**Season of Creation 2022 (YEAR C, Revised Common Lectionary)**

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Fifteen years ago, when I awoke to the call to care for creation, I said to myself that I needed to put on green lenses to see the creation care in the Biblical Text. I was mistaken in thinking that. I realized that I didn’t need green lenses to see something in the Text that may or may not be there, but corrective lenses to see what was already there, that which I had not noticed before. This year the Season of Creation theme for 2022 “Listen to the Voice of Creation” – symbolized by the burning bush. And as I write this in the depths of July, Europe is burning.

If you are observing Season of Creation and wish to remain with the RCL, Elin Goulden (October) and I (September) offer some thoughts on the lectionary readings to help us to see the green that is already there. These are not exhaustive commentaries: just observations to get your creativity going.

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**Sept. 4 (Pentecost 13)**

**Jeremiah 18:1-11** the potter and the clay – can turn from evil and be saved

Jeremiah is so interesting: the backdrop is the impending invasion of Judah by the Babylonians, the eventual siege of Jerusalem and the deportation to Babylonia. What is less obvious is the weakened state Judah is in because of the centuries of over farming and the land’s subsequent desertification. This becomes apparent in next week’s reading from Jeremiah. Today, in this famous passage of Jeremiah and the potter’s wheel the Lord is begging that the people return to God through establishing justice for the both for the poor and the land.

**OR Deuteronomy 30:15-20** choose life that you and your descendants shall live

Three times ‘living in the land’ is referenced. So, in the context of choosing life, we choose to live life well in the land - and what does that mean?

**Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18** God knows us intimately

**OR Psalm 1** – the righteous are like fruitful trees by streams of water. Psalm 1 is the link to creation care obviously with the reference fruitful trees and living water. It is wonderful imagery which might support the Deuteronomy passage of choosing life.

**Philemon 1:1-21** restoration of Onesimus the runaway slave. This passage is about Onesimus’ restoration “no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother” (v. 16). As a slaveholder in the Roman empire, Philemon could have had Onesimus punished severely, even killed, without legal repercussions. Paul, however, appeals to Philemon, in the light of his newfound Christian faith, to view Onesimus differently, as a human being with his own value. The material economy views the natural world merely as “resources” that may be exploited; and indeed treats many humans in similar fashion: how does our faith force us to reconsider our view of God’s creatures, both our fellow-humans and more than humans, as having value in their own right?

**Luke 14:25-33** So then none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions

This text is Jesus’ directive to count the cost of discipleship. And it stands as that. So go ahead and use your favourite Bonhoeffer illustration. However, we might also want to expand what it is to be a disciple. Does being a disciple of Jesus Christ include caring for God’s creation as a sign of a return to the first command in Genesis 1? Following Jesus is about being in a right relation God, each other and creation. (BTW in Genesis 1 lots of work has been done on better translating ‘caretaking’ for ‘dominion.’)

**Sept. 11 (Pentecost 14)**

**Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28** – destruction & desolation of earth **OR Exodus 32:7-14** – golden calf and God changing his mind about disaster

If we are doing Season of Creation then Jeremiah preaches. Just a casual reading of this passage will bring to mind current environmental degradation. You may want to further consider linking Jeremiah 9: 10-16 which is another devastating observation of the land around Jerusalem and its desertification. And there is the link between the poor who suffer with the land and injustice. Essentially the root of the desertification was the failure to observe the Levitical laws of husbandry: to rotate crops, to not till too deeply, and let the land rest, and observe the Year of Jubilee. And the poor suffer first.

The Exodus reading, less obviously creation-themed, lends itself to a consideration of idolatry, specifically wealth. What idols are we bowing down to – material wealth, economic growth? - instead of recognizing God’s providing hand? If we turn away from our idols, there is still a chance for restoration.

**Psalm 14** Fool says there is no God; oppresses poor **OR Psalm 51:1-10** – prayer for forgiveness of sins

Again, Psalm 14 supports the Jeremiah reading.

**1 Timothy 1:12-17** Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost

A lovely paean of praise from St. Paul; echoes the themes of forgiveness and restoration in the Exodus and Ps. 51 readings

**Luke 15:1-10** Parable of lost sheep, lost coin

These two parables are about human repentance, clearly. And in our contemporary discipleship one of the things, we are all repentant of is our mistreatment of the Earth. I do not want to impose a green reading on this text. I just suggest that fully formed disciples reflect on their personal contribution to eco-injustice.

