



LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR – FOREST SUNDAY

Seasons of Creation - 1

September 06, 2020
Anglican Parish of Raymond Terrace
www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org

SEASONS OF CREATION 1

Pray:

May I speak to you in the name of GOD – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen



The words: “Love Thy Neighbour” give rise to many thoughts, emotions, and memories. There was that TV series back in the early 1970’s which looked at the bigoted relationships between people of different colour and race – available on You Tube but certainly not recommended viewing.

^In the Gospel of Matthew – at chapter 22:37-40 it says:
³⁷He said to him, ‘ “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” ³⁸This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’ In our passage from Exodus, God introduces and ordains what will become a major Israelite festival – the

Passover. ^As the passage describes, ⁴If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbour in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. In other words, we are to join with our neighbours in celebrating the Passover or significant events.

It is helpful – in the context of celebrating the Seasons of Creation, to read Psalm 149 in conjunction with Psalm 148 because we hear not only our neighbours praising GOD but all of creation.

In the passage from Paul's letter to the Romans, he examines how we as Christians should respond to GOD's plan for us in this beautiful world that He has created. ^This is best described in verses 8-10: ⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet'; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' ¹⁰Love does no

wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Our Gospel passage continues the theme of GOD's people being obedient and of keeping GOD's commandments. How should we react if someone in our Church community sins against us? The words "against us" seems to have been added after the original text was written. This shows the early Christian Church community – who were Jewish converts – grappling with the issue. The passage in verse 15 says: ¹⁵ 'If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. Otherwise, take it to a more formal hearing until a resolution can be found. It is clear, however, that there should be some discipline and in fact disciplinary action by the faith community – that whatever is bound on earth is bound in heaven, and whatever is loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Retired Bishop Geoff Davies from South Africa asks: How do we love our neighbour in the current ecological crisis? For too long, the church's theology, preaching and ministry has been involved in ambulance work – seeking to heal the damage done by self-centred mis-behaviour. We know that we must feed the hungry – but the question today is: [How do we stop people from becoming hungry?](#) How do we establish justice and equity for people and all of life? There is enough on this planet for our needs, but not our greed. The destruction of planetary life is NOT GOD's will. This needs to be loudly proclaimed from every pulpit and Bible Study around the world. Environmental care must become a priority.

The Church in the past has been apprehensive that in caring for nature we might be accused of worshipping Creation rather than the Creator – nature rather than GOD. We need to get the message to everybody that GOD is in everything. All life is sacred, and we must recognise that we are inescapably connected to the rest of life, a part of the web of life. In the extinction we are

bringing about, we are unravelling this web of life which is leading to our own demise. This is not GOD's will. Thus, there is the need for urgent action to care for life. Forests need to be replenished. They play an important part in our lives – consuming the carbon dioxide and giving us oxygen. Loving our neighbour applies not only to our human neighbours. On this Forest Sunday, it applies to our neighbours the trees as well. ^Here are some images to consider:

And so it cycles through – some trees have the ability to come back, others don't. New trees need to be planted wherever possible in order to maintain stability and a healthy environment.

September and the Season of Creation gives us the opportunity to take stock of our environmental position, get rid of any bad practices and to continue working toward a cleaner environment where everyone will benefit.



May we pray:

Heavenly Father, may the only debt we owe be that of loving one another. Help us to be more environmentally aware and responsible as we go about our daily lives. Help us to care for our forests in whatever way we can. This we pray in the name of JESUS. Amen



Life Application Study Bible

<http://sustainable-preaching.org/2020/09/06/14th-sunday-after-pentecost-season-of-creation-1/>