

## **Our broken world**

Louis Armstrong sang, “what a beautiful world” and he was right, it is a beautiful world.

His song touches our hearts, as we see trees of green, red roses too, as we see skies of blue, and clouds of white, bright blessed days, dark sacred nights.

When we see the colours of the rainbow so pretty in the sky  
and on the faces of people going by.

When we see friends shaking hands sayin' how do you do, really sayin' I love you.

When we hear babies cry, and watch them grow.

Yes, we can say it's a wonderful world.

But Louis Armstrong wasn't the first to say these words.

They were first spoken by the Creator of this world. God stood back and he admired his work, and he said, “It is good!” What a beautiful world. He saw that it was good and he was rightly pleased of his creation, and so at the beginning he created humans to be the stewards of his creation.

What an amazing world filled with such variety, created with design, coloured to perfection.

I see God as an artist, and on his canvas, he paints Creation and brings it to life.

It is good.

And on the sixth day, we appear.

We arrive after the world was created and God places us into the centre of his picture; He creates us to look after all that He has made. He has placed this responsibility on our shoulders.

“The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” 2v15 and God stepped back from the canvas and he said it's good!

With this privilege to look after God's world comes free will. God places at the heart of the world, the opportunity humans to make decisions. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is planted at the centre of the garden.

He could have made us like robots, programmed to do what we should, but God made us in His image, therefore with the ability to choose between good and evil.

It didn't take long for the world to implode.

By the third chapter of Genesis, the world had fallen into disarray. Disobedience to God brought about man being sent from the garden and the garden of life being permanently closed.

If we follow the story of Genesis, we find that humanity falls further away from God. Cain murders his brother Abel and wickedness takes root as humans increase in numbers on the earth.

This culminates with God saying that "His spirit will not contend with humans for ever..." 6v1.

6 v 5 The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. <sup>6</sup> The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. <sup>7</sup> So the Lord said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them." <sup>8</sup> But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord.

An environmental, ecological disaster was to come upon the world.

But God in his mercy gives us a lifeline. That lifeline was the salvation through a family who would survive the environmental disaster. They were instructed to build a large Ark to save the animals.

The flood did wipe out the inhabitants of earth and all the animals but God gave us a new beginning, another opportunity for the world to thrive.

So, what has this to do with caring for Creation.

I think it is a check for us to again reassess our world. Are we much different than the generation of Noah? What did they do that caused an environmental disaster? What was their sin?

Today as we look around this beautiful world, we don't have to look too far to see the mess that humans are making of God's planet. Here are some issues according to a charity called "The Earth Project"

7 Biggest Environmental Issues We Are Facing Today

There is a wide range of environmental issues currently impacting the entire globe. From deforestation to overpopulation, all of these factors are manmade and have directly led to a decline in wildlife habitat and species destruction. In our article, we're going to be covering seven of the biggest environmental issues that we are currently facing.

### 1. Overpopulation

One of the biggest environmental issues we are currently facing is overpopulation. Based on the Census website's population clock, we are averaging one birth every eight seconds and one death every 15 seconds worldwide. This translates to an estimated net population growth rate of one person in the world every 15 seconds. With these types of numbers, the estimated population count of the world will reach approximately 9.7 billion people by the year 2050. Unfortunately, this type of sustained population growth is not sustainable for us as a species or the environment. With a direct impact on our food production and other important factors, overpopulation is one of the leading causes.

### 2. Threatened Fresh Water Supply

Access to fresh drinking water is crucial to the ongoing survival of the majority of life on Earth. This is why we are included this in our list of the biggest environmental issues that we are currently facing. Factors that are threatening our supply of fresh water include overpopulation as well as things like pollution. One of the biggest sources of water pollution actually comes from runoff from agricultural and livestock farms. These nitrogen-rich compounds reach our fresh waterways and disrupt the natural balance that protects them. In addition, the construction of dams and other manmade structures has a tendency to displace wildlife from freshwater sources and disrupt their natural order as well. To counteract this, it's important to conserve fresh water whenever possible. It's also vital to implement development practices that are less harmful to the environment.

### 3. Deforestation

Deforestation is another one of the biggest environmental issues as well. Forests cover an estimated 31 percent of the Earth's landmass. The biggest contributor to deforestation by far is clearing lands for agricultural use. While the exact numbers may vary slightly, it's estimated that we lose approximately 27 soccer fields of forest area in the world every minute. With numbers like this, we are quickly destroying the habitats of a variety

of wildlife and plants. We owe many of our modern advances in medicine to the discovery of compounds that are only naturally present in these rainforests. In addition, the loss of rainforests quickly leads to soil erosion and other secondary factors that can decimate large areas of land.