**Sept. 18 (Pentecost 15)**

**Jeremiah 8:18-9:1** – weeping over the destruction of the people

Again, in Jeremiah we see the link between injustice, the impoverished land and the suffering of the human poor. Haunting is the sense that there has been a bad harvest and there is not enough to sustain human life. This is a lament and we observe the weeping prophet in full (but genuine) theatrics.

**OR Amos 8:4-7** – woe to those who exploit & oppress the poor

The theme of injustice to the poor and to the land continues: the time of reckoning is coming for those who act unjustly.

**Psalm 79:1-9** – prayer for God’s mercy & compassion

Clearly the forewarned devastation of Judah has befallen.

**OR Psalm 113** God watches over the needy

If preaching from Jeremiah and the environmental devastation around Jerusalem this psalm might be an important note of hope in a coming restoration. It also contrasts with the callous disregard shown to the poor by the wealthy in the Amos passage

**1 Timothy 2:1-7** Prayers for all in authority

Here one might think Paul is concerned with the status quo; but the prayer for those in authority has a purpose: “so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in godliness and dignity.” The actions of rulers have an impact, for good or ill, on the ability of ordinary people to lead their lives in peace and dignity.

**Luke 16:1-13** Parable of shrewd manager – how do we use our riches?

This parable is a challenge – partly because it is usually subtitled in our translations as the parable of the “unjust” or “dishonest” steward, which biases our interpretation from the outset. Yet both the “master” in the parable and Jesus commend the steward’s action. Theologian Ched Myers calls this the parable of the “Defect-ive Manager” – a mid-level functionary who, as he is about to be disenfranchised from an economic system that drives people into debt, “defects” from that system in a way that provides “a modicum of Jubilee justice…by using capital to build social relations, rather than sacrificing social relations to build capital”.

“Like the manager being squeezed out, disciples caught and complicit in the “Mammon” system must figure out ways to defect from it, while trying to rehabilitate traditional ways of “Manna” sharing. If we so dare, we will be dismissed by the dominant system as “defect-ive,” but according to Jesus, this is the *only way people like us can become “trustworthy,”* as the following verses argue (16:10-12).”

Myers notes that this parable is particularly applicable to middle-class Christians. “We must be clear that money is neither a rational exchange mechanism nor a morally neutral tool. Rather, it is a means of either negating or affirming social relationships. Unlike poor folk, we middle class Christians have far more of a choice about how we deploy our financial resources than we are socialized to imagine. Growing movements such as fair trade, community supported agriculture, sustainable building and social investing demonstrate this.” <https://radicaldiscipleship.net/2016/09/15/discipleship-as-defection-from-the-mammon-system-jesus-parable-about-a-manager-of-injustice/>

It would be interesting to set this reading of the parable off against the other passages, particularly the Amos passage.

**Sept. 25 (Pentecost 16)**

**Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15:** Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land

This is such an astonishing passage, the drama of buying a field of blood and carnage, where an utterly destructive battle has taken place. But again, it is about hope. Despite environmental devastation God can restore- even promises to restore. Just know that the restoration might not necessarily be in our generation. And for us in the burning summer of 2022 we might recognize that sober thought.

**OR Amos 6:1a, 4-7**: woe to those who are rich and complacent

Apparently, this prophecy came true. When the Babylonians took Judah into captivity, it was the poor of the land that were allowed to stay behind. So, in a twist of cosmic justice the poor remained in the promised land. It wouldn’t have been much of an existence I am sure, but they got to stay home, connected to the ground and to their God.

**Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16**: Trust in God for refuge **OR Psalm 146** hope in the God of justice

Again, notes of hope in the midst of devastation.

