

Words spoken at the invitation of Extinction Rebellion Peterborough Cathedral Square, Saturday 20 July 2019

Over the last few days we've heard a lot about those heady days back in the 60's when in "one giant step for mankind" – men walked on the moon for the first time.

It was an amazing achievement but most amazing of all was the experience those astronauts had of looking back at the earth they had left behind and recognising its transcendent beauty. Here in the immensity of space – a brilliant blue green sphere – which we call "home".

For many people and for me it's a special gift – a God given treasure that He called Good and which we are privileged to share with a countless array of creatures great and small – living together in what should be a wonderful balance and harmony.

Except we know that isn't what is happening. Instead our hungry, greedy species is devouring the goodness of the earth, exploiting its resources, despoiling the natural world and turning our home into a wasteland. We can see around us the signs that things are out of kilter but somehow we can't summon up the will to do things differently. We plough on consuming as if there was no tomorrow ...and in the process making that outcome a real possibility.

900 years ago that great church over there was built as a sign of hope and trust in the future – a future that was believed to be in God's hands – and as a witness to Jesus, to the One who called us to consider the birds of the air and the lilies of the field and to turn away from selfishness to embrace each other and the whole created order. But who also talked about repentance and saw that people needed to wake up and see the signs of the time. And the message remains true – we need to wake up fast. It's late – very late in the day but it's not too late. The time is now to embrace hope, to act on behalf of the planet, to care for our home to save our wounded world.

Next month we shall be displaying an image of the earth in the Cathedral - Luke Jerram's Gaia and inviting all who will to spend time just reflecting on the beauty of the earth and the wonderfully rich but fragile planet we inhabit. We must use that opportunity and all our best efforts to turn the tide, to bring people to their senses, to save our home.

50 years ago men walked on the moon but they looked back to earth and yearned to be home again.

So, in the words of an West African poem

Enjoy the earth gently
Enjoy the earth gently
For if the earth is spoiled it cannot be repaired
Enjoy the earth gently

*The Very Revd Chris Dalliston
Dean of Peterborough*