

Week 3. Let the land produce vegetation

Genesis 1.9-13

⁹ And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good.

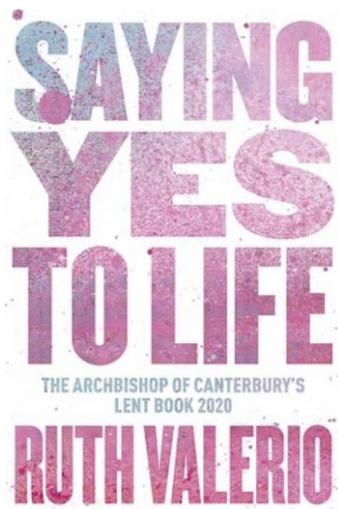
¹¹ Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. ¹² The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

Introduction

Having fashioned the seas and the land, God pronounces that the land should produce plants and trees. Twice in today’s passage we read that God saw that what he had created ‘was good’ and this challenges us to reflect this Lent on how we view the world around us.

Ruth Valerio refers to the great respect shown to their land and its natural features by indigenous people groups in Australia and elsewhere. Last September near Vancouver we felt humbled by the enormous respect shown by the native people to their environment and such special creatures as orca whales and bald eagles.

When we consider trees, the Bible is full of powerful imagery, and the vital importance of trees and forests is at the forefront of today’s environmental debate. It is alarming to read that ‘over half of the world’s tropical forests have been destroyed since the 1960s’. As a positive response it is heartening to read of Ethiopia’s massive steps towards reforestation, and nearer to home, St. John’s Church in the



heart of London, just round the corner from Waterloo Station, is undertaking all sorts of imaginative projects, including planting a pollution-reducing hedge!

Questions for Groups

Q How aware are you of your connectedness to the land? What helps you appreciate that more deeply?

Q Consider how your actions impact on forests, whether through meat that comes from deforested land or wood and paper products you may buy. What steps could you take in response?

Q / Reflection Reflect on Psalm 1 (below) asking God to root you deeply into him through the rhythms and practices of your life.

¹ Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; ² but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night. ³ They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper. (Psalm 1. 1-3)

Further reading you may choose to do later on

Jeremiah 17:5-8, A powerful and challenging contrast of two kinds of tree.

‘Wilding’ by Isabella Tree, especially chapter one, re the value of ancient oak trees and chapter sixteen re the importance of healthy soil (and the vital contribution of worms!)

Practical Response

A really simple thing you can do is to calculate your carbon emissions for a year through the Climate Stewards calculator [on-line at www.climatestewards.org] and then offset them, directly funding tree planting and reduced-fuel cookstoves projects in Uganda, Kenya, Ghana and Mexico. (Lent Book p.77)