



Sunday  
September 1<sup>st</sup> 2024

**Pentecost 15B**

Secular Father's Day  
First Day of Spring

# The Season of CREATION

**Breaking Open the Word**

**Pentecost 15  
Liturgical Year B**



**St Peter's by the Lake  
PAYNESVILLE**

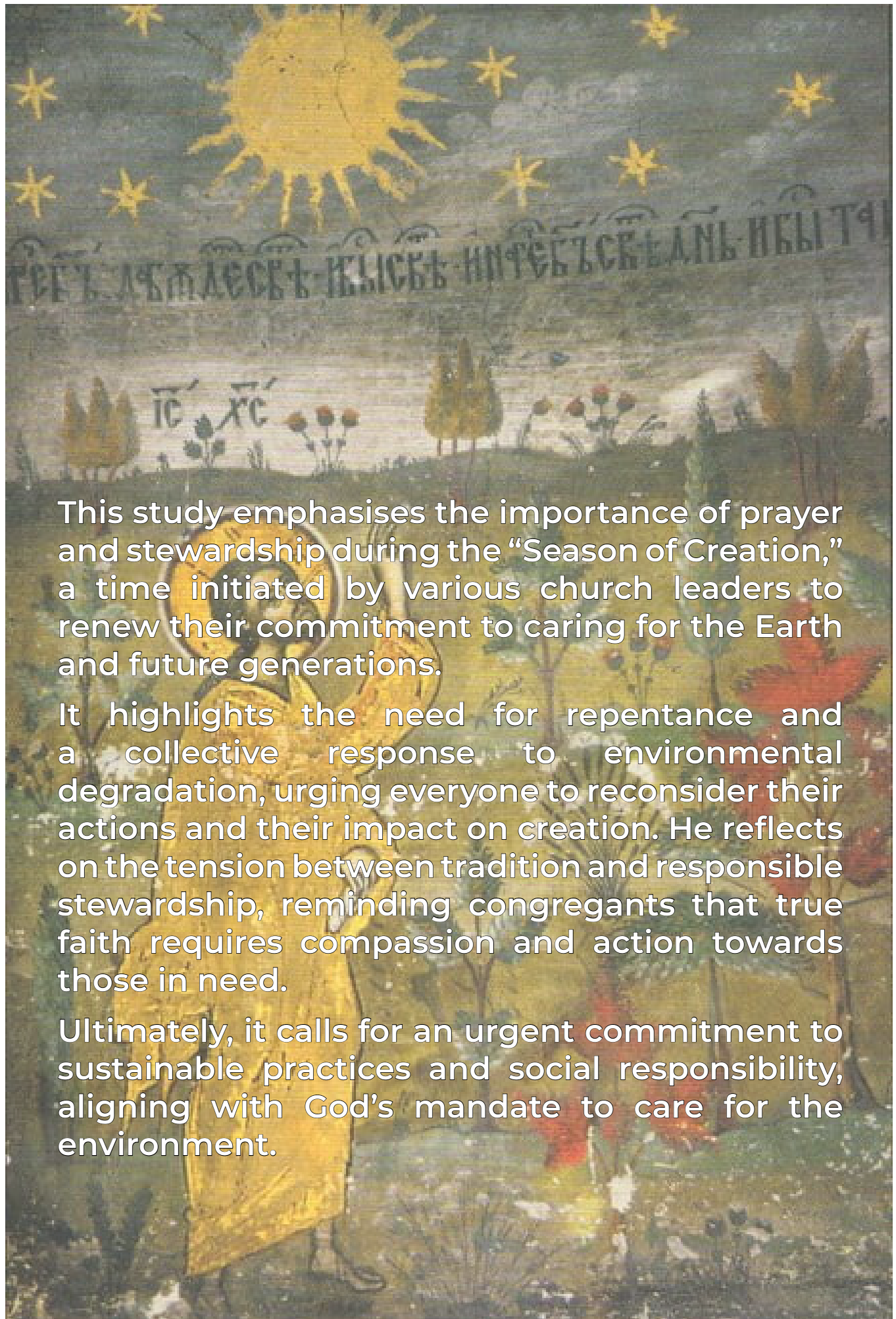
Anglican Diocese of  
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This study emphasises the importance of prayer and stewardship during the “Season of Creation,” a time initiated by various church leaders to renew their commitment to caring for the Earth and future generations.

It highlights the need for repentance and a collective response to environmental degradation, urging everyone to reconsider their actions and their impact on creation. He reflects on the tension between tradition and responsible stewardship, reminding congregants that true faith requires compassion and action towards those in need.

