

For Such a Time as This

(What have Christians got to offer?)

Week 5. Restoration

'Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.' Proverbs 22:6

Introduction to Week Five

Through salvation we believe all of Creation is restored to new life. God calls us to play our part in the restoration of God's Creation.

Opening Prayers

O Lord open our lips
And our mouth shall declare your praise

Let us pray together:

Creator God, breathing your own life into being, you gave us the gift of life: you placed us on this earth with its minerals and waters, flowers and fruits, living creatures of grace and beauty. You gave us the care of the earth. Teach us, Creator God of Love, that the earth and all its fullness is yours, the world and all who dwell in it. Call us yet again to safeguard the gift of life.

Amen

Lord, thank you for bringing us together for this session. We know you are with us as we join together in your name. Help us to make the best use of the time available tonight. We realise that some of the discussions may be uncomfortable, but we pray that you give us the willingness and enthusiasm to fully engage and join in the discussions. We also pray that we continue after the session to contemplate and explore the thoughts and lessons we can take away from this evening. **Amen**

Luke 2.41-52

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.' He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour.

Discussion: For such a time

A VIEW FROM THE CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA

The Church of South India (CSI) is recognised as a leading force on ecological action in India. Part of the reason for this is its Green Schools programme, through which the CSI instils in children and young people the Godly value of caring for the environment. The Green Schools programme has received commendations from the World Council of Churches and the United Nations Environment and Development Forum. School pupils take the lead in ensuring their schools are environmentally friendly. Children conduct 'green audits' of their schools, assessing their performance in areas such as air quality and waste management. They then make recommendations based on their findings, and the schools make adjustments where necessary. Each school involved in the programme appoints 60 of its pupils to look after ecological issues. India's government has recognised Green Schools as a flagship programme. As a result of this, the CSI's Department of Ecological Concerns was asked to work with the government's Department of the Environment to produce a curriculum for use in schools. The CSI aims to implement the programme in all its 1,000 schools – not just for the pupils but their teachers too. Schoolchildren on the programme have become champions for the environment. Through them, the message of caring for Creation is reaching not only their schools and homes, but spreading further, influencing their neighbourhoods and wider communities. And the programme is now crossing continents; in 2021, 10 of the schools that are part of Green Schools in India will be twinned with 10 schools in the Diocese of Oxford, UK. Alongside Green Schools, the CSI has created a wide range of environmental resources, including the books *Green Stories for Sunday School Children* and *The Green God of the Bible*, which was published in September 2020. 'At Sunday School, children should be trained in eco-spirituality, so that they can lead their lives from an ecological perspective,' says D Ratnakara Sadananda, former General Secretary of the CSI Synod.

Discussion Questions:

1. Ecological justice is a priority for many young people. What does this mean for the mission of the church?
2. The 'prophetic voice of the Church' can often be heard loudest and clearest through its young people. In what ways does your church listen to the voices of its young people? And how can we work more effectively as an intergenerational community?
3. Jesus in the temple reminds us of the wisdom and leadership of young people. How does your community encourage young leadership?

Closing Prayers

Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can come together again, to discuss views and listen to each other's experiences. As we near the end of this evening's session, help us to keep the thoughts and ideas we have encountered tonight, alive in our hearts.

Amen

Father of everlasting compassion you see your children growing up in an uncertain and confusing world: show them the path of life enable them to triumph over failure and frustration to hold fast their faith in you and to keep alive their joy in your Creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

The Lord bless us and watch over us;
the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us;
the Lord look kindly on us and give us peace.

Amen.

Let us bless the Lord

Thanks be to God.