



Creation Season

Proper 24, Year A, October 19, 2008

*Special Recognition of the Place of Food in our Lives
Food as Basic Human Need*

A Bulletin Insert for the congregations of the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota

Lessons (Revised Common Lectionary)

Deuteronomy. 34: 1-12	Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18
Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17	Psalm 1
1 Thessalonians 2:1-8	Matthew 22: 34-46

Alternate Readings: Isaiah 55:1-5 and Matthew 14:13-21

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Climate Change and Food

Food is a Basic Human Need

Food is our most basic need after oxygen and water. Without it, life cannot go on. The feeding of the five thousand is the most told of all stories in the Gospels. Matthew's Gospel includes two near-duplicate stories (see also Matthew 15:32-39) which are close parallels of two in Mark (6:32-44 and 8:1-10). Luke (9:10-17) and John (6:1-13) also include the "feeding of the five thousand" or a parallel. This image of Jesus providing food for the hungry is so powerful that John's gospel identifies Jesus as himself the Bread of Life.

Food supplies are threatened by climate change.

Runaway climate change will likely reduce and certainly disrupt food production throughout the world. A study published in Science suggests that, "due to climate change, 'southern Africa could lose more than 30% of its main crop, maize, by 2030. In South Asia losses of many regional staples, such as rice, millet and maize could top 10%.'" (www.sciencemag.org SCIENCE VOL 319 1 FEBRUARY 2008)

Why is this issue of concern for Christians?

If you live in a developing country, and most Christians do, it may be a matter of personal and family survival. Even those of us in wealthier nations need to be concerned if we are follow the teaching of Christ and our tradition.

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In both Hebrew and Christian Scriptures God shows great concern for the plight of the poor.

In addition to the above mentioned identification of Jesus as the bread of life, illustrated by a quite concrete feeding of 5000 plus people, we find that early Christian communities were known for their care of widows and orphans.

God's promise to Israel was a land flowing with milk and honey. And God sought to ensure that all the people enjoyed it's benefits. Farmers were instructed not to till the corners of their fields, but to leave some grain there to be harvested by the poor. Lest ownership of land become concentrated in too few hands, the law calls for a Jubilee year every 50 years, in which all lands would be returned to their original owners. The Prophets railed against those who grew fat at the expense of others.

Finally Christians are called to concern by Jesus' saying, "In as much as you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto me."

The poorest countries and people would be hardest hit.

The 2001 IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) Third Assessment Report concluded that

"the poorest countries would be hardest hit, with reductions in crop yields in most tropical and sub-tropical regions due to decreased water availability, and new or changed insect pest incidence. In Africa and Latin America many rainfed crops are near their maximum temperature tolerance, so that yields are likely to fall sharply for even small climate changes; falls in agricultural productivity of up to 30% over the 21st century are projected. Marine life and the fishing industry will also be severely affected in some places."

What shall we do, in our concern?

First we must take every action we can to limit climate change by limiting the emission of greenhouse gasses. The three most effective steps for American consumers are to use less fuel, use less electricity, and eat less meat, especially red meat. But that won't be enough without government and industry action. We must also push our companies and governments to adopt the most effective policies and practices to limit greenhouse gas emissions. The necessary technologies exist. It's a matter of political will to encourage and, if necessary, enforce their use.

The Minnesota Episcopal Environmental Stewardship Commission (MEESC) has prepared Creation Season materials for for Propers 22-25, Year A, with a focus on food. If you find the information on these inserts to be of interest, you may wish to visit the MEESC website for more information (www.env-steward.com). Members of MEESC are available to visit your congregation to assist you in your environmental stewardship walk.