Ultimately, it calls for an urgent commitment to sustainable practices and social responsibility, aligning with God’s mandate to care for the environment.

READINGS

Deuteronomy 4.1-2, 6-9  
Psalm 15  
James 1.17-27  
Mark 7.1-8, 14, 15, 21-23



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“

Our duties are for  
orphans and widows  
in their distress,  
and to keep oneself  
unstained by the  
world.

”

James 1

Almighty and everlasting  
God,  
give unto us the increase of  
faith, hope, and charity;  
and, that we may obtain  
that which thou dost  
promise,  
make us to love that which  
thou dost command:  
through Jesus Christ our  
Lord.  
Amen.



# INTRODUCTION

This sermon emphasises the importance of recognising and acting upon the call for environmental stewardship, a message echoed by prominent religious leaders over the years.

Starting with the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I in 1989, followed by Pope Francis and Archbishop Justin in 2017, there is a resounding consensus within the Christian community to engage in prayer and action for the renewal of creation, particularly during the season starting September 1st.

It highlights the necessity of choosing life — a concept rooted in biblical scripture — emphasising the moral obligation to make sustainable choices that will benefit future generations.

Addressing contemporary criticisms regarding environmental education and awareness, parallels

are drawn between modern calls for responsibility and the teachings of Jesus.

By referencing the parable of the Good Samaritan, there is a call to prioritise compassion and proactive stewardship over rigid adherence to traditions.

The sermon underscores the dire consequences of neglecting our role as caretakers of the Earth, stressing that true spirituality involves actively working towards a sustainable future and ensuring the planet's and humanity's well-being.

Ultimately, all are called for collective action and responsibility in addressing environmental issues as a critical element of faith and moral commitment.

## Key Reflection Points

1. Reflect on how your faith community can respond to this call. What steps can be taken individually and collectively to honour this responsibility?
2. What prayers or actions can you incorporate into your daily life to align with this global movement?
3. How can we make more sustainable choices that reflect our commitment to life and creation?
4. Are there ways you can challenge traditions or behaviours that hinder environmental progress?
5. What actions can you take to ensure the well-being of both the planet and humanity?
6. What initiatives or collaborations can be formed to make a meaningful impact?

God of Creation, breathe into us, made of clay,  
your gift of life so that we, made in your image  
may be your eyes, ears, hands and voice.



In 1989, the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Orthodox Church, Bartholomew I, called on the Orthodox community on the first of September each year to be a month of intentional prayers for the renewal of creation. In 2015, the new pontiff, Francis, urged Roman Catholics to do the same, advocating that from the 1st of September until St Francis Day, this time is to be the “Season of Creation” in which we look at our world. All creation is to be open to the word of God, the teachings of Jesus, and the countenance of the Holy Spirit to address what we can, the future of humanity, the care and responsible use of the Earth and all resources.

2017, a significant event occurred before the World Summit on Creation in Glasgow. In a powerful display of unity, Archbishop Justin Welby joined the two patriarchs in a call to the entire Christian world. Their unprecedented joint encyclical was a resounding call to renew our commitment to the stewardship of creation, a mandate God gave in Deuteronomy. Their words carry profound significance:

These are not new lessons, but we have had to face them anew. May we not waste this moment. We must decide what kind of world we want to leave to future generations. God mandates: ‘Choose life, so that you and your children might live’ (Dt 30:19). We must choose to live differently; we must choose life.

We must pray and care for God’s creation as we celebrate September as the Season of Creation. As leaders of our Churches, we call on everyone, whatever their belief or worldview, to listen to the cry of the earth and of poor people, examining their behaviour and pledging meaningful sacrifices for the sake of the world which God has given us.

(A JOINT MESSAGE FOR THE PROTECTION OF CREATION, The Holy See, 2017)

Sadly, as we begin this season, our Bishop

launched the season yesterday at The Abbey. A creation service is to be held at the Cathedral this afternoon at 3 pm (with it being broadcast on the Cathedral’s YouTube channel if you care to watch); there has been criticism levelled at the Bishop and myself. Rather than quote anyone here today, let me share this from someone with exceptional wealth and political pull addressing the Bush Summit held in Bendigo during June and, again, at her alma mater, St Hilda’s Anglican School for Girls in Perth, WA.

“It’s not easy at times to stand up, but for the sake of our children and grandchildren, we need to consider doing so.”

