

View from the Rectory window August 25

As I write the article for the August edition of the magazine, the second heat wave of July is beginning to bring a yellowy orange colour to the landscape around me. The ground is becoming very dry and some of our garden plants have perished in the heat. Yet now the focus of the news is the floods in America following torrential rain, which has taken over a hundred lives, many of them children and young people. A stark and sobering reflection of the extremes of nature and our vulnerability to the overwhelming forces that nature can unleash upon human beings.

So where does this leave mankind in relation to the ferocity of extreme forces of nature? Are we impotent collateral damage, or 'agent provocateur's' who have triggered nature's reaction by the impact we have on nature itself. Without wanting to be drawn into the ongoing debate about climate change (a few would dispute the term change), perhaps I can offer a consensus by using the phrase 'fluctuating patterns of climate' to describe recent events. A 'fluctuating pattern of extremes' that leads me to ask what is the Christian theology of the weather?

In Christian theology the weather is understood as part of God's creation, reflecting both his power and his Grace. The weather therefore serves as a reminder of God's presence, his faithfulness in maintaining the natural order, and his common grace extended to all people. With the sun shining and the rain falling on both the righteous and unrighteous seen as examples of God's general favour towards all people. And therefore, when climate extremes do occur (induced by human activity or natural phenomena), a reminder that humanity is not in control of nature and due to the limitations of human power, the absolute (which we ignore at our peril) need for humility and a sense of wonder at God's creation and our impact upon it.

Hence, our weather is a sign and a reminder that the fluctuating patterns of climate point not only to God's faithfulness, but also to the enduring promises of his word,

Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.

Matthew 8:27 The men were amazed, and said, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

So, what is the relationship between weather and human responsibility? It is twofold,

- That we should be in awe and wonder at the weather because it is an expression of God's glory, might, and authority.
- Whatever the nature/ truth of climate change we must recognise the impact of our actions. As individuals and as mankind we are told we hold the keys to the kingdom: Matthew 16 verse 19, 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.'

Rev. Richard