



Climate Change and the Purposes of God

Session three. What is God asking of me?

‘What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?’ (Micah 6:8).

1. Here is a story from Oxfam:

People living in Char Atra, an island community in Bangladesh, have had huge problems as their land is being lost due to erosion as the river floods.
“Eight months ago I was living where the river is now. Since I got married I have moved to a new home six times because of the river erosion. This is happening more frequently as before we used to stay for three or four years in one place but during the last five years we have been forced to move every year. Six years ago we owned some land but this became a river and now we are landless. I hope we will be safe this year but we can’t predict where the river erosion will happen after the flood.”
Hasina Begum, Char Atra, Bangladesh.
Extract from Oxfam Education’s Climate Change Impact Stories.

? Why is climate change an issue of justice?.

2. Climate Change and the Purposes of God links the call to justice with the justice of God:

God is just and requires justice in response from us. This justice applies to poor communities already suffering the devastating consequences of climate change, to future generations, and to all other creatures. The prophets put economic behaviour at the forefront of their call to justice. The primary driver of human induced climate change is the belief that prosperity depends on limitless consumption of the earth’s resources. Today, the challenge is to seek a different, sustainable economy, based on the values of human flourishing and the well-being of all creation, not on the assumption of unlimited economic growth, on overconsumption, exploitative interest and debt. To seek justice for all, for present and future generations, our authorities must encourage and enable all people to live fairly and sustainably. Acting justly requires us to hold our governments and corporations to account.

? What does the word ‘justice’ mean to you? Can you give some examples of ways in which we live ‘unjustly’ in relation to God’s earth?

3. A definition of justice?

God's justice has to do with wellbeing and flourishing at all levels of life and relationship:

- Flourishing in our relationships with God
- Flourishing in our relationships with each other
- Flourishing in our own hearts and consciences
- Flourishing in our relationships with our environment.

Discussion

Talk together about what the word 'flourishing' means to you. What do you do which contributes to - or gets in the way of - human flourishing and the wellbeing of all creatures?

How could we look for a different sort of economics in which human flourishing and the well being of all creatures takes priority over the quest for financial growth and making everything into a commodity with a price-tag?

4. Justice and neighbour love.

Read James 2:1 – 9. 'Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead' (James 2:17)

What is the relationship between 'justice' and 'love of neighbour'?

Christ teaches us to love all our neighbours, not just our own family and friends. This love extends to our grandchildren and future generations. People in poor communities are mostly innocent of any role in causing climate change, whilst the nations that pollute the most, refuse to accept their responsibilities. Loving our neighbour requires us to reduce our consumption of energy for the sake of Christ, who suffers with those who suffer. To live simply and sustainably contributes significantly to human flourishing. As the nations fight over dwindling energy resources, Christians need to bear witness that the way to life, and not death, is the way of non-retaliation. In the future, Christians may also be called to receive into their communities refugees forced to leave their lands through climate change.

? Do you agree that God is especially on the side of the poor and disadvantaged?

? How, in practice, can we love our neighbours?

? How can we, as a church, become better informed about the impact of climate change around the world, and pray for those impacted most?

? Have you measured your household's carbon footprint? If not, use our calculator (<http://www.operationnoah.org/carbon-calculator>) to do this. A carbon footprint of 2 tonnes per person would bring some measure of justice around the world.

? Which aspect of your life contributes most to climate change? How might you commit to changing it?