

A Christian Response to the Ecological Crisis

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Texts: Psalm 145 and Colossians 1: 15-20

Introduction

It is a great pleasure to be here today. The focus of this sermon is on the nature of Christian discipleship in the midst of the current global ecological crisis. Let me summarize my argument right at the outset – while everyone is still awake!

God has created an extraordinary universe of breathtaking scale, majesty and grandeur, with billions of galaxies each with billions of stars. The cosmos is truly amazing: it is ablaze with beauty, richness and diversity, bursting with wonder and mystery. So, too, is this small planet, Earth, that we are blessed to inhabit, with its millions of distinct species, each carefully perfected and evolved over billions of years.

God's creation has enormous intrinsic worth; it is utterly precious; every little bit is uniquely valuable. Why? Above all, because God made it, values it, providentially cares for it and blesses it – that is, He bestows upon it His favour. Likewise, God upholds the universe moment by moment, guides its development and sustains its natural laws. He does all this for a range of good purposes, some of which are not yet fully realized. Moreover, God delights and rejoices in everything He has made. It fills Him with joy.

In response, the whole creation, both animate and inanimate, reflects and displays its Maker's glory, power and wonder and offers back to God continuous worship and enduring praise. To quote Psalm 19, verse 1: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands". Likewise, Job 38, verse 7 speaks of "the morning stars" singing together and "all the heavenly beings" shouting for joy. And Psalm 145 ends with these words: "Let every creature praise his holy name forever and ever".

Humanity, likewise, is called to give voice to creation's praise of God. But further, we have a distinctive and special role: we are to be instruments of God's blessing of the created order and entrusted with its loving care. The early chapters of Genesis speak of humanity having 'dominion' over every living thing. But this means stewardship, guardianship or trusteeship, not domination or exploitation. And our stewardship must be viewed Christologically; that is, it must be informed by the ministry and Lordship of

Christ. Our stewardship must thus be characterized by servanthood, faithfulness, humble obedience, reconciliation and restoration.

Moreover, because the Earth is precious, we must treat it with consideration, sensitivity and respect. We are to preserve its beauty and nurture its fruitfulness. This does not negate our right to harness and utilize the Earth's rich physical resources to meet our needs, but we must do so with restraint and within strict limits. We must not annihilate entire species or be cruel, exploitative or wasteful. Rather, we are called to tread lightly, treasuring and cherishing everything that God has made. This responsibility of stewardship is all the more momentous because of the exceptional power we now possess to transform the natural world and to wreck havoc and destruction.

Regrettably, we have failed to be wise stewards. Indeed, we have precipitated a grave ecological crisis. As this unfolds, God's Spirit is stirring the conscience of the nations, revealing our collective folly and beseeching us to repent of our destructive impulses and profligate lifestyles. God is now calling all His people, each one of us, to serve as co-creators and co-redeemers, bringing healing and restoration to the scarred wastelands we have tragically fashioned.

So, that's my quick summary. Let me now unpack several of these points, respond to the inevitable objections which often arise, and then suggest what faithful and intelligent stewardship entails. But first, a few words about the ecological crisis.

The ecological crisis: a brief overview

Globally, we have witnessed extraordinary economic growth since the Second World War. This growth has yielded a dramatic improvement in the living standards of billions of people and substantially reduced material deprivation. But these benefits have come at a big environmental cost. At the global level, the damage includes: widespread habitat destruction and degradation; air, land and water pollution; ozone depletion; soil erosion and desertification; the over-exploitation of very scarce natural resources; climate change; ocean acidification; and massive deforestation. Here in New Zealand our problems include deteriorating water quality, the over-allocation of scarce fresh water supplies, a significant per capita carbon footprint, poor land-use management, weak marine governance and threats to many native species.