#### 4. Global Warming

No list of the biggest environmental issues currently threatening us would be complete without global warming. Global warming quickly leads to a variety of environmental issues that impact people all across the world. One of the biggest issues associated with global warming is related to Arctic sea ice. Arctic sea ice plays a crucial role in reflecting light back into the atmosphere and regulating the Earth's overall temperature. Unfortunately, scientists have noticed a recent decline in Arctic sea ice that is likely related to global warming. While it is normal for Arctic sea ice to experience periods of remission, the degree of loss is much more severe recently than almost any point in recorded history. In addition to sea ice loss, global warming also leads to ocean acidification. This process quickly leads to mass coral deaths that result in the loss of habitat for many protected aquatic species. The melting of sea ice also leads to rising water levels; they can be particularly dangerous to coastal communities all across the world.

#### 5. Overfishing

Another one of the biggest environmental issues currently facing us is overfishing. Directly tied to overpopulation, our hunger for fresh fish has caused us to tax the supply of wild fish all across the world. In total, the average person eats an estimated 19.2kg of fish each year. This is almost twice the amount we consumed 50 years ago. This type of mass farming of the world's oceans has led to a 39 percent decrease in recorded marine species in just 40 years. To further put this in perspective, only ten percent of the world's fish species are classified as underfished. This type of behaviour is not sustainable and will eventually lead to species destruction and loss of a valuable food source.

#### 6. Pollution

Pollution comes in many different forms and is another one of the biggest environmental issues. The two largest contributors of pollution are from farms as well as raising livestock. With these types of activities, manure and fertilizer are quickly carried away with rain where it reaches the water table. As it works its way to streams and riverways, it leads to massive algae

blooms that quickly consume all of the oxygen in the water. As the oxygen is depleted, aquatic life quickly begins to die off. Birds and other predators feed on the diseased fish and begin to die off as well. In addition to the loss of wildlife, these types of aquatic algae blooms can be particularly harmful to people with respiratory conditions like asthma and bronchitis. Other sources of pollution include coal and gas power plants. These types of activities release large amounts of toxic chemicals into the air and are some of the biggest contributors of greenhouse gases. These gases are one of the core causes of global warming that was discussed earlier.

## 7. Loss of Biodiversity

The loss of biodiversity is another environmental issue that we should pay careful attention to. In an effort to increase our global food production, humans have developed specific plant and animal breeds that offer increased harvesting yields and improved growth rates. Many genetically modified crops have been developed to be naturally resistant to man-made chemicals like herbicides. Unfortunately, the widespread use of just a few select species can be particularly problematic. In the event that a disease quickly develops that directly impacts the given species, we could find our global food supplies quickly disrupted. In addition to biodiversity loss in our food system, the loss of many creatures in the natural environment is problematic as well. Due to mankind's activities like deforestation, many creatures are dying off and disrupting their local food chains. This can quickly lead to the complete eradication of multiple species in a given environment.

### The Bottom Line

By focusing on these issues, we can make sure that the environment all across the globe is better maintained. With just a bit of time and effort, we can all do our part in making sure that the natural beauty around us is preserved for future generations.

Let us sing the hymn 259 which helps us acknowledge our failings when it comes to looking after God's creation.

There is a line in it that says, "Lord, end our madness, carelessness, greed; make us content with the things that we need." That's a good line for us to reflect upon and it helps us to see that the environmental issues that we face today are at its core the issue of human selfishness and greed.

If we really want to fix the environment, we need to fix our hearts first, and foremost and we can only do this through God's grace.

Let us sing 259 – Beauty for brokenness

### **God's solution**

Concern for the health and future of the world of nature is one of the most powerful forces in our culture today. In the last 30 years, the environmental movement has moved from the fringe to the mainstream of contemporary life. It affects all our lives in so many ways from the rubbish bins to the way we vote. It's not going to go away, and it will remain at the top of our urgent lists perhaps forever.

It has also become a main marker for mission in the Church of Scotland as it has in other denominations in the UK.

The Church of Scotland set a 2030 net zero target at the General Assembly in October 2020 when its Faith Impact Forum successfully proposed 'for the Church to transition both locally and nationally to net zero carbon emissions by 2030'. Many local authorities have also made this pledge, including the City Councils of Edinburgh and Glasgow.

The Scottish Episcopal Church has also signed up to this as has the Church of England to set a 2030 net zero carbon target.

Mary Sweetland, chairperson of Eco-Congregation Scotland, said: 'We are really pleased to see that our supporting Churches are backing the priority to aim for net zero by 2030, which will bring changes to local congregations and their members.'

Sally Foster-Fulton, our present Moderator and Head of Christian Aid Scotland, said: 'The Secretary General of the United Nations told the world we have a climate emergency which is impacting most heavily on the world's most vulnerable people. We know all too well here at Christian Aid that those who have done the least to cause the problem suffer the most.'