(Gina Rinehart AO, St Hilda’s Anglican School for Girls)

Note the language and similarity to Deuteronomy 20:19: “Choose life so that your children may live.”

Ms Rinehart continued,

Children are “...no longer taught to be proud of our country”, and she called on the government to overhaul the curriculum.

“Even for those (kids) as young as those in preschools, (they) are being taught our police are bad, plastics, essential in hospitals, are bad...”

“They and others in school classes are no longer taught to be proud of our country; quite the opposite.”

Students are being taught “propaganda rather than facts and woke causes instead of understanding, rationale and logic.”

(HeraldSun Bush Summit 2024)

And that beautiful word is at the centre of the readings today and, most appropriately, as we consider the need to acknowledge our sins against the world, humanity, repentance, and work towards a sustainable future. To be woke, according to the origins of the term, is now unfortunately applied by conservative political commentators as being a sign of antidisestablishmentarianism (I’ve



always wanted to use that in a sermon!) but equated with Marxism and anti-traditionalism.

If we are aware that things are not necessarily rosy in creation, then we are duty-bound by God's mandate to be "co-workers in the garden" and "stewards of creation" (Genesis 2.4-7, 17). This awareness should lead us to a deep sense of repentance and a commitment to change our ways.

Ms Rinehart also addressed the need for traditional values to be taught rather than attention to human rights and the opportunity to mine and farm the world for the benefit of all people. I have no real qualms with that, but my woke self is also aware that traditions of exploitation of the earth for gain have led to the most atrocious environmental issues. We have the science and wisdom to do better, and we must.

Throughout the gospel, Jesus talks about short-term gain over the need for a long-term plan of being one with him in the Father's presence. A rich man prides himself on saving up all the grain, depriving others in the community. In Luke's gospel, God exacts his life that very night. His lifelong work was in vain. A disgruntled son demands his inheritance and wastes it, living in poverty. What we do find, though,

is the father is loving and forgiving and welcomes him back. True repentance is one way of assuring life continues.

The gospel today talks about tradition over responsible stewardship. Whilst there are rules for cleansing yourself if you encounter something unclean, a ritual of washing before entering the tent of Tabernacle or the Temple for sacrifice was required. However, I can still hear both my parents calling to the boys this Father's Day, "Tea's up. Go and wash your hands." We all know the value of that. If we were not careful, we would be sent back to wash again, this time with the dreaded Solvol!

We know it makes sense to be clean. Another little wordplay happens, and it is rendered as "unclean" in this translation, but to be honest, it is simply the Greek word for "common", "koine." If you touch what is expected, you should cleanse yourself, for that is what is right to do. The application of this was varied among the leaders, and in Luke's gospel, we hear of a man attacked on the track to Jericho and left for dead. A priest, fearful of rendering himself unclean, leaves him to die. A scribe, one learned in the law and traditions, decides that tradition is more important than saving life. Then, a Samaritan, not holden to the traditions,





addresses the necessary needs of life for the man left dead.

Jesus points out that nothing that goes into the body can defile; it is only the actions of our hearts. Behind this is the understanding that applying the heart is essential as it is part of the Shema, the daily creed, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. Not caring for the man left dying on the road is not attending to your soul or strength. It also ignores the heart's cry to show compassion and the need for healing. What violates is what the heart desires. Let's be honest when Jesus says what comes out is defiling. We have an Aussie phrase we could apply to the actions of others when they stick to traditions over compassion. We all know what they are full of!

And if we do know what they are full of, beware, lest you be called 'woke'. There is too much name-calling, and self-serving people are clinging to the past and the extinct world. The big problem is that if we are unaware of our role in working in God's garden, we will one day be past and extinct. As we have been told repeatedly in the scriptures and taught by the environment, we must live to be good stewards of ALL creation.

Today, we are called to pray for the whole of creation in Earth. We will pray, "Your will be done on earth as in heaven." How can we pray that daily and not be woke? How can we not be aware of the need to change? Why are we not empowering the inventions that turn bad into good? I watched a video recently of plastic shopping bags being turned into outdoor chairs. Many communities extended for something simple as furniture. Our local supermarket

informs us that each trolley was once a plastic carton. In our waterways, plastics and litter are fouling fish and aquatic life. Yes, we do enjoy a much better way of living, but in the future, if we are not mindful of God's commands, the next generations will face a living hell.

