

All the Trees of the Field Shall Clap their Hands

**Uncovering Subversive Prophetic Preaching to Address Faith and Action
in a World of Climate Crisis**

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Abstract

The world's climate is changing rapidly in a way that is making our whole environment face major challenges. This thesis is about exploring if subversive prophetic preaching can be a way to preach substantially about the climate in the Church of Sweden, analyzing if this preaching form can bring faith and climate actions closer together for the listeners in my congregation. I will explore subversive prophetic preaching with the help of Walter Brueggemann, Leah D Schade and Norman Habel. Per Espen Stoknes will help me understand the rhetorical form needed of climate messages to the individual and the collective community. I find the aspect of criticizing social systems in prophetic preaching, together with a subversive aspect of reading the bible texts 'from below', and seeing the Earth as the exposed one, as fruitful to help my listeners to a stronger connection between faith and action for the sake of the Earth.

*The title on the front page is a quote from Isaiah 55:12

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Chapter One

Introduction

In the summer of 2018, Sweden had several really big bushfires, due to exceedingly hot weather and little rain. Not only did forests burn, the crop also failed to grow. In this summer, climate change became a reality to the many in Sweden and was no longer something that only affected others somewhere else. Since then not a day passes by when the climate is not in some way or another mentioned in media and social media. Happenings in nature, political decisions, production processes and lifestyle are viewed through the lens of climate and environmental issues. It is talked about and referred to at every level in society – concerning, for example, sustainably grown food, eating less meat, electric bikes, clothing industry, second hand shopping, house heating, carbon emissions, plastics, amongst other things. The impact this has made on our conversation and awareness on the climate in our Swedish society has been big. Nevertheless, habits are hard to change and the transformation of our society, in the sense of becoming more environmental friendly as a whole, is slow.

Climate change is not new to Swedes. It has been on the agenda several decades - locally, nationally, and internationally. In Sweden in the seventies, green political parties grew and environmental issues were expressed through music and films. The referendum in Sweden 1980 for or against nuclear energy placed the environment issue at the center. I went around with badges on my clothes from Linje 3 (The Third Option) which said “Atomkraft – Nej Tack!” (Nuclear Energy - No Thanks!), participating with my parents on demonstrations and manifestations. The nuclear catastrophe in Chernobyl in Ukraine 1986 made acid rain fall over parts of Sweden, contaminating our ground with high levels of radiation. It led, for example, to warnings of eating moose meat and mushrooms from the Swedish forests for a considerably long time. But I sense that when the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen gathered 15 000 delegates from 192 countries in 2009, with the aim of finding

mutual ways to slow down climate change, the aspects of climate change and the acuteness of the situation were a kind of wake-up call for many. By then the film “An Inconvenient Truth” by Al Gore, in 2006, had spread disturbing facts. One of Sweden’s most well-known scientists in the field of environment, Johan Rockström from Stockholm Resilience Center, presented a TED-talk in 2013, with facts from different disciplines of research concerning the environment, for example carbon emissions, biodiversity, and clean water. The total sum painted a picture of a bleak coming scenario, if things did not change.¹ Today, continuing reports from scientists, the work of UN, and the noticeable and rapid change in nature in present time, with melting ices, mass-extinction of species and extreme weather show the alarming acuteness of the problems with our global climate is not decreasing. In Sweden, in the last year, media has more often referred to the situation not simply as “climate change” but as a “Climate Crisis”.²

The issue of climate change has affected me increasingly over the years. I am incredibly concerned about the future of the Earth. I have during the last years cut down on eating meat, started to buy more second hand, have periods of ‘shopping stops’ and buy substantially more sustainably grown food. Flying is something I only do at very rare occasions. I do not longer call it climate change, but Climate Crisis with capital C. The Climate Crisis cannot though be dealt with only by individuals changing their lifestyles; it needs to be dealt with through national politics, economic decisions by manufacturing companies and trade, but also in mutual collective global ways. The issue of the climate has both individual and collective perspectives.

I am a minister in the Church of Sweden and my engagement on climate issues is based on my faith of a living, life-giving God, who has created Earth and all that is within it.