Christian Aid holds a vision of a better world, free from poverty and climate change. Christian Aid Scotland has been campaigning for the UK and Scottish Governments to take climate change seriously for the benefit of

those who are impacted first and worst by its effects. Operation Noah is a Christian charity working with the Church across all Christian denominations to inspire action on climate change.

For so long, we sang about all things bright and beautiful all creatures great and small, whilst the environment has hit an iceberg.

Schools today have made environmental issues a priority and thankfully our children are being educated on ways which they can literally save our planet.

I hear often from folks, ah they don't teach religion in school any more - perhaps not in the way that we understood religion, but they are taught values and one of these values is respect.

So we are all wakening up to environmental issues, young and old alike, and we see it now, not as a side show for the Church, but it is now a real and urgent mark of mission.

The Apostle Paul writes to the Church in Rome, as they eagerly await the Second coming of Jesus. He writes, "Creation waits in eager expectation."

Paul understands salvation, to be not just for the human soul but he has this vision of salvation for the whole world...salvation in the bible means healing. He writes, creation groans as in the pains of child birth right up to the present age.

2000 years ago, the Apostle Paul is engaging with environmental issues. Why? Because he sees the link between creation groaning and the human soul.

He creates in their minds that image, that God's people should be waiting for something special to happen – something which is transformational.

What are they waiting for? The children of God to be revealed.

Who are the children of God?

Surely, we are the children of God. Those who have new life through Jesus. Those who have been forgiven and accepted through the grace of Jesus.

Creation groans in anticipation, and it is waiting for us to be like the first created people Adam and Eve, to look after this world, to look after creation, and to take care and be wise stewards of God's world.

Creation groans for this special day when the perfect man and Son of God will return, and everyone will live in peace; everyone will have enough; everyone will share and be content and creation will be restored to its original design.

Creation groans for this day.

Just as creation groans so also should the people of God; we should be groaning as we anticipate the new world that God will recreate.

Paul writes, “for in this hope we are saved”. The blazing truth that lit life for Paul was that the human situation is not hopeless. Paul was no pessimist. He saw human sin; he saw creation groaning, but he also believed in God’s healing power, and the end of it for him was hope.

Friends, It's good and proper to bring God into the environmental issues, and to see that God is at work in the renewing and recreation of this planet and to see that God has higher purposes and designs that we know little about.

Paul uses the words “eager expectation” – for he is painting a picture of people scanning the horizon, head thrust forward, eagerly searching the distance for the first signs of the dawn breaking. The day break of glory. To Paul, life was not a weary, defeated waiting; it was a throbbing vivid expectation.

Yes, we live in a world of death and decay, but we also live in Christ. We do not see only this world but we look beyond it to see God. Yes, we see the consequences of human sin and our environment reminds us of it, but we also see the power of God's mercy and love. The key note of a Christian's life is always hope and never despair. Christians wait not for death but for life.

I want to encourage us all, that caring for creation, is a vital and important mark of mission for our church. Our Kirk Session has adopted the 5 marks of mission which the Church of Scotland have also adopted as a way forward for our Churches.

Our Kirk Session have also adopted this vision statement for our church.

### **A VISION for CADDER CHURCH - A VIBRANT PART OF GOD’S JIGSAW**

In 5 years’ time, Cadder’s ministry will come together like a jigsaw puzzle, revealing the picture of a vibrant, dynamic church at the centre of our community



The spiritual life of the church will be strong and deep, offering multi-generational worship and fellowship opportunities. Worship will take many different forms. Everyone, regardless of age or experience, gets to take part and is encouraged to bring their own particular piece of the jigsaw.

We will communicate around and about the church in a wide variety of ways. The church will be open to individuals and groups of people both online and in person. It will be known as a place where support is offered with kindness and sensitivity. It will be seen as an anchor point in the community which it serves.

The feeling will be that of a family where everyone looks out for everyone else. Our focus on care and community will make Cadder a place where people feel they belong. The church will radiate love and acceptance and when people come alongside us they will be seen to add new and vibrant parts to an ever growing jigsaw.

Cadder will be a church which cares about creation. We will actively work to reduce our impact on the planet and will engage with other likeminded people and organisations to be a catalyst for change in the community. It will be a church which is known for being willing to pioneer things which enable change in society. By its actions it will help shape that piece of the jigsaw which is the church's part in social justice and reform.

In 5 years' time, Cadder will be a church which is Growing. It will be seen as a Jesus centred community where everyone values each other and treasures God's Word and World.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen

Let us sing – 245 “It's a world of sunshine, it's a world of rain”