**1 Timothy 6:6-19** Love of money is a root of all kinds of evil; rich commanded to do good with their wealth

**Luke 16:19-31** Rich man and Lazarus

I address the Epistle and the Gospel together for they are both about love of money, greed, luxury, overconsumption and personal downfall. The global imbalance between north and south, east and west, first and third worlds axis is overconsumption, greed and money. Carbon production is simply not addressed because it is in the hands of the wealthy. These texts are about indeed about personal piety, but applied to the current climate crisis they speak to the source of global warming- oil, money and greed. Lazarus and the Rich Man is easily about our idolatry of wealth to the detriment of the Earth. I would even play with the idea of the Rich Man being the West and Lazarus being the Earth.

**October 2 (Pentecost 17)**

**Habakkuk 1:1-4:** The first reading finds the prophet lamenting and complaining to God. Why will God not arise and save us in our time of crisis? We demand an answer! God’s response is in ch. 2 – there is still a vision for the appointed time – a vision of a renewed heaven and earth. This vision is something that is “made plain” – can be grasped by ordinary people; “on tablets” – enduring; and “can be read by a runner” – which speaks to the urgency of the situation. Those who will live are the righteous, the just; those who are faithful.

**Psalm 37: 1-9:** Some commentators, including Walter Brueggemann, dismiss this psalm as a “random collection of truisms,” reflecting a community “for whom most things work.” Indeed, v. 4 is often used by proponents of the so-called “prosperity gospel” to justify the idea that God’s favour is shown via material blessing. Yet, far from portraying God as a cosmic genie or slot machine, the psalm’s emphasis on the practices of trusting, waiting on, committing oneself to, and delighting in the Lord (vv. 3-4) suggests that doing so works to modify our desires, and teach us humility and wisdom.

Ellen F. Davis maintains that “the psalmist speaks to and for the “vulnerable”, who it seems, are currently landless” and “looks toward change in matter of land tenure. Davis notes that the overall “tone of the psalm is encouragement for the dispirited, not contentment with the status quo.” (Ellen F. Davis*, Scripture, Culture and Agriculture*, 2009, p. 115)

Read in conjunction with Habakkuk, Psalm 37 continues the theme of contrasting the wicked with the righteous/meek who wait for the Lord and who are the ones who will live in/inherit the land (see also Matthew 5:5.) The righteous/meek are the ones who are able to live in right relationship with creation.

In the face of ecological crisis, commentator Kelly J. Murphy notes that Psalm 37 offers hope in the face of climate change: “With Davis, we might use Psalm 37 as a text that encourages us to become a community that “cultivate[s] modest habits of use and accumulation.”7 And in this way, we can endeavor to create a world where future generations might “live in the land, and enjoy security.”” (Kelly J. Murphy, Working Preacher, October 6, 2019 <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-27-3/commentary-on-psalm-371-9-5> )

**2 Timothy 1:1-14:** This passage is full of encouragement to Timothy not to be ashamed or intimidated, but to move forth in the strength of God’s spirit. Christian climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe often appeals to v. 7 to urge people not to despair over the climate crisis, nor to be intimidated about talking about it, but to urge them to action, confident that God has provided us with the power, the love, and the self-discipline to make positive change.

**Luke 17:5-10:** Jesus’ comments make clear that the question is not about the *amount* of your faith but saying that the faith we have is sufficient. Ira Brent Driggers notes that this comment on faith comes in the midst of a discussion on forgiveness and obedience: “Jesus then offers the slave metaphor *as a way of situating his forgiveness directive among the everyday tasks of discipleship*. What the apostles hear as an extraordinary case of discipleship is, in fact, quite ordinary.” (Working Preacher, Oct. 6, 2019) <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-27-3/commentary-on-luke-175-10-4>

Debie Thomas also interprets faith as an action rather than a possession: “What if faith isn't quantifiable?  What if “more” faith isn’t “better” faith? What if faith isn't even a noun? What if, instead, faith is engagement, orientation, action?  What if faith is something we *do?*  Not something we have? I believe the invitation in this lection is for us to go forth and live in light of what we see and know.  In other words, to *do* faith.  To do the loving, forgiving thing we consider so banal we ignore it.  Why?  Because the life of faith is as straightforward as a slave serving his master dinner.  As ordinary as a hired worker fulfilling the terms of his contract.  Faith isn't fireworks; it's not meant to dazzle.  Faith is simply recognizing our tiny place in relation to God's enormous, creative love, and then filling that place with our whole lives.” (Debie Thomas, Journey with Jesus 29 September 2019 <https://www.journeywithjesus.net/essays/2384-if-you-have-faith> )

In light of these readings, we are invited not to give up – to faithfully keep doing what God has entrusted us to do, in the strength God has given us, and to trust that God is ultimately bringing about the vision for the appointed time.