¹ Johan Rockström, “How can we all become responsible stewards of Planet Earth”, TED talk, filmed at TED Global in Edinburgh in 2013, June 18 2015, <https://vimeo.com/131133951>

² Lisa Nilsson, “Medier väljer klimatkris framför klimatförändring”, *Sveriges Televisions Nyheter*, June 13, 2019, <https://www.svt.se/kultur/mediers-nya-klimatsprak>

The Church of Sweden's bishops express poetically in their Bishop's letter about the climate that we are all created out of stardust, interconnected in a weave of life and mutually dependent on God's life-giving creativity. As caretakers, the mission of human kind to be stewards for the Earth is a longterm mission and proxy, but we must never forget the Earth is not ours, but God's.³ My belief is that we have conscious creative minds and can take responsible actions; that is how we are created.⁴ By this I mean we need to find ways to take better care of this wonderful world created and given to us by God. This is an acute task for people and society but also for the church. It is something the church needs to act upon and speak about, because of the mission we humans are given. We need to speak about it not only in our conference rooms and around coffee tables, but also in the pulpits. I find that, including myself, preachers in the Church of Sweden do not preach substantially about the Climate Crisis and I keep asking myself why.

Thesis Question

As a minister and as a part of the ACTS Doctor of Ministry Program of Preaching, where a part of the program is to write a thesis connected to preaching and Homiletics, I have chosen to bring the issues of preaching and the Climate Crisis together. My thesis question is:

Can subversive prophetic preaching help people to strengthen their connection between their faith and action for the sake of the Earth?

I will explore if prophetic preaching can be a way to address the Climate Crisis. To narrow down the project to make it a reasonable project for this thesis, I have decided to look

³ The Bishops letters in Sweden are part of the work of the bishops. The letters are written on different subjects that are of importance to church, theologically or practical parish work, or bigger issues in society. In this case about the climate, the Bishops point to bible verse Ps 24:1 as one of the theological standpoints for our mission of being caretakers of Creation. *Biskopsmötet 2019, Ett biskopsbrev om klimatet* (Uppsala: Svenska kyrkan 2019), 61-63.

⁴ Gen 1:27, Gen 2:15

at if prophetic preaching can affect the connection between faith and action for the sake of the Earth, in a limited group of people in my congregation. Even though it would be ideal to have ‘everyone’ as the aim of this project, it is only possible to use a limited group in this limited thesis, counting on the possibility that the outcome might apply to people in common. I have also added the notion of ‘subversive’ to the prophetic preaching form. To make clear why I have chosen prophetic preaching with the notion ‘subversive’ connected to it, I will now present some definitions of prophetic preaching and an explanation of the word ‘subversive’.

Definitions of Prophetic Preaching

To explain why I have chosen prophetic preaching as my preaching model, I will first discern some definitions of prophetic preaching on which I lean in this thesis.

Prophetic preaching has different definitions by different homileticians. A common ingredient in these definitions, as I have understood it, is that it aims to criticize unjust collective systems in society. Walter Brueggemann and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale have both written about prophetic preaching with a pastoral approach, that is, with the knowledge and experience that prophetic preaching takes place in congregations where you as a minister are in relation with people in need of hearing and meeting grace and love, both from God, from their neighbors and their minister. The parishioners are people caught up in just those collective systems that need to be addressed and named as being destructive. When pointing to and challenged about these systems, you can, as a minister, be met with denial and maybe anger, because letting go of these systems can be hard. As a minister, you are caught in the middle of this, needing to simultaneously address destructive collective systems, challenge your congregation, and meeting your parishioners with respect and giving pastoral care.⁵

⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipating Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 16-20, and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Prophetic Preaching: A Pastoral Approach* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), xii

I understand this pastoral view of prophetic preaching as an acknowledgement of the individual in the collective systems. This is helpful in view of the Climate Crisis, since the issue of the climate is a blend of collective and individual aspects, of both personal and collective needs and challenges. I find this pastoral aspect in prophetic preaching a fruitful starting point for viewing the mission of a priest when preaching about the climate in a congregation. Prophetic preaching is a model that is not commonly acknowledged in the Church of Sweden, but the pastoral approach is. The central aspect in prophetic preaching of criticizing collective systems, together with a pastoral view of the individual, makes me curious to explore if this pastoral approach in prophetic preaching that Brueggemann and Tubbs Tisdale argue for can be a useful model for preaching about the climate in our Swedish context.