Friends, today, we are to be mindful of creation. As the three great patriarchs, Bartholomew, Francis and Justin, have written,

We have maximised our interest at the expense of future generations. Concentrating on our wealth, we find that long-term assets, including nature's bounty, are depleted for short-term advantage. Technology has unfolded new possibilities for progress and the accumulation of unrestrained wealth, and many of us behave in ways that demonstrate little concern for other people or the limits of the planet. Nature is resilient yet delicate. We have already witnessed the consequences of our refusal to protect and preserve it (Gn 2.15).

We must pursue generosity and fairness in our lives, work, and use of money instead of selfish gain. But this involves making changes. Each of us must take responsibility for how we use our resources.

All of us—whoever and wherever we are—can contribute to changing our collective response to the unprecedented threat of climate change and environmental degradation.

Caring for God's creation is a spiritual commission requiring a response of commitment. This is a critical moment. Our children's and our typical home's future depend on it.



### Key Words in James' letter.

- Καύχημα (Kauchēma): translated as "boasting" in verse 10. The rich person is directed to boast in his humiliation. This could lead into a discussion about the Christian approach to wealth and success.
- Πειρασμός (Peirasmos): This word is translated as "trial" or "temptation" in verse 12 and 13. It could be used to discuss the nature of hardship and temptation in a Christian's life.
- Τέλειον (Teleion): found in verse 17, translated as "perfect." This could provide a platform for discussing God's perfection and goodness, as well as his unchanging nature.
- Απαρσκέυαστος (Aparaskévastos): translated as "shadow of turning", it can be used to explore God's unchanging nature.

**Biblical and Cultural Context** When studying these terms, it's essential to keep in mind the cultural and theological context in which the Epistle of James was written. The letter's audience were Jewish-Christians scattered abroad, and the text discusses topics relevant to their context like suffering, temptation, and contradictions between faith and actions.



# GROUP DISCUSSION

## Question 1

**How can we actively participate in caring for God's creation during the 'Season of Creation'?**

The sermon called for everyone to take action for the renewal of creation and to pledge meaningful sacrifices for the sake of the world.

What small steps can you take in your everyday life to demonstrate your care for the environment?

## Question 2

**What do you think the phrase 'Choose life so that your children may live' means in the context of environmental issues?**

The patriarchs quote Deuteronomy 30:19, discussing how we must choose life and care for future generations.

In what ways do you think your choices today could impact the lives of children in the future?

## Question 3

**Why do you think connecting spiritual values with environmental stewardship is essential?**

The sermon discussed that caring for creation is a spiritual commission that requires a response of commitment.

How do your personal beliefs influence your views on environmental issues and your actions towards them?

## Question 4

**What are some examples of how people might prioritise tradition over necessary change based on the stories from the sermon?**



The sermon talked about how tradition can sometimes lead to inaction, pointing out the story of the priest and the scribe who ignored a needy and injured man.

Can you think of a time when you had to choose between following a tradition and making a necessary change?

## Question 5

**How does the the description of ‘wokeness’ challenge our understanding of environmental responsibility?**

The sermon discussed how being called ‘woke’ has negative connotations for some, yet understanding our role in creation is vital.

What does it mean to you to be ‘woke’ about the issues facing our environment, and how can you use that understanding to inspire others?

## End notes and further reading

(A JOINT MESSAGE FOR THE PROTECTION OF CREATION, The Holy See, 2021)

Pope Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Archbishop of Canterbury Release Joint Statement on Care for Creation – Millennial.

<https://millennialjournal.com/2021/09/09/pope-francis-ecumenical-patriarch-bartholomew-archbishop-of-canterbury-release-joint-statement-on-care-for-creation/>

Sacra Pagina, **The Gospel of Mark** John Donaghue, Daniel Carrington

Andrew's Version: [https://open.substack.com/pub/abmcg/p/what-defiles-food-the-body-and-the?r=3zdc09&utm\\_campaign=post&utm\\_medium=email](https://open.substack.com/pub/abmcg/p/what-defiles-food-the-body-and-the?r=3zdc09&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=email)



Brabarlung Totem  
This is produced on  
Gunaikurnai Land, and our  
respects are paid to the First  
Nations people everywhere.



# Spring is here!

This five-day devotional will be taking a deeper dive into the sermon from this weekend.

We'll explore themes of faith, resilience, and living out God's word in our daily lives, guided by the teachings from Ephesians 6 and John 6.

## **Day 1 Deuteronomy 30:19**

On this first day of our devotional, we reflect on the profound call to "choose life." Engaging in the stewardship of creation is a commitment to our environment, the essence of our being, and future generations. It challenges us to examine our lifestyles, consumption habits, and responsibilities in caring for the world God entrusted to us. This is a moment to pause and engage with the critical reality of our actions and their effects on creation.