Many of you know a great deal about such problems and I will not dwell on them. But we need to understand the magnitude of the environmental damage being wrought across the planet. Many unique ecosystems have been destroyed forever and many beautiful landscapes have been irrevocably marred. Numerous species of animals, birds and fish have been lost, including dozens of bird species in this country alone. We have increased the species extinction rate about 1,000 times above the normal background rate. Tragically, therefore, we are entering the sixth great mass extinction event of the past 540 million years; such events are where more than 50% of the planet's species are destroyed. The most recent mass extinction was about 65 million years ago. This witnessed the demise of the dinosaurs and countless other creatures. But unlike previous

mass extinctions, which were the result of massive volcanic eruptions and asteroid impacts, the current event is the product of human activity – much of it driven by ignorance and greed. As the former Pope Benedict XVI observed at his Inaugural Mass in 2005: “The external deserts in the world are growing because our internal deserts have become so vast”.¹

Unfortunately, further significant environmental harm is now inevitable. This is because of the inertia or long lags in many natural and human systems – the climate system, energy systems, transport systems and political systems. Our carbon emissions today, for example, will have damaging consequences for numerous generations to come. Accordingly, it is imperative to act quickly, both globally and locally. Failure to do so will lead to massive ecological degradation; it will also pose a major threat to economic and social progress. As the international body, the OECD, recently argued in a major report, there is a risk of “irreversible changes that could endanger two centuries of rising living standards”.²

For most people, the magnitude of what is being lost and the huge risks we are running are largely invisible. Most of us live in urban areas. Few of us have a detailed knowledge of ecology or this planet's bio-physical systems. We do not witness daily or directly the unfolding drama of death and destruction in the natural world. But there are ways of tapping into this world. For instance, Bernie Krause, a musician and naturalist, has spent some four decades making sound recordings of many of the world's most pristine habitats, including some 15,000 species. Unfortunately, the loss of species over recent decades has been so extensive that around half these recordings are now archives – they cannot be repeated either because the relevant habitats have ceased to exist or because they have been so compromised by human noise. As Krause has put it:

A great silence is spreading over the natural world even as the sound of man is becoming deafening ... Little by little the vast orchestra of life, the chorus of the natural world, is in the process of being quietened. [This is the chorus that offers constant praise and worship to God ...]

There has been a massive decrease in the density and diversity of key vocal creatures, both large and small. The sense of desolation extends beyond mere silence. If you listen to a damaged sound-scape ... the community [of life] has been altered, and organisms have been destroyed, lost their habitat or been left to re-establish their places in the spectrum. As a result, some voices are gone entirely, while others aggressively compete to establish a new place in the increasingly disjointed chorus.³

In short, the human impact on the Earth's fragile ecosystems is taking a large toll. Leading scientists believe that we are already exceeding many safe planetary

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Inaugural Mass*, 24 April 2005.

² OECD, *OECD Environmental Outlook to 2050: The Consequences of Inaction* (Paris: OECD, 2012), Highlights, p.1.

³ Quoted by John Vidal, *The Guardian*, 3 September 2012.

boundaries.⁴ Our ecological footprint is too big. We are borrowing from the future and leaving our grandchildren a dreadful legacy in the form of a huge ecological debt.

A Christian perspective

OK: enough doom and gloom! What does the Bible have to say about the relationship between humanity and the rest of creation and where does ‘creation care’ fit within God’s overall purposes for this universe? Further, what might constitute a proper, authentic and faithful Christian response to the ecological crisis facing this planet?

Encouragingly, there is a growing body of Christian scholarship on these issues, with contributions from thoughtful Christians working in a multiplicity of disciplines. I would note, in particular, people like Richard Bauckham, Sam Berry, John Houghton, Michael Northcott, Christopher Southgate, Richard Swinburne and Tom Wright. I would particularly recommend Richard Bauckham's *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (Baylor University Press, 2010).

Equally, the Bible contains a treasure trove of riches in relation to ecological matters. There is relevant, instructive and life-giving material throughout the canon of scripture, including the Torah, the major and minor prophets, the wisdom literature, the Gospels, the epistles and, not least, the book of Revelation. Moreover, all the great doctrines of our faith offer insights of relevance to our ecological crisis, above all the doctrines of the Trinity, the creation, the fall, Christ's incarnation and resurrection, and the crucial themes of salvation and reconciliation.

Reasons for caring about the creation

So, why should we care about the state of this planet? The short answer is the divine mandate to be responsible stewards. But let me take a slightly different approach and offer three related reasons.