**October 9 (Harvest Thanksgiving)**

**Deuteronomy 26:1-11** The idea of us (as majority settler North American Christians) possessing land as an inheritance is, or at least should be, problematic. This is especially true in terms of the Doctrine of Discovery, a legal and ecclesiastical construct by which “Christian” rulers justified disposessing Indigenous peoples of their lands. Yet, we need to contrast v. 1 with the reminder from Leviticus 25:23 that the land always, ultimately, belongs to the Lord.

The Israelites are reminded to tell the stories of God’s provision and mighty acts. As we tell the story of our own blessings, how can we recognize which are God’s acts of provision and which are human (and unjust) acts? God’s acts are liberating, not oppressive. How can we thank God for the goodness and bounty of the land and also acknowledge the ways in which we may benefit from that bounty at the expense of others? There is a clue in this passage. The firstfruits of the harvest are meant to given to the honour of God – and shared widely. This goes beyond dropping off a few cans at the food bank!

**Psalm 100:** This short psalm reminds us that not only humankind but *all the earth* is to make a joyful noise to God. The fact that “it is he that made us, and not we ourselves” (as v. 3 is rendered in some versions) reminds us that the earth and its bounty are gifts of a generous Creator, rather than possessions to be exploited.

**Philippians 4:4-9:** This passage might sound like “toxic positivity” with the emphasis on rejoicing, not being anxious, and thinking only of good things. Yet Paul is not denying that there is anything to be anxious about. Instead, he exhorts his readers “in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God,” and to “keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me.” Rejoicing and focussing on the good, on their own, do not bring God’s peace – bringing everything before God, and continuing to do the things we know we must do, are also needed.

**John 6:25-36**

In this passage Jesus tells his followers not to not for the food that perishes but for the food of eternal life. The work of God is to believe in him whom he has sent = Jesus. This is not an intellectual assent but a trust in Jesus and in following Him. Note that in John 4:24 Jesus talks about his food being to do the Father’s will and complete his work; this passage parallels John 6 in many ways.

Jesus knows what we need in terms of food; but will not be reduced to a mechanism simply to satisfy material needs. Rather, he is the bread of life, that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

St. Augustine famously said of the Eucharist that “we behold what we are, we become what we receive”. We, too, doing the Father’s will, and finding communion with Christ in the Eucharist, become the bread that gives life to the world. “The point is that every time we receive the Eucharist, we are transformed — or should be transformed — a little more fully into the Body of Christ, so that the divine love that made us and that flows through us can become more fully expressed in the world.” (Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, <https://revivingcreation.org/behold-what-you-are-become-what-you-receive/> )

**Oct. 16, 19th after Pentecost (World Food Day)**

**Jeremiah 31:27-34**: the days are surely coming when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of humans and animals… I will make a new covenant with them and write it on their hearts. The theme of rebuilding and replanting is appropriate for this date, which is designated as World Food Day by the United Nations. Where there was devastation there will be regeneration: not only for human, but also non-human creatures.

“In their original context these words signified the promise of a faithful God to a devastated people for restoration, perhaps even in their lifetimes… The same God who planted the garden of Eden and crafted humanity from its soil will replant Judah. God will replant, tend, and nurture human and animal life amid the ashes of Judah, Jerusalem, and the temple. Perhaps most significantly, in 31:29, God promises to cease holding subsequent generations responsible for the transgressions of previous ones.” (Wil Gafney, Working Preacher, Oct. 17, 2010) <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-29-3/commentary-on-jeremiah-3127-34>

Future generations will bear the brunt of climate crisis and environmental degradation caused by actions in our own and our parents’ and grandparents’ generations. How can they hear these words of hope? Only if God’s covenant with us – to honour God by caring and tending for each other and the earth – is engraved on each of our hearts.

**Psalm 119: 97-104**: how sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey. This is one of 22 sections from Psalm 119, an extended paean of praise to God’s law (one section for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet). God’s word is seen as equipping and even nourishing the faithful. This could be tied in with the theme of the resources of scripture & faith tradition from the Epistle reading.

