

## **2022 TALK FOR CAREY, 17.7.22, BIRDS & BEASTIES OF THE BIBLE (3):**

### **PSALM 104:1,10-18, LUKE 12:1-7: JUST SPARROWS & GOATS**

I will start with a story from my childhood. One morning in a hairdressers. Waiting for a haircut. And I couldn't believe what I was seeing. A man much older than me, sitting in the barber's chair. Almost completely bald this guy. Except – he had, literally 3 hairs on his head. No joke. Admittedly, quite long hairs, down to his shoulders. And OK, so he wasn't asking the hairdresser for a particular style. He wasn't expecting a Mohican. But everyone in that hairdressers found this hilarious. A man with three hairs at a hairdressers !

Jesus tells us that the very hairs on our head are numbered. Well, God didn't have much trouble counting his hairs!. Of course, as well as being a master story-teller, God is a master mathematician. To be LORD of all creation, God must be both an artist and a scientist without compare.

But the story of the hairdressers is not why I chose this passage from Luke 12. It was because of the sparrows which Jesus gives a special mention to. Now, you will know that the UK sparrow population has taken a big nose-dive in last 20 years or so. Still a mystery as to why. But thankfully there is some evidence that their numbers are beginning to recover. Although they are still nowhere near the numbers we used to see. But God doesn't forget the sparrows.

Here's a spot I know that is a favourite haunt of sparrows. This is also personally one of my favourite ever holiday haunts. (PHOTOS). This is the Valley of the Rocks in Exmoor. Beyond Lynmouth and Lynton. A magical place. A rugged coastline. Some stunning rocky scenery. And on top of all this it has a cricket pitch in one of the best locations ever. And the best ever café for cream teas: Mother Meldrums. For me, this is the closest place to heaven on earth. And just along the road is Lee Abbey, the Christian Retreat Centre. (PHOTOS) I'm sure you too can think of some of your favourite holiday locations.

There's more. There are large numbers of semi-wild goats here too. (PHOTOS) They show off their gravity-defying skills dangling off the cliffs. Their incredible balance enables them to get to the most inaccessible places to find food for themselves and their young ones. Extremely resourceful and hardy animals. Alongside the simple sparrow, pointed out by Jesus, these mountain goats are celebrated in Psalm 104. We have much to learn from the faith and

resourcefulness of the birds & beasts of the Bible. And this place, Valley of the Rocks, brings these two passages of scripture together in my mind.

Now here's where my talk takes another turn. It's easy to talk about cute, cuddly animals and birds isn't it? But the rest of Luke 12 is a particularly difficult passage. What does Jesus tell one of his biggest audiences? A crowd so desperate to scramble to hear him, that they are in danger of trampling each other. (Nothing like nimble mt goats!). Jesus doesn't talk about prayer, about giving or about stories of God's people. He tells them to beware of the Pharisees. To be wary of those who are in authority over them. Jesus says: 'Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy'.

Here's the thing about the birds & beasts of creation: what you see is what you get. There is no dissembling with them. No pretending to be something different. No attempt to put on a different appearance and to make themselves look and sound better than they really are. Creation has an authenticity which humanity must learn from.

So, when we see the circus of the current political popularity contest, we should be wary. About pretence. And putting on appearances. And rank hypocrisy. But there is something else that bothers me about the fight for the top job of Prime Minister. And it's this. Where is there mention about the biggest crisis facing our nation and our world ? Very few of these candidates have given more than a sound bite to the question of our environmental crises. Precious little about global warming. And this at a time when the UK and Europe are sweltering, again, in record high temperatures... Whoever ends up getting the keys to no.10, there will also be an elephant in no.10.

It is not true that the government's existing commitment to zero carbon by 2050 is sufficient. Our leaders need to be honest and clear about how we are going to reach this goal. I tell you the truth, our government needs to give much more thought and action to reducing our nation's carbon emissions. And there's more. Truly I tell you, each of **us** need to be doing more to combat global warming. I challenge you as I challenge myself: check your own carbon footprint. Identify ways to cut down on producing CO2. The average person in the west produces as much as 10 tonnes of CO2 annually. Yes, that's right, 10 tonnes. But even if you discover that you are producing less than this, we each need to find more ways of producing even less. The race of life is on 4 all of us.

As we turn to join together in communion, what do we see? What we see is what we get. A God who both promises and delivers. A God for whom words and deeds go together. Just bread and wine. The love of God, the life of Christ.