First, as already emphasized, this is God's world. To quote Psalm 24, verse 1: “the earth is the Lord’s, and all that is in it”. Humanity does not own this planet. We are not the creators; we are but God's creatures, the product of his creative genius. The whole creation belongs to God; every little bit. Nothing belongs to us. Nothing is ours for keeps. God is the owner of this remarkable vineyard; we are but the tenants – as highlighted by Jesus parable of the wicked tenants. Accordingly, we must approach the subject of ecological concern from a position of absolute humility, standing in awe of God's extraordinary handiwork and creative power.

To quote from Psalm 8:

When I consider your heavens,

⁴ See, for instance, Johan Rockström, et al., “A Safe Operating Space for Humanity”, *Nature*, 461, 24 September 2009, 472-475; John Rockström, et al., “Planetary Boundaries: Exploring the Safe Operating Space for Humanity”, *Ecology and Society*, 14, 2.

the work of your fingers,
 the moon and the stars,
 which you have set in place,
 what is man that you are mindful of him,
 the son of man that you care for him ...
 O Lord, our Lord,
 how majestic is your name in all the earth.

In short, God is the creator and we are his creatures. Accordingly, we need to respect His creation – every aspect of it – and care for what He has temporarily gifted to us. Failure to do so is morally wrong; it shows a contempt for the Creator and an indifference to His incredible gift. Without doubt, therefore, it is sinful.

Secondly, the creation is the object of God's ongoing providential care; this includes all aspects of the created order. Further, God seeks to achieve this providential care at least in part through the work of humanity. The scriptures contain a wealth of material on this theme, although I suspect that we often miss it. Let me just mention a few relevant scriptures.

However we understand the story of the flood and Noah's ark in Genesis, the story is instructive in affirming God's desire for the preservation of life and his quest for a fresh start after a chaotic period of corruption, rebellion and endemic violence. Likewise, Noah is presented as "the epitome of the kind of responsible care for other creatures" that God expects of all humanity.⁵ Notice, too, that the covenant which God makes after the flood is with all his creatures, not just human beings. To quote Genesis 9, verses 9-10, God says to Noah: "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you – the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals ... every living creature on earth". And later, quoting verse 16: "Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth". Such verses speak powerfully of God's providential care. The Earth is home to all God's creatures, not just humanity. Every creature is a precious and integral part of the wonderful "community of creation", as Richard Bauckham describes it.

Many other scriptures reflect a similar perspective. To quote Psalm 145, verse 9: "The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made"; that is, all creaturely life. And later, from verses 16 and 17: "You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. The Lord is righteous in all his ways and loving towards all he has made".

Likewise, to quote Jesus' words in Matthew's gospel, 6, verse 26: "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them". Or we can turn to Exodus and Leviticus, where the various decrees required the people of Israel to share the resources of the land, not merely with the poor and strangers, but also with the wild animals (Lev 25:7, etc.). In other words, God showed concern for wild nature: like their domestic counterparts, the wild animals must

⁵ Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, p.24.

also have enough to eat. This concern for all creatures is expressed in the requirement for all fields, vineyards and orchards to lie fallow and be left to rest every seven years – the so-called sabbatical decrees. Likewise, those who killed animals inappropriately were required to pay restitution (Lev: 24:21). In summary, the picture we have from the scriptures is very clear: humanity must share the resources of the Earth and contribute to God's providential care for every creature.

The third reason why we should care about the creation is because it is an integral part of God's eschatological purposes; it is inextricably bound up in his redemptive plans. The non-human world is not some temporary prop or extraneous stage on which the drama of salvation history is unfolding;⁶ it will not be destroyed when this drama reaches its final climax; rather it will be liberated and healed, set free from the deep "groaning" of which the Apostle Paul speaks in Romans 8. Salvation history, in other words, is not about the complete abandonment or replacement of the current created order, but about its ultimate reconciliation, renewal and transformation. To be sure, there will be discontinuity – the book of Revelation, for instance, speaks of a new Heaven and a new Earth; but there will also be continuity – as we witness in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. In other words, a new reality will emerge from the old. I realize that there remains much mystery in all this and we are at the limits of what can reasonably be known or claimed at this point in salvation history.