As we journey through this season, let us earnestly reflect on our role as caretakers of the Earth. The choices we make today regarding our environmental impact affect our lives and have profound implications for our children and grandchildren. We are called to be proactive, to step into the conversation around climate action, and to embody the message of hope and responsibility found in God's word.

What does "choosing life" look like in your daily routine?

How can you contribute to the stewardship of creation in your community?

In what ways do you feel called to respond to the environmental issues we face today?

Pray for guidance in understanding your role in caring for creation.

Reflect on the current state of the environment and ask God for a heart of compassion and action.

## **Day 2 Genesis 2:15**

On this second day of reflection, we focus on our God-given role as stewards of creation. The Bible emphasises our responsibility to tend to and keep the Garden of Eden, metaphorically representing our Earth. Looking around us, it is clear that our stewardship is needed now more than ever. With climate change and environmental degradation affecting countless lives, this scripture calls us to recognise that caring for creation is not merely an option but a divine mandate.

This journey of stewardship begins with awareness and repentance. Acknowledging our failures as a society and individuals is essential for growth and healing. We must shift from exploitation to care, from indifference to action, embracing practices that sustain rather than deplete our resources. The challenge lies before us, but we can create a sustainable future rooted in love and responsibility through God's strength.

How can you actively participate in God's creation care?

What personal habits must you change to honour God's plan for the Earth?

In what ways can your community come together for the betterment of creation?

Pray for clarity on how you can serve as a steward of creation.

Think about the beauty of God's creation and express gratitude for its wonders.

## **Day 3 Luke 12:16-21**

As we explore today's passage, we learn about the futility of hoarding wealth at the expense of the community and creation. The rich man in the parable acted without regard for the needs of others or the long-term implications of his choices. This reflects our present situation, where desires for material gain often lead us to disregard the very environment we inhabit. We are reminded that our lives are not measured by our possessions but by our relationship with God and others.

Our journey towards responsible stewardship calls for a radical rethinking of priorities. Scripture teaches us that true richness lies in generosity and contributing to the well-being of our communities and the planet. By aligning our actions with God's principles, we foster a culture of compassion that uplifts creation and nurtures life, embodying the divine call to love our neighbours as ourselves.

What does it mean to you to be "rich toward God"?

How can you extend generosity to those around you, both humans and nature?

What material possessions do you need to reassess in light of this teaching?

Pray for a heart that seeks to serve others and respect creation in all you do.  
I'd like you to reflect on how you can support community environmental initiatives.

#### **Day 4 Mark 12:30-31**

Our reflections today centre around the greatest commandments: to love God and to love our neighbours. This dual focus extends further to include creation, an essential segment of our community. Loving God involves caring for the world He created, as we are all interconnected. Neglecting our environment is neglecting our love for God and our neighbours who depend on it.

Caring for creation motivates us to act out of love. As we acknowledge the sufferings caused by environmental neglect, our love should compel us to seek justice for the vulnerable and address issues like climate change. This call is not just for individual action but a communal effort to redefine our ethics and practice, ensuring that love manifests in our treatment of creation and humanity.

How do you express love for God through your commitment to creation?  
How can you practice love for your neighbours in the context of environmental actions?  
Who in your community might be affected by environmental decline, and how can you help?

Pray for the strength to act for those impacted by environmental issues.  
I'd like you to reflect on your connections with nature and how to strengthen them.

#### **Day 5 Romans 8:19-22**

As we conclude our devotional, we are reminded of creation's groaning, waiting for redemption. This passage beautifully illustrates the tension in our world, where hope and despair coexist. Restoring creation is part of the broader narrative of salvation. Through God's promise, we are called to engage with this process by acting as caretakers and advocates for our environment.

Understanding our part in this redemptive story inspires us to work towards a sustainable future. The actions we take today frame the world our children will inherit. Our responsibility is to ensure it reflects God's love and justice, advocating for both people and the planet. As we pray, may we commit to actively participating in the renewal of creation.

How can you actively contribute to the redemption of creation?  
What changes are you willing to make in your lifestyle to reflect your commitment to God's creation?  
In what ways can you inspire others to join you in this mission?  
Pray for the courage to champion environmental causes within your community.  
Reflect on the hope surrounding the coming restoration of all creation and your part in it.

Prepared by Rev'd Dennis Webster, Rector of the Anglican Parish of Paynesville, Diocese of Gippsland for personal or small group use.

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