Brueggemanns writes “(P)rophetic proclamation is an attempt to imagine the world as though JHWH – the creator of the world, the deliverer of Israel, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ whom we Christians come to name as Father, Son, and Spirit – were a real character and an efficient agent in the world.”⁶ His definition is guided by the works of the prophets in Scripture, however he makes his definition in opposition to two other common ways of seeing prophetic preaching. The first one is seeing prophetic preaching as a kind of preaching that tells about the future with predictions about what is to be. The other way is seeing prophetic preaching as social activism to establish social justice, mainly found in liberal movements. Instead, he focuses on the key word ‘imagine’. To preach prophetically is to paint an image that suggests something different from the world we see before us. That ‘something else’ is to present God as an agent in our world to give hope. To be guided by and use this content of the texts of the prophetic tradition is for him what defines prophetic preaching, not the call to

⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipating Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 2

social action or the preacher being seen by others as a prophet.⁷

Tubbs Tisdale understands prophetic preaching as "based on prophetic biblical texts that call people to live into God's vision for justice, peace, and equality in our world (such as those found in the Hebrew prophets or teachings of Jesus), or to preaching that addresses significant social issues and concerns."⁸ She writes that she is interested "in the type of preaching that is cutting edge and future-oriented (yet not future predicting), and that addresses public and social concerns."⁹ She also does not see prophetic preaching as predicting the future or dealing with the end of times. She does not give her own definition of prophetic preaching but presents "Seven Hallmarks" of the character of prophetic proclamation to show what makes it different from other ways of preaching.¹⁰ These hallmarks are that prophetic preaching is: rooted in the biblical witness of Old Testament prophets and Jesus Christ, is countercultural and challenges the status quo, is concerned with the ills of present social orders, requires naming what is and what is not of God, offers hope, incites courage and empower to change, requires passion for justice, and reliance on God's Holy Spirit as powerful and present.¹¹

I have built my understanding of prophetic preaching on Brueggemann's definition and Tubbs Tisdale's hallmarks, inclusive of their pastoral view of the individual in this preaching model. I understand and will perform prophetic preaching not as preaching about the end of times in a predictive way, as both Brueggemann and Tubbs Tisdale argue against. I will neither see it only as a way to agitate for social change. I would need to explore prophetic preaching more to be able to give my own definition of it, but in this thesis I lean on

⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipating Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 2

⁸ Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Prophetic Preaching: A Pastoral Approach* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 3

⁹ *Ibid*, 3

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 9

¹¹ *Ibid*, 10

Brueggemann's and Tubbs Tisdale's understanding of prophetic preaching as preaching based on the prophets of the Old Testament and the life and deeds of Jesus Christ, but specifically read and interpreted with the eyes of what threatens not only humans but our entire planet and all that is on it. It is a preaching offering hope of something new, aiming to energize and motivate to actions towards transformation. It will build on images and present a narrative of an active God in our world.

Definition of the Word 'Subversive'

In thinking of how prophetic preaching about climate issues can be construed in the Swedish context, I am also interested in subversive prophetic preaching. The word subversive comes from Latin, built of the words 'sub' meaning 'under' and 'vertere' meaning 'to turn', creating a word meaning 'overthrow'.¹² The usual meaning is about overthrowing systems, often relating to not only the result but also the way of undermining political systems.

Both Brueggemann and Tubbs Tisdale use the word 'subversive' in relation to prophetic preaching. Both of them refer, for example, to worship or baptism as actions that can be seen as subversive actions. These actions contain a different narrative of present reality for the community to abide and grow in, when counting on a God who reins the world.¹³

The reason I am using the word is not built on the usual meaning of overthrowing systems but instead dependent on the direct translation of the word 'subversive' and the meaning of 'under', coming from below.¹⁴ I aim to read and interpret the bible texts trying to see and hear the voices of the Earth as one of the exposed, that is, reading these texts 'from

¹² Source for the latin meaning of the word subversive: <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/subversive>

¹³ Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipating Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2012), 4. Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Prophetic Preaching: A Pastoral Approach* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 102.

¹⁴ Obery M. Hendricks Jr means that reading the text from below is a crucial way of reading and interpreting the Gospel. Obery M. Hendricks Jr, *The Universe Bends Towards Justice: Radical Reflections on the Bible, the Church and the Body Politic* (New York: Orbis Books, 2011), 60-62

below'. When interpreting a bible text in a way that is not the usual way, it will make the text open up to new understandings and views. In this sense, the text can then actually 'turn around', bringing new insights and meanings to us. The meaning of the word 'overthrows', or maybe an even better word in a faith context, 'conversion', can then become adequate, because the aim in the long run is to 'turn our ways around', bringing about social transformation and actions for the sake of the Earth.

