

A Future for Creation - Reflection

Jeremiah 8:18 - 9:1

The words of Jeremiah to his people seem particularly appropriate this week in the light of the recent release of the first national climate risk assessment. Drawing on the work of respected agencies, such as the Bureau of Meteorology, the CSIRO, university researchers across a wide range of fields, and leaders in national security, this report warned of the effects of global warming that we are already experiencing and the impact if it continues unchecked.

The 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change set “carbon budgets” for each country that took into account what was fair, given their levels of development, as well as the overall amount of carbon that will keep the world below that critical 2 degrees of warming. Because of our nation’s past inaction, we will have used our entire budget by the middle of the next decade. Whilst our emissions have decreased from over 600Mt per annum since 2007, we are still using over 400Mt per annum and the rate of that decrease has to increase sharply to keep within the budget.¹

And what if we fail? Economists from the Australian National University warn it could cost us 4% of our GDP.² Insurance companies warn of premiums having to rise beyond what is affordable for most people, and the Defence Force warns it will no longer have the capacity to respond to disaster. Apart from the financial implications, we see anticipated a 300% rise in heat related deaths in Perth, if we reach 3 degrees of warming,³ with more drought years that will increase bushfires, the loss of wildlife, and security challenges based on the world’s population having to make do with less resources. We also have the challenge of being good neighbours to the Pacific Island nations who are likely to lose their homelands through rising oceans.

Jeremiah’s words ring true as we reflect on the dire predictions of our future, and the future of our children and grandchildren:

Is there no balm in Gilead?
Is there no physician there?
Why then has the health of the daughter of my people
not been restored?

O that my head were a spring of water
and my eyes a fountain of tears,
so that I might weep day and night
for the slain of the daughter of my people!

Jeremiah, at this point in his ministry, looked with despair at the people to whom he was called to preach. Like us, they were confronted with an existential crisis – in their case, the invasion of the Babylonian empire. We know with hindsight that they had a second

¹ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-09-15/australia-carbon-budget-2035-emissions-target/105341080>

² <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-09-16/climate-risk-assessment-million-homes-insurance-gdp-costs/105774418>

³ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-09-15/national-climate-risk-assessment-and-why-it-matters-explained/105773936>

chance after the return from Exile, but of course, they did not know that at the time. Similarly, we do not know whether we will have a second chance to put things right. Perhaps if we have a catastrophe on a similar scale to what the Babylonian Exile would have been like, then nature will have a chance to reset and recover – but do we really want to take that chance?

This is Sustainable September, a time when churches around the world deliberately connect to the beautiful world our Creator God made and reflect on what it means in our context to be good stewards of creation. If we are going to be different from those who turned a blind eye to Jeremiah's call to repentance, what does this look like in our world as it looks to a new, different, and even threatened future?

It would be all too easy to leave these reflections with Jeremiah's feelings of utter despair at the future of his people, but for me hope is important. It is also a verb. We hear something of that call to acting in partnership with God in our Gospel story for today.

Luke 16:1-13

This story of a “dishonest” steward has puzzled commentators through the ages – why would Jesus be praising someone who has just defrauded his soon-to-be ex-employer? There are many theories, each as plausible as the next, but one in particular took my attention and set me thinking. Usury, or the charging of interest on a loan, was a practice that was outlawed in Leviticus, or at least for fellow Jews. This had been carried on into the Christian tradition until the last few centuries, but that note is an aside.

The wealthy could dictate the terms of interest to the less fortunate in society. Much like today's pay-day lenders, the interest was steep and the impact of not being able to pay was severe. The “what if” about this parable, was “what if this dishonest steward is actually cancelling out the impact of usury on the debtors?” That certainly would make sense for Jesus to then be praising his actions. The steward was taking the right actions for the wrong reasons, which brings us to the age-old ethical dilemma whether the intention or the outcomes are more important.

In this age when we see the potential for devastation, do we really care about the motivations for action, or can we focus on the outcome? I am reminded of this cartoon, which reminds us that even if that vast majority of qualified scientists were lying about climate change, the actions that we take to counter it are also about creating a better, cleaner world that gives hope to future generations through maintaining a healthy environment, which enables all people – and indeed all creation – to flourish.



Joel Pett, USA Today, 2009

And so, during this season of creation, how will you respond to the invitation to be co-creators with God working towards a future that gives all people hope?

[Reflective music]

Let us finish with the next bit of the Gospel reading, which is missed out in our lectionary:

The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they ridiculed him. So he said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of others, but God knows your hearts, for what is prized by humans is an abomination in the sight of God.

“The Law and the Prophets were until John came; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is being proclaimed, and everyone tries to enter it by force. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter in the law to be dropped.