge self-interest, and to advocate for climate victims and nature herself?
- Mark 9:42ff uses strong language to warn of the danger of causing children and young people to stumble. A recent UK survey claimed 90% of young Christians see the climate as today’s most pressing and urgent issue, and yet 90% also say their churches are not doing enough on climate change. If churches are slow to pray, speak and act on the climate emergency, this passage suggests God will judge us harshly for causing young people to stumble in their faith. Our response needs to be in lament and repentance, in prayer and fasting, and in speaking out and acting decisively.



October 3<sup>rd</sup>

Proper 22 / 18<sup>th</sup> after Trinity

## A HOME AND A HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Job 1:1; 2:1-10

1:1 In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.

2:1 On another day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. <sup>2</sup> And the LORD said to Satan, 'Where have you come from?' Satan answered the LORD, 'From roaming throughout the earth, going to and fro on it.' <sup>3</sup> Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.' <sup>4</sup> 'Skin for skin!' Satan replied. 'A man will give all he has for his own life. <sup>5</sup> But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.' <sup>6</sup> The LORD said to Satan, 'Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life.' <sup>7</sup> So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. <sup>8</sup> Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes. <sup>9</sup> His wife said to him, 'Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!' <sup>10</sup> He replied, 'You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?' In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

Psalm 26

<sup>1</sup> Vindicate me, LORD, for I have led a blameless life;  
I have trusted in the LORD and have not faltered.

<sup>2</sup> Test me, LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind;  
<sup>3</sup> for I have always been mindful of your unfailing love  
and have lived in reliance on your faithfulness.

<sup>4</sup> I do not sit with the deceitful, nor do I associate with hypocrites.

<sup>5</sup> I abhor the assembly of evildoers and refuse to sit with the wicked.

<sup>6</sup> I wash my hands in innocence, and go about your altar, LORD,

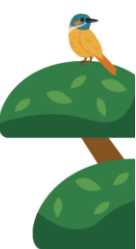
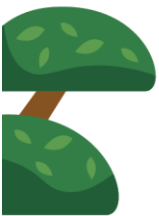
<sup>7</sup> proclaiming aloud your praise and telling of all your wonderful deeds.

<sup>8</sup> LORD, I love the house where you live, the place where your glory dwells.

<sup>9</sup> Do not take away my soul along with sinners, my life with those who are bloodthirsty,

<sup>10</sup> in whose hands are wicked schemes, whose right hands are full of bribes.

<sup>11</sup> I lead a blameless life; deliver me and be merciful to me.



<sup>12</sup> My feet stand on level ground; in the great congregation I will praise the LORD.

## Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

<sup>1</sup> In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. <sup>3</sup> The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. <sup>4</sup> So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

2:5 It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. <sup>6</sup> But there is a place where someone has testified:

'What is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
a son of man that you care for him?

<sup>7</sup> You made them a little lower than the angels;  
you crowned them with glory and honour

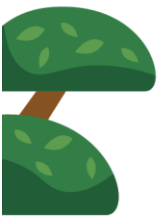
<sup>8</sup> and put everything under their feet.'

In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them. <sup>9</sup> But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. <sup>10</sup> In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. <sup>11</sup> Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. <sup>12</sup> He says,

'I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters;  
in the assembly I will sing your praises.'

## Mark 10:2-16

<sup>2</sup> Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' <sup>3</sup> 'What did Moses command you?' he replied. <sup>4</sup> They said, 'Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.' <sup>5</sup> 'It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,' Jesus replied. <sup>6</sup> 'But at the beginning of creation God "made them male and female". <sup>7</sup> "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, <sup>8</sup> and the two will become one flesh." So they are no longer two, but one flesh. <sup>9</sup> Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.' <sup>10</sup> When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about



this. <sup>11</sup> He answered, 'Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. <sup>12</sup> And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.'

<sup>13</sup> People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup> When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the beloved community of God belongs to such as these. <sup>15</sup> Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the beloved community of God like a little child will never enter it.' <sup>16</sup> And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

## NOTES:

- For the third consecutive week, the Gospel speaks of the place of children in God's kingdom. In Mark 10:14-15 Jesus blesses children and states, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' Today's children will inherit an impoverished and unstable world due to our failures to address climate and ecological breakdown. Many suffer from deep anxiety and despair. Yet, God's kingdom belongs to 'such as these'. How can we both learn from today's children and young people, and also become like them in trust and in seeing clearly?
- Hope is the key to living through despair. Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God speaks of a future hope that is guaranteed and certain. Even if today we see only glimpses and signs of hope amidst so much suffering, we can still live in the light of our prayer 'Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven'. One day, God's kingdom will come in all its glorious fullness. That does not mean we passively wait. Rather it gives us the motivation to live today in the light of that future truth.
- Hebrews 1:1-4 & 2:5-12 speak of Jesus as Lord of all creation. He is the one 'through whom' God made the universe (1:2), and who sustains all things 'by his powerful word' (1:3). He is 'heir of all things (1:2). 'now crowned with glory and honour (2:9) because of his saving death and suffering. We can have hope for the future of all creation, because Christ who died is now raised and reigns in glory. He is the one 'for whom and through whom everything exists' (2:10).
- In some mysterious way, Hebrews 2 also suggests that we as believers, are caught up with Christ in his glory, made holy, and 'crowned with glory and honour', with all things placed under our feet (2:7-8, quoting Psalm 8). Back in Genesis 1, humans were made in God's image and commissioned to reflect God's loving purposes in leadership within creation. We have repeatedly failed, but here, as in Romans 8:19 which states 'the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed', it seems the Church (God's 'sons and daughters') is once

again given leadership within the community of creation. This is both a deep and humbling mystery, and a great privilege and responsibility.

