

Season of Creation

11/10/15

“Jesus, Attenborough and Earth ...”

I speak in the name of Jesus the Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

She has a radius of 6 371 kms.

Her age is approximately 4.54 billion years.

Her distance from the G2V star (our Sun) is approximately 149 600 000 kms.

She has a mass of 5972 190 000 000 000 billion kgs.

Her diameter is 12 714 kms.

Her equatorial diameter is 40 030 kms.

Her orbit period around the G2V star is 365.26 days.

Her surface temperature varies between -88* to 58* C

She is Earth.

She gave birth to everything we know.

She gave birth to you and me.

She gave birth to Jesus through Mary and the Holy Ghost.

And she's in trouble ... serious trouble.

When I was invited to preach on the topic of the Season of Creation, being mainly a science teacher, I knew that I had to make good use of the opportunity to draw a relatively unknown documentary to your attention this morning. The reason? The documentary entitled, The State of the Planet by Sir David Attenborough, a well-respected and knighted British Natural Scientist efficiently summarises all of the challenges that we face in the 21st century with regards to the housekeeping of our beautiful planet. And, let's be honest,

the history of our housekeeping of our planet is a poor one – not something that we can be proud of.

Perhaps you are asking the question: “Why on earth, excuse the pun, is this cleric expounding on issues that don’t really belong in the pulpit?”

This reminds me of a true experience I once had. When I was in high school, I started to become involved in the youth group at my local church as my calling was being verified. There were many of my fellow school pupils in the church too. After leading the introductory part of the worship one evening service, a fellow pupil came up to me and said the following, which I have never forgotten: “I don’t really like you that much, in fact, I think that you are a bit of a dunce (he used a slightly more derogative term in fact), but when you get up into the pulpit, I listen to you. That’s the only time. You see, I have no problem with Apartheid. What goes on outside of church has nothing to do with religion.”

I received a Face Book request from the same person a few months ago. Someone I have not seen since school.

Needless to say, I did not accept his request.

But this true story reflects exactly the same situation that the Christian Church finds herself in. Many parishioners think that as long as I tithe, pray, attend church regularly and read the Bible, all is fine. I have no need to be concerned about the bigger picture in my world.

Just like my school friend, who went to church regularly but supported Apartheid.

This is a disconnection between our spiritual life and the world we live in.

This is reflective of a dysfunctional relationship in our lives.

Jesus knew this.

Jesus challenged the Jewish authorities. He remained concerned about the poor and the weak. Jesus took real action in the real world around Him. He did not merely learn the Jewish liturgy and Torah off by heart. He knew, that in

order to make a real difference in the real world, He had to act, He had to intervene, He had to make a difference.

This, my brothers and sisters, is exactly what we are called to do too.

Make a difference.

Make a difference for our Planet Earth.

She is suffering.

And we are to blame.

I often think about what social actions Jesus would take should He be physically on Earth today?

I have no doubt in my mind that Jesus would be a revolutionary movement rallying against governments who fail to comply with international pollution protocols and law. He would be making a difference. As Christians in the world today, you and I are His voice, you and I are His hands, you and I are His means of continuing to make a real difference in the world.

Are we making a difference?

Or are we only keeping the pews warm on a Sunday?

So, in order to appreciate the current State of our Planet, I refer to Sir David who has beautifully summarised the main issues that we face.

Sir David identifies five human activities that he holds responsible for damaging the Earth.

As Christians, we need to be aware of these activities if we are to make a difference in the world around us.

Firstly, Sir David identifies the problem of over-harvesting.

We have simply just become too good at harvesting nature, from the fish in the sea to the trees in the forests. At our current rate, we are over-harvesting beyond the regeneration rate. What this means, is that Mother Nature is unable to regenerate her supplies because of our over harvesting. This boils down to simple greed. There is more than enough food and supplies to feed

everyone on this planet, but the drive for wealth overwhelms nature as our greed spirals out of control. This also applies to our stock of fossil fuels. I teach my Gr 7 Science class every year that the internal combustion engine that we use in our vehicles has basically been around just over one hundred years. Planet Earth took millions of years to produce crude oil below the surface of our planet. Yet, due to our greed and needs, nearly half of all the crude oil produced naturally has already been drilled and tapped. Scientists estimate that, if we are lucky, there is only about another one hundred years left in crude oil reserves... hence the panicked rush by governments all over the world to develop alternate sources of energy. How do you and I try to live our daily lives so that we are not part of the over-harvesting culture?