**2 Timothy 3:14 – 4:5:** We are to hold to our faith traditions not because they are traditions, or because they identify us as in this or that group, but in order that “everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.” There are resources in our scripture and tradition to equip us for the work we are to do. Because of the kingdom, we are to “be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable.” We don’t have the luxury of choosing our moments; we need to persist.

**Luke 18:1-8**: The theme of persistence continues with the parable of the widow and the unjust judge: God is not unjust; but we, waiting for justice, may feel like the widow in this story. Still, knowing that even the unjust judge will eventually bring justice (if reluctantly and for the wrong reasons) should give us confidence that God will bring justice in due time. Those of us with privilege ironically may be quicker to give up the struggle for justice when it does not meet with immediate results; those who are more vulnerable, like the widow in this story, do not have the luxury of despair and giving up.

**Oct. 23, 20th after Pentecost**

**Joel 2:23-32**: “I will repay you for the years the locust has eaten… you shall eat in plenty and be satisfied… I will pour out my spirit on *all flesh* (note direct address of non-human world in verses 21-22) Joel is set in a time of ecological catastrophe –all the crops have failed, pushing humans and animals alike to the brink of starvation. On top of the infestations, drought and wildfire have consumed the land. The people are called to lament, fast, and repent (2:12-17, a passage often read on Ash Wednesday.)

“In both cases – the locust plague and the fall of Jerusalem – whether natural or human engineered disasters, God restores and provides for God’s people and their animals. Can we ask the same when we have polluted the oceans? Will God hear and heal our waters, coasts, and their wildlife if we all – child and adult, strong and weak, male and female, clergy and lay, fast and pray?... The beloved community is called to respond to the needs of the earth, her peoples, and creatures by turning to our God. Lastly, the restoration… in Joel 2 was accomplished by more than an act of God. The people cleared, planted, and harvested the fields, vineyards, and orchards. This is an important reminder lest we think that all we are called to do is to close ourselves up in our temples and pray. We must also work with God in and on the earth” – Wil Gafney, Working Preacher, Oct. 24, 2010 https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-30-3/commentary-on-joel-223-32

**Psalm 65:** “To you shall all flesh come” – not just human beings but again, as in Joel, *all flesh*. This is one of the passages in Scripture which speaks of the moral and spiritual agency of the non-human creation. One can imagine the restored fields and watercourses of the book of Joel expressing themselves to their Creator in the joy and gratitude of verses 12-13. How do we hear the voice of Creation in both groaning and gratitude?

**2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18**: “I have fought the good fight” – is Paul puffing himself up here like the Pharisee in today’s Gospel? No – he is dependent on God, not on himself (and indeed, as a prisoner, he is dependent on not-necessarily reliable other people for assistance and basic necessities). “Even the relentless confidence of this particular biblical book must finally admit that glory belongs to the Lord and that the Lord’s will – not necessarily the letter writer’s will – must be done. Such an admission commends humility and hope.” – Mark Throntveit, Working Preacher, October 27, 2013 <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-30-3/commentary-on-2-timothy-46-8-16-18-3>

**Luke 18: 9-14:**  Pharisee and tax collector – those who humble themselves will be exalted. We are accustomed to viewing the Pharisee as judgemental and legalistic (in implicit contrast to ourselves), but in doing so we miss our own tendencies to behave in similar fashion. Note that the fasts and tithes the Pharisee practices were originally meant as liberative practices, part of God’s instructions in the Torah for the redistribution of wealth. But they have become mere badges of his identity, confirming his moral superiority in contrast with the tax collector, rather than about being part of God’s redeeming work. How might the same be said of us?

