



# Hope for the world

## Worship the Creator

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I have a confession to make. I know virtually nothing about the environment. That isn't a very promising way to start this Advent podcast, but it's true.

I remember being invited to rather a smart dinner with twelve people, and the invitation said '7.30pm for a discussion gathering about the environment'. I assumed it meant '7.30pm for 8pm' so I turned up at 7.40pm. It meant 7.30. And they were all seated. Now this wasn't a polite conversation dinner, this was a serious discussion dinner. So I arrived there very embarrassed because eleven places were filled, one was empty, and I was the missing person.

The people present were all Christians involved in the environment. When I say involved, they had all either started environmental charities or lectured in the environment. They were all doing something absolutely amazing in terms of the environment. As they talked one after another, I was increasingly thinking, 'What on earth am I doing here?' Eventually it got to me and I said, 'Well, I've got nothing to add at all – except to say I'm so sorry I was late, but my excuse is that I came on an eco-friendly bicycle'. Thankfully they laughed, and that was it.

But since then I've done a lot of thinking about this whole subject of the environment: about how this world is in serious trouble and how Christians should be at the forefront of the environmental cause and movement. This Advent we reflect on a newborn baby who carries within him hope for the entire world, so what can we do ourselves to reflect that hope?

Firstly, and certainly in my case, we need to repent. When I looked at this subject, I realised there are things that we have been doing that we should not have been doing in terms of the environment. And we are trying to put that right. For example we've transferred to a green energy supplier. I think we are now supplied in the vicarage with wind power – I do not know how that will work out, but we have done it.

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Secondly, we should enjoy God's creation with gratitude and not guilt. God loves it when we enjoy his creation. So food is to be enjoyed. Often we read of Jesus 'while they were eating together...'. Wine, the Psalmist says, was made to '... gladden the heart of human beings'. People said about Jesus, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard'. Of course these things can be abused and misused, but in it's proper place it is to be enjoyed. Nature, mountains, the oceans (what greater pleasure than swimming in an ocean?), countryside, sunsets, music, art, architecture, sport, the theatre, going to a film – all these things are gifts of God to be enjoyed, not with guilt ('oh, we shouldn't be having such fun'), but with gratitude.

Thirdly, refocus on Jesus. It is fascinating to me that the climax of the creation story is not the creation of human beings. It is day seven. Day seven is a day of rest. What does that symbolise? It relativises the importance of work. Work is not the be-all and end-all of our existence.

Worship is what it is about. What it tells us is that God is sovereign. Because God is ultimately in control. He rested, and he gave us rest. Of course we are called to enjoy creation; we are called to take care of it; we are called to develop it and do all we can... but ultimately we do not find our meaning and purpose in those things. We find our meaning and purpose in the Creator – in a relationship, in worship. Our understanding of creation is ultimately that creation is not an end in itself.

This Advent season we celebrate the fact that creation came about through Jesus and it is for Jesus. Therefore supremely what we are called to do in life is to worship Him.



Nicky Gumbel is Vicar of Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB), an Anglican church in central London. He is the pioneer of Alpha, an introduction to the Christian faith now running all over the world.

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