**Trinity Sunday – World Environment Day - Environment Sunday**

**Sermon Outline**

*The Spirit of the Lord fills the whole world, the Spirit of God renews the face of the earth –* this is a theme or pattern which runs through the Christ story and our worship from Ascension to Pentecost, sometimes called the birthday of the Church, and onto Trinity Sunday.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we find the festival of the supreme coming of the Spirit.

Yet the Spirit has many ‘comings’ and in a sense is always arriving. The coming of the Spirit begins on the day that the *ruach,* the breath of God, breathed upon the waters in Genesis 1. The Spirit comes countless times in the anointing and inspiring of prophets and kings. The Spirit overshadowed Mary and conceives the Christ-child; and again descends on Jesus in his baptism and anoints him for ministry. It was through the power of the Spirit that Jesus was raised. The 50 days of Easter could be seen as one great Easter Day culminating in the giving of the Spirit.

There are many images of fullness, overflowing, outpouring……as filled with the life of the Spirit we bring the gospel to the world.

Traditionally the mystical way was described as culminating in either union with God, or the infinite never-ending growth into the infinity of God, as Gregory of Nyassa describes. Further, there could come a stage, or some recognise a stage, in which the person who has moved into union with God begins to move out again with the outpouring of divine life for the world. Likewise in the priestly prayer of Jesus (John 17) divine union is the basis of divine mission.

Yet we are not ‘filled with the Spirit’ like containers, we are not ‘empty bottles to be filled – rather people of many dimensions and interests. The Spirit as wind, flame or stream rushes on with the Spirit’s own motion, the very motion that ‘fills all things in creation’ fills us too.

‘The Spirit of God fills the whole world – the Spirit of God renews the face of the earth’, proclaims the liturgy during the days between the ascension and Pentecost.

Is this ‘the new creation’? Is God transforming damaged and mutilated creation and making something magnificent?

A good place to start is to consider what has happened to the human condition…the picture presented is that God has forgiven us through Jesus Christ and given us a new birth. We have received a new start regardless of what has happened before, and have become new creations in Jesus Christ. If that is the case, then new birth begins with a restoration here and now, but to be completed in the future.

Paul is not speaking of an outer newness as much as one that will show new attitudes, new values and new desires through a new relationship with God.

Our frame of reference broadens, and rather than wanting an experience only for ourselves, or in the human community, we desire to be part of God’s total restorative process.

*John 3. 1-8, 16-17*

*Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. 2 He came to Jesus[a] by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” 3 Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”[b] 4 Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” 5 Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. 6 What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.[c] 7 Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You[d] must be born from above.’[e] 8 The wind[f] blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”…………….. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*

*17 “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*

Paul, who describes personal salvation in Romans, also believed confidently that ‘creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God’ ( Romans 8.21).

When we have a proper understanding of creation’s place within God’s total plans for salvation, we will develop a more positive attitude to the world. If God has asked us to care for creation, we will treat creation with love and gentleness rather than indifference or simply the backdrop, the scenery behind our existence. We will cease to plunder it simply for our own good.

What more does the festival of the Trinity teach us?

Maybe a sense of community; in the ‘glory of the eternal Trinity and in the power of divine majesty to worship the’ Unity’. The resurrection, as have seen in the New Testament, is the demonstration of the finality of Jesus’ Christ’s work of restoration of humanity to God’s purposes. The ministry of Jesus is universally known and now has universal ramifications. The resurrected Lord brought newness to our community and renewed hope towards the ultimate redemption of humanity and creation. The Church must proclaim this hope, and demonstrate it in a way of life which shows a sense of responsibility towards the community of creation in all its’ diversity.

The Church is founded on the reality of the resurrection, and is committed to demonstrating and proclaiming this reality. The resurrection and the coming of the Spirit made an inward looking group of disciples into a dynamic body turning the then-known world upside down. The Church today similarly, needs to look beyond its boundaries, break from purely human-centred perspectives and proclaim the complete message of hope to humanity and all creation. This is to be shown in a willingness to be involved in the renewal of God’s creation, in practical demonstrations of stewardship and care for the earth. If the resurrection is a historical reality, the Church as a historic community must get into action in all the world.

With what local issues can you and your Church become involved?

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