Secondly, Sir David lists the Introduction of Alien Species as a devastating human activity, done both intentionally and unintentionally. This activity is when an exotic species is introduced to an area. The net result is usually an over-proliferation of the alien species and an indigenous species that goes extinct. Mass transport and globalisation has in essence meant that we are able to get onto a plane and fly to any part of the world within hours. This has also meant that alien species are easily introduced to eco-sensitive areas. The result can and has been devastating in certain places. How do you and I try to live our daily lives so that we are not part of this problem?

Thirdly, Sir David mentions Habitat Loss as a major problem that Mother Nature currently faces. With 9 billion human beings on our planet and counting, this problem was inevitable. The net result is that many species are having their natural habitat destroyed due to the expansion of suburbs and industry. There is no easy solution for this as human beings have always demanded quality of life and rightly so. The downside of this rapid expansion is the direct mass extinction of species. The answer to this is varied and complex and will require the focus of many trained minds working together across the globe.

Fourthly, perhaps as a response to the problem of Habitat Loss, the issue of Islandisation has arisen in recent years. Islandisation was an attempt by authorities to slow down and even prevent habitat loss. Here the idea was to create pockets of natural conservation areas that are protected and nurtured. However, studies show that nature is far more complex than often realised and the net result is that unless these pockets of protected nature are a minimum size, extinction of species will still occur. Once again, the solutions remain complex and varied.

Lastly, perhaps the issue raised most frequently, is the issue of Pollution. Unfortunately, whilst crude oil is an incredibly flexible and energy-rich natural resource, it also has the dramatic side effect of speeding up global warming. The use of fossil fuels around the planet 24/7 has meant that carbon particles are flooding our atmosphere. The result is that natural radiation from our Sun is unable to reflect back to space and thus the surface temperature of the Earth continues to escalate on a frightening basis. This has caused the rapid melting of ice packs at the poles and the rising of sea levels, all of which can be clearly seen over the last twenty-five years. Yes, there are scientists who argue that global warming is a natural phenomenon as occasionally we orbit closer to the Sun than other times. They are correct and pole-ice analysis going back millions of years confirms this. However, what humankind has done through the use of fossil fuels and the resultant pollution levels is to rapidly increase the natural rate of global warming, so much so, scientists are sure that Mother Nature is unable to cope with the rapid change and this alone will cause a massive extinction of species, which is already happening by the way. Another interesting fact is that a group of scientists have suggested that if we were to stop using all the fossil fuels in the world today, it is already too late; the pattern has started and is unavoidable.

I close with a quote from Sir David himself:

“The future of life on Earth depends on our ability to take action. Many individuals are doing what they can, but real success can only come if there’s a change in our societies and our economics and in our politics. I’ve been lucky in

my lifetime to see some of the greatest spectacles that the natural world has to offer. Surely we have a responsibility to leave for future generations a planet that is healthy, inhabitable by all species.”

The challenge for us as Christians is even greater. For not only do we face a world that is becoming increasingly faithless and disinterested in God, but we are also facing a crisis on our planet with regards to her health. The challenges and problems are as diverse and complex as are the possible solutions. At the end of the day, we are called as God’s people to make a difference in every walk of our lives; this includes making a difference to the planet that gave us birth. It is the only one that we have at this point in time. It is the one that God gave us. Surely, if we are to be spiritually in tune with God and one another, this would imply being in tune with nature too? I do not have all the answers. I do know that just being aware of the main issues is already starting to take responsibility and showing accountability. If we all do our bit, no matter how small, it will make a difference.

Are you ready to make a difference?

Jesus did.

Every blessing in the week ahead as you pray about your positive action in our troubled world.

Amen.