As Alastair Roberts points out, we tend to view ourselves as being on the right side of history – but “the vision of the kingdom of God in Luke is one within which we all find ourselves on the wrong side of history. If the blessings of God’s justice are to be received, they must be received as pure mercy and grace, from a position of weakness, dependence, lack, and confessed injustice… To the degree that we resist perceiving ourselves as radically unjust, morally insufficient, subject to condemnation, and as wilfully and extensively complicit in evil, we disqualify ourselves from entry into the justice of the kingdom” (Alastair Roberts, “The politics of being on the wrong side of history” <https://politicaltheology.com/the-politics-of-being-on-the-wrong-side-of-history-luke-189-14-alastair-roberts/> )

**Oct. 30, 21st after Pentecost**

**Isaiah 1:10-18:** This passage is set in the context of a warning of coming ecological and military devastation (v. 7) – the country is desolate, scorched, overthrown. Isaiah likens his audience to “Sodom and Gomorrah” – cities famously destroyed by God for their injustice. (Ezekiel 16:49). Isaiah warns his audience that they cannot rely on worship and prayer alone to avert the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah; God is not impressed by worship without justice. Isaiah’s audience are obviously wealthy enough to afford fat animals for sacrifice (v. 11) but in disregarding the rights of the oppressed and the vulnerable (v. 17), their “hands are full of blood” (v. 15) making their sins like “scarlet” and “crimson” (v. 18)

Duke Divinity professor Anathea Portier-Young notes that, in the Torah, Israel’s worship was intimately connected with economic justice: “The sanctuary was an important depository and distribution center for tithes, offerings from the bounty of the land that would feed temple personnel as well as widows and orphans throughout the land… In Deuteronomy, Moses promised that, when the people faithfully distributed the tithe, the Lord would look down from heaven and bless not only the people but also the land (Deut: 26:15), ensuring that the land would yield further bounty. Isaiah’s logic is similar… If the people will learn and commit to shared ways of living that promote the welfare and safeguard the rights of all members of society, including the widow and orphan (Isaiah 1:17), then they will “eat the good of the land” (Isaiah 1:19; see also 3:10.) – Anathea Portier-Young, Working Preacher, Aug. 11, 2019). <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-19-3/commentary-on-isaiah-11-10-20-4>

**Psalm 32:1-7**: talks about the blessing of forgiveness and finding refuge in God; but this requires the acknowledgement of sin. And in context with the OT and Gospel readings, the acknowledgement of sin involves practical acts of repentance and reparation.

**2 Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11-12:** Paul is glad to hear that the Thessalonians’ faith is growing; prays for God to “fulfill by his power every good resolve and work of faith, so that the name of Jesus Christ may be glorified in you.” May the good resolves and works of faith that accompany our repentance be fulfilled by God’s power and to God’s glory.

**Luke 19:1-10:** The Isaiah passage also provides context for the Gospel story of Jesus’ encounter with Zacchaeus. As Dr. Sylvia Keesmaat points out in “*From Ecological Grief to Creational Hope*,” (<https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/LentCurriculum2022.PrintBlack.pdf> ) while we usually think of Zacchaeus’ wealth in terms of money, as a tax collector exacting revenue from a population of subsistence farmers, much of the wealth Zacchaeus would have amassed would have been in the form of the crops and even the lands of those being taxed. While the Torah provided for debt forgiveness and restoration of people to their original lands in the year of Jubilee (see Leviticus 25), Zacchaeus’ exercise of his office has pushed people into debt and off their lands. Moreover, treating the land as an economic input to produce further wealth, rather than as a biotic community sustaining a wide variety of life, has not only socio-economic but ecological consequences, and spiritual ones as well. Zacchaeus has alienated his fellow Jews from their lands, has alienated the land from those who loved and worked it intimately, and he has become alienated from the community – and from God – in turn.

As Keesmaat notes, “When Zacchaeus gave away his possessions and returned what he had taken, he was correcting injustice. He was giving the land back to those he had taken it from. And by giving back more than he had taken, he was making up for the years that the people had not been able to flourish because Zacchaeus had their land.” It is when Zacchaeus does so that Jesus says, “Today salvation has come to this house” and identifies him as “a son of Abraham”, i.e. an inheritor of the Torah covenant who acts justly and observes the jubilee. Jesus thus connects Zacchaeus’ spiritual regeneration with his act of economic and ecological reparation, just as in Isaiah the seeking of justice and doing right by the vulnerable and oppressed leads to a renewed relationship with God and with the earth.

How does the voice of Creation call out through the voice of the poor and oppressed in our days? To what extent do our spiritual practices uphold an unjust status quo, or propel us to seek justice? How can we repent of our ways and make reparation?