But let us consider what Paul says about Christ and the creation in his letter to the Colossians (1:15-20). Of Christ he writes:

He is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn over all creation;
for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created,
things visible and invisible ...

all things have been created through him and for him.
He himself is before all things
and in him all things hold together ...

For in him all the fullness (of God) was pleased to dwell,
and through him to reconcile to him all things,
whether on earth or in heaven,
by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Now, we could spend hours reflecting on these verses. But let me just highlight several points. Notice, first, the constant repetition of "all things". Plainly, this means everything, both in heaven and on Earth. This of course includes human beings, but it equally includes absolutely everything else. Notice, further, that Christ is involved intimately in the creation of all things, in sustaining all things, and in reconciling all things. Thus the scope of Christ's reconciling work is just as broad and extraordinary as the scope of his creative work – it includes everything; the reconciliation of the whole

⁶ Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, p.145.

creation, not just humanity. God wants everything ultimately to be at peace, to be complete, to be put right and to be reconciled to Him.

Notice, also, the continuity that this passage highlights between the original creation and the new creation. The original creation will ultimately be reconciled and transformed, not replaced and destroyed. Moreover, the process has begun: the new creation has already been inaugurated in the resurrection of Christ, but of course it is far from complete. Nevertheless, its destiny is secure. Christ will ensure that the ultimate goal of reconciliation is fully achieved. But how? Christopher Southgate puts it this way: Christ, via His incarnation and resurrection, “takes *all* creaturely experience into the life of God in a new way”,⁷ thereby making possible the transformation of all life and matter in the age to come, that is, making possible the redemption and renewal of the whole creation. Hence, in the new Heaven and the new Earth we have reason to believe that there will be a multiplicity of creatures living some form of resurrected life. If so, humanity will certainly not be alone!

But what is humanity's role in all of this? In brief, our role is to serve as Christ's disciples. This includes being co-creators and co-redeemers with Christ, seeking wherever possible to live in harmony with the created order and bring healing and restoration where damage has been done.

In summary, aside from the clear and unequivocal mandate to be responsible stewards of God's good creation, we have at least three other reasons to care for this planet and its millions of species: first, this is God's world, and we ought to respect it; second, the creation is the object of God's ongoing providential care and He actively seeks our involvement and cooperation in this process; and third, the creation is an integral part of God's eschatological purposes; it is inextricably bound up in His plan for redemption.

Some common objections

Now let me turn quickly to some objections. Over the past four decades since I became involved in environmental policy issues many Christians have challenged the view that 'creation care' is part of the gospel. The objections take various forms.

First, some people argue that there is a fundamental distinction between physical stuff and spiritual stuff, or between matter and the spirit, or between our physical bodies and our souls, or between our minds and bodies. Further, they claim that none of the physical stuff, including the entire universe, is important or valuable because it will not endure. Eventually it will cease to exist. Hence, we should focus on spiritual matters and, above all, the salvation of our souls.

Known as dualism, this approach has its roots in Greek philosophy, especially the writings of Plato. While Christians have had different views about dualism over the centuries, the majority view has been cautious if not highly critical. In my view, there is no Biblical basis for denigrating the value of physical things, including our bodies or the

⁷ Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation*, p.77.

creation more generally. Notice that Genesis (1:31) tells us that, on the sixth day of creation, God saw everything that he had made and it was "very good". God clearly thought all the physical stuff was valuable. Moreover, John's Gospel (1:14) declares that "the Word became flesh and lived among us"; that is, God became incarnate in Jesus Christ; God took on human flesh; he became part of the material stuff of this planet, a member of the community of creation. He thus completely embraced and fully experienced the physical world. Accordingly, Christ's incarnation affirms the worth and importance of the physical world. So, too, does the bodily resurrection of our Lord. When Jesus rose from the dead, his body was not destroyed or annihilated or left decaying in the tomb; it was renewed and transformed, acquiring new and extraordinary properties but still bearing the wounds of His crucifixion. Likewise, when we die our souls will not linger perpetually in some disembodied state; rather God will make us whole persons again with new, resurrected bodies. Thus, while we can justifiably distinguish between physical and spiritual things, there is no Biblical warrant for downplaying the value of the physical stuff of this universe. In short, matter matters!

