

Readings: Isaiah 32: 14-18 & Romans 8: 18-22 and Mark 4: 35-41

Sermon: Creation - From Groaning to Glory

Julian of Norwich

Julian of Norwich wrote in Revelations of Divine Love about seeing “a tiny thing in the palm of my hand, the size of a hazelnut.” She looked with the “eye of my soul” and heard, “It is all that is made.” Astonished that something so small could endure, she was told, “It lives on and will live on forever because God loves it.” Julian draws out three simple truths: God made it; God loves it; God sustains it.

Those three truths give us a down-to-earth theology of creation. The world is not an accident or merely material to be used however we wish. Creation is a deliberate, loving act of God. If God made and loves the world, then our treatment of it matters. Caring for the earth is not optional; it flows from the way we understand God.

Creationtide

The church marks a season for remembering this reality each year in the Season of Creation, a time when Christians worldwide renew their relationship with the Creator and all creation through prayer, repentance, and action. This year’s theme, “Peace with Creation,” invites us to move from devastation toward restoration and justice.

That is why we speak of stewardship. The Bible and our tradition teach that God entrusts the care of creation to human beings; we are called to cooperate with God in sustaining and renewing the world. Practically, this means three connected relationships: our relationship with God, our relationship with one another, and our relationship with the earth and its creatures. This week in our Open The Book sessions with the schools, we said just that.

Each relationship shapes the other: worship that ignores how we treat the world is incomplete, and decisions that forget God's love for creation are bad ones.

So Creationtide is not an optional extra. It is a focused season for giving thanks, saying sorry where we have failed, and gathering our energies to do better. It calls us back to the truth Julian saw in that hazelnut: because God loves the world, we must love and protect it too

The Creation groans

St Paul writes in Romans 8 that “the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.” It's a powerful image — not of destruction, but of deep longing for something better. Paul is speaking about the difference between life lived in the Spirit and life lived apart from God. Those who are “in Christ” live by the Spirit, sharing in God's work of healing and renewal. But the world, affected by sin and death, carries the weight of human separation from God.

Paul tells us that creation isn't just a backdrop to our lives — it's involved. It suffers alongside us. It groans, waiting for the children of God to step up, for redemption to reach not just our souls, but our bodies, our communities, and the whole natural world. This isn't a side issue in Christian faith — it's part of God's big plan to restore everything.

Today, that groaning is loud and clear. We hear it in floods and wildfires, in the loss of species and the damage to soil and water, in the voices of people forced to leave their homes because of climate change. The environmental crisis isn't just about science or politics — it's also about our spiritual health. It shows how far we've drifted from the care God intended.

And I think many of our current world tensions have some sort of origin here – the more we humankind fails in its treatment of the earth, the more pressure it places on humankind’s relationship with each other leading to conflict, violence and appalling terrorist acts – evident as recent as last week just a hundred miles or so from here.

But to live “in Christ” is to live with hope — an active hope. It means joining creation’s groaning with our own prayers and actions and becoming part of the healing. St Paul reminds us that the suffering we see now is nothing compared to the glory that will come. But that glory isn’t about escaping the earth, it’s about working with God to transform it. It begins how we treat the world God loves.

Peace with Creation

Isaiah’s vision of a just and flourishing land pictures what God longs creation to be: desert blossoming, the people living in secure peace, and righteousness reigning so that harm is healed and abundance follows. That prophetic vision sees a future shaped by God’s justice and invites us in bringing it about. Mark’s story of Jesus calming the storm gives the assurance that the one who promises this healed creation is king over the forces that threaten it. In the storm Jesus commands peace, showing that the renewal Isaiah imagines is not just idealistic but the work of a God who acts in power.

But we know that God desires and intends to work through humans and communities. God’s initial intention has been to use humankind as co-workers in the renewal of the world, a vocation of stewardship and discipleship. The life “in the Spirit” St Paul describes is therefore not private spirituality but public, world-repairing work.

History shows this. Christians have often been instrumental in taking on injustices: bringing education to the poorest, founding

hospitals and early welfare, campaigning to end slavery, establishing schools and charities to care for children, and in recent years supporting international relief, foodbanks, housing projects, and debt relief. So it's inline that we take on the big issues of this age: the eco crisis.

Local Renewal

We give thanks for what God is doing here. Our church has an Eco Church Silver award. Our Eco Group meets to help our worship, building, and mission reflect God's care. We are changing our heating to a greener system. Yesterday's Green Fair brought the parish together to celebrate simple and practical steps. These are not trophies but signs that we are learning to be co-workers with God.

Our next aim is Gold. Not for a medal, but because Gold names a deeper commitment: to make our worship, theology, and daily living hold together in caring for creation. When we cooperate with Christ, his power does not replace our work; it strengthens and guides it. The one who calmed the storm sends us out to tend fields, homes, streets, and policies with courage and compassion.

And let's remember: transformation does not only come through big steps like a new heating system. It is also found in quiet, faithful habits: buying Fairtrade, turning lights off, using the suggestions on the eco menu tucked inside your hymn book; each small choice is a thread in the renewal God is weaving among us.

We long for a visible change — to move “From Groaning to Glory” — so that Paul's groaning becomes Isaiah's flourishing and Christ's peace is made visible in our parish. That change will mean warmer homes that do not cost the earth, church activities that restore habitat and community, advocacy that protects the vulnerable, and hospitality that shares resources generously.

Each step is worship. Each commitment answers Julian's three truths: God made it; God loves it; God sustains it. Let us press on in prayer, learning, and action until our neighbourhood bears witness to God's mercy and renewal. Amen.

Rev'd Richard Haynes 5 October 2025 Creation Service