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Read the Archbishop of Canterbury's sermon preached at La Divina Providencia, El Maizal, El Salvador at the blessing of the Anglican Communion Forest on World Environment Day.

Readings: Psalm 104:5-15; Revelation 22:1-5; John 1:1-13

Holy Spirit of God, come and bless us as we think about your creation, your word and your call.

What an amazing place! Thank you for us being together today. It is such a beautiful place. This place and the readings bring three pictures to mind for me.

The first one comes from the words of the Gospel – in the beginning. Because it takes us back to the same words at the beginning of the Bible, “In the beginning, God created...”. It talks about creation and about the garden, which was the earth. The picture we get is that God created the earth as a blessing. It was a place of justice, of equality, of walking closely with God, where work was a gift, not a curse. It was a place where all was good, but, in the story of Genesis, that was spoiled by the actions of human beings. That is the first picture.

The second picture comes from that reading, that God came into the world in Jesus. When human beings wreck the world with injustice and cruelty, when we exclude people, when we torture people and when we as human beings - particularly the big industrial corporations around the world, in the 19th and 20th centuries - when we declare war on the creation, and we wreck it, the creation will win, but look at the harm we are doing.

Who comes into the creation? It is God himself, Jesus, who lives among us, among the poorest. Every time he went out of his house as a teenager or a young man, he might have been stopped by Roman soldiers who would make him carry their packs. He grew up in a place of war; he was a refugee. All of this shows that God is part of the suffering of humanity.

The second picture, then, is of Jesus living in the middle of the mess of war and cruelty, and being tortured and crucified and killed. This is the Jesus who knows you and me, and who loves us. We can hear his voice through the Bible, in looking at the beauty of creation and in listening to those who suffer.

The third picture is of the future, from the book of Revelation. The Bible tells us in Colossians chapter one that Jesus did not just make things right between us and God, He made the potential for the whole creation to be healed. All creation is reconciled with God. That gives us that third picture in Revelation - at the end of all things we get back to rivers and trees. We get back to the healing of the nations, the dream of every human being, that they can be secure and safe, that they can have health, and know the presence of God, that there is a full and eternal life,

there is no more war, there is no more injustice, for God is visibly among us.

Three pictures, but they ask us two questions. First, what are we going to do? The church is called to be light and salt in the world. We must be just with one another. We must put aside our arguments and our divisions. We have to love each other as God loves us. And we have to love the creation as the blessing that it is intended to be. Here then we have the reason for the Anglican Communion forest. We cannot do everything here, or in England, or anywhere else alone in the world. But we must do what we can. And what we can do is plant trees. We can care for the creation. That is within our power. And we can live as reconciled reconcilers. So that is the first challenge, will the church begin to look more like Jesus? We cannot reject anyone because they are not like us, whatever the reason, because that is not looking like Jesus.

The second question is, how do we change the world? Can companies and businesses become part of the solution and not just the problem? Can they refuse to be linked to those who act unjustly and cruelly? Are they willing to have less profit in order that the world may find healing? Will they employ young people and teach and train them? Will they reject the ideas that the rich and powerful are their only friends? Those actions by business would change much of the world.

And then, lastly, we campaign. All the world must campaign and we must campaign with all those who share our care for the world. That is where Jesus says, those who are not against us are with us. Bishop Julio Murray leads for the whole Anglican Communion on creation care. I'm going to embarrass him. He is known internationally with those who campaign for the environment. He is known by governments. He represents all of us. Pray for him because your prayers will mean that the Holy Spirit gives him favour with the powerful. He represents you.

So, what can we do? We do what we can, and we raise our voices for a just treatment of people and of the creation. We persuade the powerful that it is in their interest to do good. Some will never do that. We have to be real. But where we speak loudly, people will listen.

In England, part of the Church of England has organised votes at company meetings, and the result has been that many companies have changed their policies. At first just with their heads, and now with their hearts. We can make a difference. So let us pray for this world, let us bless those who do good, let us be a blessing to our creation, and let us be good and loving to each other in justice, so that the world may see that justice comes from God. Because this country, through the sacrifices of many Christians, is a country that speaks of the need for justice. Let us raise our voices ever more loudly. Amen.

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