Evening Service with Prayer for Healing Sunday 7th November 2021
Micah 4:1-5

The Priest Pastor

When my mother in law died, she left us a little octagonal table. I realised only recently that the top of the table lifted up and had compartments for storing things. In it I found a little sampler, sewed beautifully with this motto ‘Waste Nothing’. It is something that she really lived by, sometimes to an extreme extent. Waiting until you had a full bowl before doing washing up, darning tights, keeping food until it was beginning to go off only to be told, its fine dear!

That’s how a lot of that generation who lived through the war were – make do and mend. Waste nothing. And I remember into my childhood in the sixties when the milkman would come around in an electric van with recyclable glass bottles. Food shops where you bought the exact amount you needed and it was wrapped in paper and placed in your string bag. As the sixties progressed plastic bags were invented and freezers became an everyday household item.

Consumption and waste has rocketed over the last fifty years, with disastrous effects on the environment and we are going back to some of the old ways. This week we have seen world leaders meeting at COP26 discussing a whole range of actions which could reduce the impact of a climate crisis: keeping a 1.5c temperature rise within reach, committing finances to mitigate the climate crisis, reducing the use of coal and the emission of methane gas, committing to net zero carbon emissions, and the ending of deforestation by 2030. Fine words have been spoken, mainly by high consuming millionaires, some of whom fly around in private jets, but success has been patchy, with many countries either not present or refusing to sign agreements. The protestors outside COP26 are writing it off as a waste of time.
Are the nations of the world prepared to take a short term economic hit for the long term sake of the planet? 
And will economic justice prevail for those communities where they are forced to cut down forests to survive?

I saw a heartbreaking film recently about the Democratic Republic of Congo where a large percentage of the population have no electricity whatsoever: they know that cutting the trees to make charcoal is bad for the environment but they literally have not other way of cooking their food. Very far from Micah’s vision we heard earlier: ‘they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid’. A vision of individual dignity for the person; to have possession and control of the necessities of life; not to be threatened by anyone or anything, not to be dependent on handouts or compromising behaviour; to live in peace and prosperity.

This is God’s vision for the human race. He has given us a beautiful world full of natural resources. But as Gandhi said, the world has enough for every one’s needs but not everyone’s greed. In the second creation story of Genesis, Adam is taken from the earth, he is literally made from dust. As the funeral service reminds us, we are earth to earth, dust to dust. The theologian Tim Gorringe has pointed out that ‘human beings are therefore part of creation: we do not live in an ‘environment’, we are indissolubly linked with every other part of creation.

As the creation account continues, Adam and Eve are given dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air the cattle, the wild animals of the earth, and every creeping thing; they are also put in the garden to till and keep it. The word translated ‘till’ is the verb ‘abad’ which means to work, serve or worship. That somewhat mitigates the verb ‘dominion’. Adam and Eve were given dominion, but they were ultimately condemned for misinterpreting that; wanting to be like God. It could be argued that that is how we are treating the earth. Dominating, ravaging, rather than tilling and serving. As if we were Gods, and not stewards of a beautiful gift.

We come to this service tonight praying for healing in mind body and spirit, for people, relationships, communities. But we also come to pray for the healing of this beautiful world, that is gasping under the weight of human greed and domination rather than responsible dominion, service and care. 
We cannot pray for healing for the worlds people without praying for healing for the environment.
May God give the leaders of the world the will to put the long term good before short term greed. May God give us all deep gratitude for this garden we have been entrusted to till and to serve. We have been given so much: let us waste nothing of it.