A second, and related, objection is that we should focus on saving people's souls, not on saving the planet. Our emphasis should be on evangelism, not environmentalism. But surely this distinction is false. The Great Commission given to us by Jesus, as recorded in Matthew's gospel (28-18-20) is this: "go and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you". Well, what does discipleship mean? What does it require of us? Surely it entails following Christ, being salt and light in the world, and being faithful and obedient. And this surely includes giving proper attention to what God requires of us in terms of how we live our lives, how we treat other people, and how we treat the amazing world that God has placed us in. Our evangelism risks being cheap, shallow and insincere if it is not combined with faithful living.

Thirdly, people sometimes claim that creation care entails a commitment to pantheism and the worship of nature; that is, it implies that nature is God or at least part of God. But this objection has no validity whatsoever. Christian theology has always made a fundamental distinction between the Creator and the creation. The creation is neither God nor part of God, as pantheists believe. Admittedly, God is present or immanent in creation in various ways. But the cosmos is not the physical manifestation of his 'spiritual body'. God exists utterly apart from and beyond the physical or natural world. Hence, we do not honour, value or care for the creation because it is in some sense part of God, but rather because it is the product of God's creative energy and subject to His providential care. To repeat my previous comments: the cosmos is valuable because God created, sustains and cares for it, and because it is inextricably bound up in his redemptive purposes. And while it is utterly proper that we should delight in everything that God has made, there is absolutely no case for worshipping it. We worship God and God alone. In short, we can readily care for God's world without embracing pantheism.

Let me now turn to a fourth and arguably more common and significant objection. Over the years I have often heard Christians say: "Yes, the environment is important and yes, we should look after it, but human beings are much more valuable than the non-human world. After all, human beings are made in the image of God and we have a special

destiny. We should therefore focus our attention on caring for our neighbours rather than caring for the environment. The human world, in other words, should have precedence over the non-human world". Various presuppositions often underpin such views. One of these is that human beings are not an integral part of creation; somehow humanity is above, separate or independent from the rest of the natural world. A related presupposition is that to the extent that human beings are embedded in the creation, this is a bad thing. The aim is to be liberated from the creation so that we are no longer bound by its limits.

What might constitute a proper Christian response to such views? To start with, while human beings have a unique place within creation, we are very much part of the creation and utterly dependent upon it. God has placed us unambiguously within creation, not above it or outside of it. As Richard Bauckham writes:

Humans are not demi-Gods ... set like God above creation, but creatures among other creatures, dependent, like other creatures, on the material world of which they are part, and immersed in a web of reciprocal relationships with other creatures.⁸

Furthermore, he argues that we need to recognize the "fundamental solidarity of humans with the rest of creation".⁹ Humans cannot flourish in the longer term in a scarred, degraded and impoverished biosphere. Our prospering is dependent upon the prospering of the rest of creation.

Moreover, the Biblical view suggests that we are to live in mutuality and harmony with the natural world, not seek emancipation from it. To quote Bauckham again:

God's purpose in history and in the eschatological future does not abstract humans from nature, but heals the human relationship with nature. Only after fully appreciating that human embeddedness in, and solidarity with, the rest of creation, can we then understand rightly the sense in which humanity is in certain ways highly distinctive by comparison with the rest of creation ...¹⁰

Fifthly, some claim that there is no need to worry about the ecological crisis because God will limit the damage. We may be in the early stages of the sixth mass extinction of species, but God is bound to intervene and stop it. This is because God will not tolerate damage, destruction and suffering beyond a certain threshold.

But is this true? Certainly we can say that God actively seeks to limit the scope and duration of evil; but the historical record suggests that human beings have been given a remarkable degree of freedom, including the freedom either to destroy or affirm God's creation. It is also clear that God chooses to work through the hearts, minds, hands and

⁸ Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, pp.27-28.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.28.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.150.

feet of human beings and that He has given us a very clear mandate to look after this amazing world.