Project, Research and Evaluation Method

To answer my thesis question if subversive prophetic preaching can help people to stronger connect their faith and actions for the sake of the Earth, I use the "Logical Model" presented by Sarah B. Drummond in her book *Holy Clarity* as my evaluation method.¹⁵ This model contains five aspects: resources, input, output, impact and indicators. The indicators point to if you have reached the goal or not.

As a first step to find an answer, I will use three biblical scholars to find a homiletical base of theory concerning subversive prophetic preaching – Walter Brueggemann, Leah D Schade and Norman Habel. The concepts of image, loss, new hope and God as an active agent are main aspects of prophetic preaching that Walter Brueggemann speaks of in his book *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination*. These aspects will become a base for my understanding of what prophetic preaching can be and contain. Leah D Schade, in her book *Creation-Crisis Preaching*, explores prophetic and pastoral preaching in special relation to the Climate crisis. Her aspects will become an important contribution to my understanding of how you can preach prophetically with the life and deeds of Jesus at the base, connected to the climate issue. She articulates a Lutheran eco-feminist Christology in addressing the oppressing

¹⁵ Sarah B. Drummond, *Holy Clarity: The Practice of Planning and Evaluation* (Herndon: The Alban Institute, 2009), 60

systems that bring destruction to Earth. Norman Habel, in his book *An Inconvenient Text*, suggests a different exegetical study of the biblical texts. He speaks of the ‘grey’ and ‘green’ texts of the bible and advocates a strategy to move towards ‘green’ reading and analysis of the bible texts. He will give me essential inputs of how you can read bible texts in relation to the Climate Crisis.

Going beyond the homiletics, I shall turn to Per Espen Stoknes, who in his book *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming*, presents strategies to successfully communicate messages of the climate issue. If Brueggemann, Schade and Habel mainly view the content of prophetic preaching, Stoknes looks at how we can frame our messages of the Climate Crisis. His book is written in face of what he calls the Climate Paradox, that is, why we don’t act when we know the facts and know what to do. He views this paradox from psychological theories and names different barriers we have inside us that are triggered in climate communication, and that can prevent actions for change. His contribution lies in presenting strategies to overcome these psychological barriers we set up when meeting tough issues and facts like the Climate Crisis. For me, these strategies will have impact on the rhetorical form of my sermons dealing with the Climate Crisis and how they can be framed.

The learnings from Brueggemann, Schade, Habel and Stoknes will give me the tools to be able to attempt creating two subversive prophetic sermons. These two sermons shall be the main input in my project in seeing if subversive prophetic preaching can help people in my congregation to connect faith and actions for the sake of the Earth stronger to one another.

To be able to explore what the outcome and impact of these two sermons will be, I shall use two tracks of research at the same time, with a limited group of people in each of the tracks. The first track shall center on a Parish Project Group of six people in my congregation of different ages and gender. They will give input to my preparations of the sermons and

feedback afterwards. The second track shall consist of a survey with ten people of different ages and gender in my congregation before the first sermon. The aim is to see how these people relate to and connect the issues of faith and climate at the beginning of this project. Five of them will then be asked to listen to both sermons. Afterwards I will interview each one of these five. I chose to only interview five of them, since interviewing all ten of the participants of the survey will be too extensive for this thesis.

Tim Sensing's book *Qualitative Research* shall be a base for my research methods in both tracks.¹⁶ I will use a survey with fixed answers, and semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions for those I interview. During the interviews I shall take notes and record the conversations digitally. Journal-writing for my own process will be used as a way to follow my own thoughts along the way, especially in my sermon-writing. In my conversations with the persons in the interviews and in my Parish Project Group (PPG), I shall also use observations to add to my understanding how people react and seem to think. Using both group and individual interviews for research have both positive aspects and limitations. In a group, the members can help each other to express themselves, but one can also be limited by the presence of others and hold back thoughts. In an interview, the interviewee is not helped in finding expressions and insights by others, but has instead more space and time to linger in the own thoughts and explain oneself. I am also aware that the relationship to me might affect the conversations in wanting to say kind things to their minister and give good feedback, and maybe hold back more negative feedback. I find using both tracks, both a group and single interviewees, will be useful when considering these advantages and disadvantages.

Out of these interviews and feedbacks, I plan to be able to find an answer to whether subversive prophetic preaching can help people to stronger connect their faith and action for the sake of the Earth. My evaluation will build on the "Logical model" by Drummond in

¹⁶ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 90-124

trying to see indications if my sermons, by being subversive prophetic preaching, have in any way altered or brought new thoughts to those people who have listened to them in the PPG and those I interview, that connect faith and action stronger and closer.

