

'To suggest that God might intervene to protect us from the corporate folly of our practices is as unchristian and unbiblical as to suggest that he protects us from the results of our individual folly or sin...God's faithfulness stands, assuring us that even in the most appalling disaster love will not let us go - but it will not be a safety net that guarantees a happy ending in this world.'

Abp Rowan Williams

'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.'

Margaret Mead, anthropologist

- Global carbon emissions reached a record high in 2018, rising by 3.4% in the US alone. The higher concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is one of the causes of the changes in the yearly rhythm of freeze-thaw. So tens of thousands of lakes are no longer covered in ice.
- Vast inland areas will become uninhabitable. (For instance, it's predicted that southern Spain will become a desert before the end of this century).

How will we feed ten billion people? 'A large body of evidence is beginning to accumulate showing how climate breakdown is likely to affect our food supply. Already farming in some parts of the world is being hammered by drought, floods, fire and locusts (whose resurgence in the past few weeks appears to be the result of anomalous tropical cyclones).' (George Monbiot, *The Guardian*, April 2020.)

We are not helpless creatures; we are now in the Anthropocene – with god-like powers. We just need the will to make the changes that will shape our human destiny. The actions we take in the next few years will shape the future of life on this planet for decades, even centuries, to come.

Living with crisis

There is a strong sense of crisis in the Gospels: '*Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time is coming... And what I say to you, I say to all: Keep awake.*' (Mark 13.37.) And in Romans 13.11: '*...you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep.*'

The first Christians believed they were living in the end times, introduced by Christ's death and resurrection. It would be a time of great suffering, when people's faith would be severely tested, before the Lord returned in power and judgement. So St Paul challenged people to change their ways, while they had time. And we too now stand under the judgement of God, for the mess we are making of God's creation. This sense of crisis, which those first Christians felt, is what many of us feel is happening for real to us now. We too need to keep awake and alert. We only have so much time to change our ways.

What's to be done?

We have to lobby our politicians, who alone have the power to enforce the changes that need to be made. But they will only act if they feel they have a sufficient number of their constituents really concerned about climate change.

For instance, air travel is the fastest growing source of carbon dioxide emissions. Yet passengers do not pay anywhere near the real cost of flying. The aviation industry enjoys zero tax on jet fuel and zero-rated VAT on plane tickets. No wonder flying can be so cheap! People need to be dissuaded from flying, perhaps with a 'frequent flying levy'. Governments have to act - but will they?

Young people all over the world are protesting about climate chaos. It all started with the 16-year-old Swedish activist, Greta Thunberg, in September 2018. She says her protest was sparked by the record heatwave in Northern Europe that started forest fires which wiped out large areas of her country. Greta has vowed to keep protesting until the government aligns its policies with the Paris climate agreement of 2015. And on 15th March 2019 many thousands of young people, from 51 countries, joined in a global day of action, calling on people everywhere - but especially politicians - to take climate chaos seriously and do more to reduce global warming.

'*Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: The time has arrived, the Kingdom of God is upon you. Repent and believe the good news.*' (Mark 1.15.) 'The time has arrived' to face reality, with no more pretence or avoiding the truth about the crisis we now face. Engaging with reality is the only way we can truly engage with God: only by getting real will we find the real God.

God's Kingdom is where God's will is done, where all are cared for, as God's children, and all creatures. 'Repent' is actually good news: Jesus believed we could change our ways. He can inspire us and help us to change. 'Believe the good news' that God is with us, and that nothing can separate us from his love.

'Adults keep saying: "We owe it to the young people to give them hope". But I don't want your hope. I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act... as if your house was on fire. Because it is.'

Greta Thunberg, climate change activist

From September 2020 all state schools in Italy will be required to dedicate around an hour a week to teaching children about sustainability and climate change. Additionally traditional subjects such as maths and geography will be taught from the perspective of sustainability.