

To plant a tree is to say yes to life
 It is to affirm our faith in the future.
 To plant a tree is to acknowledge our debt to the past:
 Seeds are not created out of nothing.
 To plant a tree is to co-operate in nature's works
 Whereby all forms of life are interdependent.
 To plant a tree is to take sorrow for past mistakes
 When we took life's gifts for granted.
 To plant a tree is to make a social statement for green-consciousness,
 For conservation and ecology.
 To plant a tree is to enhance the quality of life
 It brings beauty to the eyes and uplifts the spirit.
 To plant a tree is to make a spiritual statement or point.
 We are all members of the tree of life
 We stand or fall together.

Francis Simon, page 77



Breadsall blossom
 and Allestree woods,
 April 2017



LENT COURSE, SESSION 3

Saying Yes to Life, Ruth Valerio (published SPCK 2020). Resources and youtube videos at <https://spckpublishing.co.uk/saying-yes-resources>

Genesis 1.9-13 - "in this chapter our focus will be on land and trees, looking both at their roles in the great story of salvation in the Bible and then how they feature in our contemporary context" (Valerio, page 53 - you may wish to look at the pages which precede this and tell the story of tree-planting in Peru).

Life emerges in order and symmetry, like a flower unfolding, opening pup and revealing intricacy and loveliness - abundance, "a fecundity that lies at the heart of a God who is three-persons-in-one, and who wants always to be giving to the other in generosity and overflowing love" (page 54).

- Discuss examples of this in Creation

And God saw that it was good

Phrase is used seven times (and note "very good" in verse 31) - too often the Church has described Creation as "wrecked" or "broken" and the church is a lifeboat to save us (plant churches not tress), which comes from a very negative view of the world - if Creation has come from the loving God making space for it through his creative and generous heart, if the eternal nature of God becomes visible in his creation ... what does that mean for our view of it all? David Wilkinson uses the phrase "matter matters to God" - the dualism of the past separates out body and spirit, earth and heaven, natural and spiritual.

The world has paid a price for this dualism - Protestant missionary theologians going to Africa demystified nature and put it in the secular sphere.

Debate on the value of nature - is it extrinsic (i.e. its value lies outside of its as a resource for us to use) or intrinsic (i.e. it has value in and of itself, regardless of its value to people)? "The value of nature is theocentric" (the value lies in God and in his perception). "God's affirmation of the goodness and value of this world spurs us on therefore to take care that we do not wipe our ecological footprints all over it, leaving it damaged and wrecked" (page 57)

Living in the Land

Creation is where we are rooted. Psalm 24.1 “the earth is the Lord’s and everything in it” - OT Law (e.g. Deut 8.17-18) reminds people they are tenants of the land - In the OT God seeks to restore the people’s relationship with Him, but this cannot be dissolved from how they are related to their land (their Promised Land) - e.g. Isaiah 58.6-7, Lev 25.1-5, Psalm 148 - in the NT Paul talks of the land “groaning” (Roms 8.19-22). Isaiah 65.21 looks ahead to a time of vineyards, the NT to a garden city with water and trees

- Where are we rooted?
- Do we feel like tenants?
- Think of the value of green spaces in our cities.

Acknowledgement of country

Pages 60-62 give examples from the indigenous peoples of Australia, a very different view of the land to what we are used to - “Receive the world that God has given. Go for a walk. Get wet. Dug the earth” (Rowan Williams, page 62)

This loss affects everyone (p 62) & The Right to Land (pa64)

We have lost a huge amount by ignoring the indigenous peoples and their knowledge - people who are robbed of their land experience deep grief and ongoing problems - right back to those who entered the Promised Land and drove people out, through the African slave trade, and into the C21. The Church has been linked to so much of that. “When the missionaries came to Africa, they had the Bible and we had the land. They said ‘let us close our eyes and pray.’ When we opened them, we had the Bible, and they had the land” (Desmond Tutu, page 63). Need for repentance.

Lots of examples of how people loose their right to land, and how long and hard the fight can be to get it back.

Trees of Life (page 66)

Trees are all through the Bible - Genesis 2, Lev 14.49-53, Solomon’s knowledge (1 Kings 4.33), trees at the heart of worship - Cedars of Lebanon were the Ferrari of their day - Messiah as righteous branch

Psalm 1

Blessed are they who have not walked
in the counsel of the wicked, ♦
nor lingered in the way of sinners,

nor sat in the assembly of the scornful.

Their delight is in the law of the Lord ♦

and they meditate on his law day and night.

Like a tree planted by streams of water

bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither, ♦
whatever they do, it shall prosper.

- How do we plant ourselves beside streams of water?

I am the Vine

Remember that myrrh and frankincense come from trees - Jesus the carpenter - think of trees in his teaching. Holy Week journey - Palms, cursing of the fig tree, Olives, thorns, myrrh, cross.

“On the third day the friends of Christ coming at the daybreak to the place found the grave empty and the stone rolled away. In varying ways they realized the new wonder; but even they hardly realized that the world had died in the night. What they were looking at was the first day of a new creation, with a new heaven and a new earth; and in a semblance of the gardener God walked again in the garden, in the cool not of the evening but the dawn” (G.K. Chesterton, page 70)

Do trees scream?

Page 71 has interesting images of trees being rooted together (literally), working (and suffering) together

Half the world’s tropical forests have been destroyed in my lifetime. People are at work trying to protect, but the powers against them are formidable - Ethiopia is taking massive steps to reforest, and the church is at the centre of it - projects in UK to ensure churches plant trees (where could we get involved?) - how do we change our lifestyle to protect the trees?