The Outline of my Thesis

The outline of my thesis will present my context, move through homiletical theory and beyond, to ultimately describe my sermon work and analysis. It will be as follows:

In chapter two, I present the setting of my project and the context where it takes place. This will include both the broader Swedish context, inclusive of the Church of Sweden, and my parish. This description will be oriented towards issues of the environment.

In chapter three, I present the homiletical theories of Walter Brueggemann, Leah D Schade and Norman Habel, on which this thesis stands, and who have inspired and made an impact on how I can construct a subversive prophetic sermon. Their theories have guided me along my preparations of the sermons and are the pillars on which my sermons rest. I will focus on the concepts I have used in the preparations and the delivery of my sermons.

In chapter four, I will turn to Per Espen Stoknes to reach beyond the homiletics and present his strategies for climate communication in general. I also use these strategies when creating my sermons in this project.

In chapter five, I will describe my project plan, my sermon work and the process of the two tracks surrounding the sermons. I will present the feedback and the results of the survey, the interviews and from the PPG.

In chapter six, I will present my conclusions and evaluate the results in relation to my thesis question. I will view if I have succeeded in preaching two subversive sermons, what kind of action and what content in faith I see with the help of the persons I interviewed and in my PPG. In this chapter I will also relate my findings to the theories presented in chapters three and four. An answer to my thesis question will be presented at the end of this chapter.

And in the last chapter, chapter seven, I will present my thoughts and learnings from this project by outlining some of the homiletical significance I can see as meaningful and important, especially to the Swedish context when preaching about the Climate Crisis.

Chapter Two

My Context

To describe the context in which this thesis question is explored, one needs to view the broader picture of the environmental issue in Sweden. I will in this chapter describe this broader picture of the issue in our society and in church, both nationally and locally. But first we look at my local parish.

My Ministry Context

The church to which I am ordained is the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden, an Episcopal church. Our church was a state church until 2000. One of its characteristics is that it is geographically organized, making its 1,337 parishes cover every corner of the nation.¹⁷

The parish in which I work is the parish of Lundby, part of the benefice of Västerås, which is the same as the city of Västerås. Västerås is inhabited by approximately 150,000 people.¹⁸ There are three churches and a chapel belonging to the Church of Sweden in our parish, and I work in two of these churches. The main church is the Church of Mikaeli which lies in the middle of residential quarters in the suburb, and this is where I mostly work. It is a large modern white-bricked church, built in 1966. The other church is a small white stone church, with parts of the structure from the 12th century. It lies just on the outskirts of Västerås, with industrial areas, allotment areas, and farmland as its closest surroundings.

Around 43% (approximately 15,000 people) in our parish belong to the Church of Sweden, out of a population of 35,400 people. That is under the 58% average in the country as a whole.¹⁹ One reason is probably the demographic picture of our parish with many

¹⁷ "Svenska kyrkan", Svenska kyrkans i siffror/Statistics from the website of the Church of Sweden, last updated August 12, 2019. <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/statistik>

¹⁸ "Svenska kyrkan", Svenska kyrkans i siffror/Statistics from the website of the Church of Sweden, last updated August 12, 2019. <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/statistik>

¹⁹ "Svenska kyrkan", Svenska kyrkan i siffror/Statistics from the website of the Church of Sweden, last updated August 12, 2019. <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/statistik>

inhabitants of immigrants and families with roots in other countries, cultures, churches and religions. The parish covers areas that are the most poor in our city, and also areas where the wealthiest lives. The Church of Sweden has written into its Church Law that every person that lives and abides in a parish is of concern to the church, whether they are a member or not. Everyone who needs the church are welcome and all that happens in our parish and in our surrounding society that affects people in any way, is a pastoral concern of ours. Reaching out to society and being a church outside our walls, cooperating with schools and sports clubs, doing pastoral work at companies, or cooperating with municipal authorities in social or festal issues, is not a strange thing for us.

