

SERMON STARTERS

THE POWER OF CHRIST IN US

Acts 7:55-60; Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16; 1 Peter 2:2-10;

John 14:1-14

The verses found in Acts, Psalms, 1 Peter, and John proclaim that our salvation relies on the power of God. Stephen was stoned to death for declaring his faith, and maintained that faith even in the face of death. The verses from Psalms remind us of the call to turn to God in times of trouble, and to pray for deliverance. 1 Peter reminds us that we are those chosen by God, granted mercy to live out that calling. In order to live that out, we are to turn to God. Finally, this well known verse in the Gospel of John tells us of the saving grace that comes from He who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. It is through Christ that we come to know God, and do acts even greater than those of Christ, who is going to God.

In our world today we are facing perhaps the greatest challenge ever put before us as a global community. Climate change is fundamentally altering the world around us. We are damaging God's Creation, and with it, putting the most vulnerable among us in even greater danger. Those living in poverty are not equipped to deal with impacts of climate change such as flooding, disease, drought, and stronger hurricanes. Scripture reminds us that it is in hard times that we are to turn to God—for prayer and for the power to perform good works. The opportunity is before us, to set the example and be a light in this world—greening our churches, our homes, and calling on our leaders to fight climate change. Christ died so that we may have life, and participate in the saving of this world. We have the opportunity. We can take steps to fight climate change and with it help our brothers and sisters who are living in poverty.

GOD'S SPIRIT IS IN YOU

Acts 17:22-31; Psalm 66:8-20; 1 Peter 3:13-22;

John 14:15-21

These verses remind us of God's role in Creation, and our responsibility for it. The scripture from Acts tells us that God does not reside in a shrine, but rather throughout all of Creation, for God made it. These verses also include a stern reminder for us to care for God's Creation. The scripture from 1 Peter reminds us that repentance and creation saving action is going to require sacrifice. But we are not to fear, for with God pleasing action comes God's blessing. It is this blessing that allows us to turn from our ways and begin to renew God's Creation that surrounds us. God has blessed us with the constant presence of the Holy Spirit

within us, so that we may live in a way that is fitting of God's children.

We are now aware that the responsibility for global climate change rests with humans, and that the cycle of extreme poverty is perpetuated by human sin, including sins of omission. We have been blessed with the power of the Holy Spirit to do the right thing, to treat this Creation as God's, and to work to restore Creation in a way that helps people living in poverty. Just as our actions (and inactions) have caused these sins to continue, our repentance and recommitment can turn them around, for God's presence never leaves us.

WE ARE WHO CREATION IS WAITING FOR

Psalm 104: 1-25, 30. Romans 8:19; Col. 1:15-20

This Psalm reminds us not only that it is God who created all things, but that God is constantly creating, and renewing Creation. This is emphasized in the passage from Colossians, which proclaims Christ as the firstborn of all Creation, all of which comes from God. According to scripture, all that is needed is the revealing of the children of God. And we are those children of God for which Creation is waiting.

Imagine, if it could be expressed, the enthusiasm with which Creation would greet us if we were to live in the glorious way that God intended. As the children of God, we are tasked with continuing the reconciliation that Jesus Christ began. This means living in harmony with the rest of Creation, both our brothers and sisters living in poverty, and the environment which surrounds us all. We should be mindful of the way we treat God's creation, and the way we treat the vulnerable among us. Because we are the very children that Creation has been waiting for, we should strive to live out our call to do justice and love mercy. In Genesis, God created everything and declared it good. In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, God again reconciled all of Creation back to God. Finally, God enabled us, as God's children, to be revealed to Creation through the power of the Holy Spirit. As living parts of God's reconciliation, it is time to live into that reality, and reveal ourselves to the rest of Creation. In revealing ourselves, we are to act in ways that promote abundance and no longer perpetuates the reinforcing and interconnected cycles of climate change and poverty, but rather pulls all of Creation out of those cycles, and renews it once again.