Furthermore, we should not be presumptuous. We should not expect God to save us from our folly. We cannot lay waste to countless ecosystems or destabilize the planet's climate system without suffering the consequences. God expects each of us to exercise proper care and responsible environmental stewardship. As Rowan Williams has put it, “we have to say, as believers, that the possibility of life is never exhausted within creation: there is always a future. But in this particular context – this specific planet – that future depends in significant ways on our cooperation, imaginative labour, on the actions of each of us”.¹¹

Finally, there are those who say that we have no need to worry about the ecological crisis because science will save us. But such an approach is potentially reckless and irresponsible. Not only does it ignore humanity's tendency for scientific hubris and arrogance, it also fails to acknowledge our capacity for duplicity and self-deceit. Moreover, while necessity may be the mother of invention, we cannot change the basic laws of nature. There are real biophysical limits within which we must live. Extinction is forever. The process is irreversible – at least given our current state of knowledge. Hence, we should not delay in making the required policy and lifestyle changes on the basis that something will turn up or that science will come to the rescue. Having said this, we need to harness the resources of the scientific community to the fullest possible extent. Mitigating climate change, for instance, will require a radical shift in global energy systems over the next few decades, with a rapid increase in our reliance on renewable energy sources (including solar, wind, geothermal, marine, etc.) and the abandonment of coal, oil and gas, except where there is an effective and safe regime of carbon capture and storage. But for renewable energy sources to be competitive, significant additional technological progress will be required.

How should we live in the face of the ecological crisis?

To conclude, let me offer a few thoughts on what stewardship means in the context of our ecological crisis.

First, we need a proper creaturely humility – including being aware of our own internal deserts, lamenting our many failings and lack of care, and recognizing our utter dependence on God and His abundant grace. This humility and lament will, in turn, lead us to prayer, repentance and worship.

Secondly, and related to this, we must be constantly alert to the power of evil, the sway of greed, and the force of sin. There is no place for complacency. Nor is there any room for denial, avoidance, evasion or escapism. Above all, we must avoid the temptation to be God – such as the desire to free ourselves from the proper limits of our creatureliness.

¹¹ Rowan Williams, “The Climate Crisis: Fashioning a Christian Response”, 13 October 2009.

Thirdly, we need to draw on God's revelation through the scriptures and exercise our God-given reason to identify ethical principles and values to guide our actions and inform government policy. Such principles will almost certainly include: relying on the best available scientific evidence; recognizing the intrinsic value and interdependence of every part of the natural world; exercising caution in the face of uncertainty; acting with humility and compassion; addressing the causes of our problems rather than papering over the cracks with expensive and risky technological fixes; and identifying non-negotiable bottom-lines, such as the need to protect unique areas of wilderness and preserve critical or non-substitutable natural capital.

Equally important, we need to expand our notion of what loving our neighbour means. For our neighbours include not only those alive here and now, but also all those in the future who may suffer harm because of our actions or inactions today. And while taking a broad view of what neighbour love means, we must also recognize that we are an integral part of the amazing community of creation, so our compassion, like God's compassion, must extend to all life, not only human life.

Fourthly, we are called to act, both individually and collectively, and at all levels – as congregations, as local communities, within our businesses and places of work, but also nationally and internationally. Individually, we must prayerfully consider what God requires of us, but it is clear that God is prompting many Christians to devote much of their time and skills to the task of creation care. For some, this will be costly, but that is the nature of Christian discipleship.

Fifthly, we must avoid being overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task or paralyzed by fear, foreboding or depression. For in Christ, there are no grounds for defeatism or fatalism. “Behold”, Jesus said, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). Equally, we must never conclude that our efforts to conserve, heal and restore God's creation are worthless. Doing what is right, responding to the Spirit of God, is important and valuable, regardless of the apparent short-term outcome. When Paul remarks that “our labour in the Lord will not be in vain” (1 Cor 15:58), he does not imply that our strivings will inevitably improve our current circumstances. Rather, he means that they “will have effects that will be preserved in the new creation”.¹² The nature of these effects we may never know. But we must be faithful all the same.

Finally, in the midst of the demanding tasks that await us, let us always rejoice in the awesome God we worship and adore. To quote a well-known hymn: "The Lord our God is good; His mercy is forever sure; His truth at all times firmly stood, and shall from age to age endure". And from Psalm 145, verses 8-9: "The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on everything he has made".

Thanks be to God!

¹² Richard Bauckham, “Ecological Hope in Crisis?”, p.3.