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**Theological reflection & Bible passages**

**Theological Reflection:**

For many of us, in this part of the world, daily life involves deliberation and choice. Our basic necessities, not to mention numerous luxuries, can be met and obtained with minimal effort. A click on a screen, results in a delivery to our door; or a trip to the shops, in a private car, often with a single occupant, opens up a vast range of consumer goods from around the globe. A cliché is no less true for being so: we largely take all this for granted.

But for many more in the majority world, the above description is not their daily life since material abundance, individual choice and conspicuous consumption are not the shaping factors of a very different way of existence. The cultural lenses by which we see our own distinctive contexts help us navigate life’s unfolding journey but aren’t fully adequate to the mega-realities that define what is most true and urgent about the human situation. For that, we need, and are given, the revelation of God’s loving actions, as recorded in the bible, and incarnate in Jesus. Such divine revelation inspires and expects appropriate human response.

This year’s World Development Appeal (WDA) affords a further opportunity for the members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) to demonstrate our faithful response to the goodness of our Creator God who shared our life and secured our salvation in Christ. Both projects, the main one in Ethiopia, and the second one in Haiti, are fine examples of how the church spans the globe in a fellowship of faith that seeks to address local points of acute need. Just as the prophets and writers of Israel enjoined the people to honour God by respecting creation, caring for the land, and sharing its resources with the poor and vulnerable, so the apostles followed Jesus in practising their faith in works of loving service. Feeding your neighbour, as well as seeking to improve the conditions in which they lived, went hand-in-hand with sharing the good news of Christ in evangelism and teaching.

Ethiopia and Haiti are as geographically distant from each other, as they are from us here in Ireland. They both have their own distinct histories with legacies that still shape their lives to this day, often the victims of how other peoples have treated them unjustly. One such legacy is that their land and livelihoods have been, and continue to be, hugely affected by global realities such as climate change and the prevailing financial system. Tragically, Ethiopia and Haiti are two nations, among many others, which have contributed much less to industrial-induced climate change, but who suffer disproportionately from its devastating effects – drought, hurricane, unpredictable rainfall, deforestation, soil depletion, and pollution.

Christian Aid and Tearfund, and their partner organisations, are major players by which PCI helps these local communities in Ethiopia, Haiti and elsewhere, to tackle the profound challenges they face. PCI’s World Development Appeal is a tried and tested vehicle to enable our church to support such vital local projects in our global mission. God’s mission in Christ continues through his church, led by the Spirit, going with the grain of the divine action to change life for the better for those most impacted by climate change and economic disparities. God’s original good creation is no longer in right relationship due to human sin. Christian theology understands that God’s economy of salvation works by the ecology of grace in Jesus, a mission that calls, converts, and enables us by the Spirit, to divest ourselves of our ego-centric way of life as we participate in a cosmic eco-system of divine providence.

Currently, our part of the world has been relatively unaffected by the dynamics of climate change. But we are learning, almost on a daily basis, it seems, through global media networks, that others have suffered longer and deeper than we have, through no fault of their own, relatively speaking. Given the gravity of this situation, once our awareness has been raised, and our conscience pricked, we can often feel simultaneously overwhelmed and disempowered. What difference can my puny efforts make to such a colossal crisis? In our own strength, not as much as needed. But in God’s strength, there are indeterminate possibilities for creative action and faithful response on the ground, or, more likely for us, at a physical distance from Ethiopia and Haiti, our prayers, and money, and enduring Christian fellowship.

**Bible Passages:**

*Genesis 1 and 2:* The first two chapters of the bible describe God’s creation of a world that is good in which humanity has a distinct place and unique vocation to care for the earth and its creatures.

*Genesis 3:* The fall into sin means that God’s good creation is no longer in right relationship. All of creation and every aspect of life is now blighted and in need of divine redemption.

*Psalm 104:* Other psalms that extol God in creation are 8, 65, 147. Psalm 104 shares many features with these but describes in greater detail the intricate connections between God, humanity, and the wider creation.

*Isaiah 55:* A wonderfully evocative chapter that weaves together the various strands of creation, providence, sin and salvation. Images from the world of creation articulate the magnificence of God’s always greater thoughts and ways in covenant relationship.

*1 Corinthians 3:5-9a:* Paul’s metaphor of Christian service in God’s mission is taken from the practices of farming as did Jesus earlier in Mark 4. An appreciation of God’s providential promises is as evident in the teaching of the apostle as in the ministry of Jesus himself (Matthew 6:24-34).

*Revelation 22:1-5:* The bible began with a description of God’s good creation, in the garden of Eden. It ends with a vision of another garden setting with a different tree of life, when God’s promise to renew this fallen creation through Jesus Christ is finally fulfilled in all its glory.

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