

Justice & Peace Group: Tregonigge Woodland Walk

Tuesday 10 September 2019

Introduction

What has walking in a woodland to do with Justice and Peace?

Woodlands are the environment from which humans evolved long ago in Africa.

Wood is the material from which homes have been built and tools fashioned, food cooked and warmth provided.

Trees are central to our Christian faith – from the story of our fall from grace in eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, to our restoration to grace through the death of Jesus upon a tree.

At present, the Amazon Forest is ablaze – yet another example of our failure to be good stewards of the creation which God has entrusted to us.

In our dealings with forests, we are often guilty of not only plundering the bounty of God's creation, but of driving fellow humans into poverty and many species to extinction.

We are living in a time of Climate Injustice. Our profligacy is fuelling the poverty of others.

The tragedy is, as the planet burns, so all of us, rich and poor alike, face an uncertain future as inhabitants of planet earth.

Hence Justice & Peace form a thread running through what we experience today.

1. The Nursery Pond

Opening Prayer

Dear God our Creator and Sustainer, help us to see your great goodness displayed in the beautiful world you have made.

In the peace of this place, may we be still and know indeed that you are God.

May the ground beneath our feet remind us of the solid foundation You provide for our faith.

May the still waters remind us that without water there is no life; that through water we are baptised into your family.

2. Bickland Stream at Two Bridges

Lord God of Creation, who made the earth and the water which sustains life upon it, help us to never take water for granted.

We are so blessed in this country with an abundant supply of clean water, yet many in this world do not have ready access to water, and in many cases the water is unsafe.

Help us to support those agencies that are seeking to bring clean water, which should be a basic human right, to all.

3. Large Oak

*I think that I shall never see
A poem as lovely as a tree
A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;
A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.*

Traditional Irish: quoted by Satish Kumar. A Sacred Journey. Resurgence, May-June 1988.

For as long as people can remember, the oak tree has been a symbol of wisdom. Maybe that's because oaks live for hundreds of years and we know that people who are much older than us often seem to be much wiser than we are because they have experienced more of life.

So the mighty oak tree is a good place to sit when you are trying to make sense of a difficult situation and you don't know how to respond.

The oak can be a reflection of God's ancient wisdom; a wisdom that you can ask for when you need help.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." (James 1:5)

<https://quietgarden.org/2018/tree-prayers/>

4. Bramble Patch

Dear God our Father, we thank you for the fruits which enrich our diet. Jesus, when he said "By their fruits you will know them" was indicating that if we are truly followers of Him, then we will be identified thus by our acts.

Our fruit is a sign of our fitness for your Kingdom. As we contemplate the beauty and taste of fruit, may we reflect on our own lives and how we might be able to grow more fruitful in your service.

5. The Holly Arches

As we stand by the Holly Arches, we may recall the well-known carol, the *Holly and the Ivy*. Whilst this carol is obviously derived from a pre-existing pagan song, it has become incorporated into the Christian liturgy and worship.

There is an even older version of the song, which starts thus:

*Holly stands in the hall, fair to behold:
Ivy stands without the door, she is full sore a cold.
Nay, ivy, nay, it shall not be I wis;
Let holly have the mastery, as the manner is.*

6. Wooden Bench on the Lower Path

As we admire God's handiwork in the many different shapes, colours, textures and uses to which trees can be put, and the haven they provide for so many creatures, let us thank God for the beauty and utility of trees and wood.

We thank you Lord that trees provide so much of our raw materials without which our lives would be materially poorer.

We also think of those people in other parts of the world whose lives depend upon wood as a source of fuel and of shelter.

Help us to appreciate trees and woodlands, and to recognise their essential role in the health of our world.

7. Rotting Log

Death and life are a constant cycle in nature; without death and decay, minerals essential for plant growth cannot be recycled.

It also reminds us of the need for us to die to our own selfish wants, and to be reborn with a concern for the needs of others.

Heavenly Father, we recognise that we share, with all creation, in the constant cycle of life and death.

We also thank you that through the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we now know that death is not the end of all things, but the beginning of eternal life.

Help us remember this truth when death comes close to us and to those we love.

8. Don Hoyle Meadow

Jesus frequently drew upon examples from nature to illustrate eternal truths. One can imagine him in a pasture field talking to the crowds when he said:

"And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!" (Matthew 6:28-30).

"All things praise thee Lord most high..." Lord God, King of Creation, we thank you for the beauty of the earth and the wonder of the flowers whose intricate shapes, colours and patterns never cease to amaze us. May we be forever thankful for the wonders of nature that surround us, and help us to be wise stewards of your world.

9. The Tregoniggie Titan

At 4851 years of age, the Great Basin bristlecone pine is the world's oldest tree. By comparison, this multi-stemmed coppiced ash tree is a mere stripling at a probable age of around 350 years. However, it is the oldest tree in Tregoniggie Woodland!

Hermann Hesse, in his *Wandering*, says this about trees:

“For me, trees have always been the most penetrating preachers. I revere them when they live in tribes and families, in forests and groves. And even more I revere them when they stand alone. They are like lonely persons. Not like hermits who have stolen away out of some weakness, but like great solitary people, like Beethoven and Nietzsche. In their highest boughs the world rustles; their roots rest in infinity, but they do not lose themselves there; struggle with all the force of their lives for one thing only: to fulfil themselves according to their own laws; to build up their own form; to represent themselves.”

Dear God, as we contemplate the time it has taken this tree to become established, help us to remember that You are not bound by time.

Give us the grace to accept that whatever we seek for happens according to Your will and purpose, and not according to our impatient spirit.

Help us to pray, as Jesus did in the garden, “yet not what I want, but what you want.”

10. Epilogue

Lest we become too focused upon our place in the scheme of things, it is good to remember that we share this planet with many other creatures. Even if we do not fully understand why they are here – how much do we understand our own presence here?

*There were three little owls in a wood
Who sang hymns whenever they could;
What the words were about
One could never make out,
But one felt it was doing them good.*

Unknown: *Ring Out, Wild Bells*

Dear Lord God, we so often assume that this world is ours for the taking. Remind us of the fact that all that is, even our own lives, are yours and to never take life for granted.

Let us give thanks for our lives and for the world in which God has set us and for families and friends and all of nature with which we share it.

Help us to remember that we borrow the world from our children, rather than bequeath it to them.