Belonging does not mean the same as active in the church. Those active in our parish is a small part of our members, approximately 2% of our members. The core group is mostly elderly who have attended this church a long time, but there is a growing amount of newcomers who are refugees and asylum seekers, many of them attending our Language Training Group that takes place on our premises. A few of them, mostly teenagers, have during their time with us converted from Islam and have been baptized in our church. Our parish is quite a 'mainstream' parish in the Church of Sweden, with six choirs of different ages, two confirmation groups of 14/15-year olds (one with a music profile and one group in cooperation with a handball club), a small youth group, and different activity groups for mainly elderly. Every Sunday we celebrate the Eucharist at 11 o'clock in the church of Mikaeli with 30-100 participants. Every Wednesday during the semesters we celebrate a shorter Eucharist service at 6.30 pm with 10-20 participants. We have baptisms, weddings and funerals all year around. We try to arrange activities in our café on different days of the week to attract people in our close neighborhood, and these are often "low-threshold" activities.

The Climate Issue in Sweden

The issues that are debated, highlighted and talked about around coffee tables in a society tells a lot about what issues are of importance to those living in that society. One of the issues you every day can hear about in Sweden on the news, TV- and radio programs, and newspapers are issues related to the Climate Crisis. The climate issues relate to transport, food industry, housing, investments and shopping. The focus is both on the producers and the consumers. For example, during the summer of 2019, a series of articles that told stories of individual responses to the Climate Crisis was published in one of the biggest Swedish newspapers, Dagens Nyheter. One article told us about a family who had actively changed several ways of their lifestyle due to the climate. They had sold their car, moved, started to grow their own vegetables, and told of their motivation for changing their ways, the loss and the gains.²⁰ Another article was about the clothing and fashion industry being a major area of unsustainable produce. The article told about a girl being part of a project with the aim of making fashion interested people choose a more sustainable lifestyle by viewing other options than buying new clothes.²¹ Yet another article related to flying. There is a new word used by everybody in Swedish nowadays called ‘the shame of flying’. One of our aircraft companies decided to stop distributing a certain magazine to their customers because this magazine had articles in it that questioned flying out of concern to the climate.²² All of these articles are part of an ongoing collective conversation, continuing all through the writing of this thesis, with no ending of it in sight.

²⁰ Ivan Solander, "Familjen Thorslund ändrade sitt liv – för klimatets skull", *Dagens Nyheter*, updated July 8, 2019 <https://www.dn.se/ekonomi/familjen-thorslund-andrade-sitt-liv-for-klimatets-skull/>

²¹ Ivan Solander, "Hon har valt att inte köpa några nya kläder", *Dagens Nyheter*, updated July 12, 2019 <https://www.dn.se/ekonomi/hon-har-valt-att-inte-kopa-nagra-nya-klader/>

²² TT, "Flygbolag stoppar tidning som kritiserar flyg", *Dagens nyheter*, updated July 4, 2019 <https://www.dn.se/ekonomi/flygbolag-stoppar-tidning-som-kritiserar-flyg/>

A majority in Sweden stand with Greta Thunberg, a 16 year old named as a ‘climate prophet’, who while criticized by some, is greatly respected by far more for her Friday strikes for the climate, calling upon politicians all over the world to start acting now and changing policies for the sake of the future. She is often highlighted in Swedish media, and many seem very proud of her and are affected by her impact. At the same time, there are voices saying that she is just a young girl that knows not much of what she is talking about.

Knowledge and awareness about the Climate Crisis is growing broader and larger, but reports also say that nothing is really changing drastically in the amounts of carbon dioxide emissions. Carbon dioxide emissions are even globally as a whole still increasing.²³ Many Swedes still fly to Thailand for vacation and buy lots of things on the internet, even though they may at the same time argue for change in lifestyle. Most politicians agree with the importance of political decisions to turn around the trend of increasing carbon emissions for the sake of the Earth and its inhabitants, but labour, welfare and economic stability still seem to come first.

The Climate Issue in the Church of Sweden

There are of course all kinds of different views on the Climate Crisis. There are those who are engaged fully to changing their lifestyle, those who care and do some changes, those who care but do not change so much and those who cannot afford to change since sustainably grown food and traveling with train is more expensive. There are also those who think the Climate crisis is a hoax and do not see this as an issue at all. They can all be found in church as well as outside the church. One lady in our church said firmly, but also with a laugh as though she was a bit embarrassed by her statement, that she was not ever going to take a train

²³ TT, "Världens koldioxidutsläpp högre än någonsin", *Ny Teknik*, December 5, 2018
<https://www.nyteknik.se/miljo/varldens-koldioxidutslapp-hogre-an-nagonsin-6941548>

anywhere when travelling. She was going to stick with flying whatever anyone thought of her. A man I follow on social media is constantly trying to persuade us that giving up fossil fuels is totally the wrong way to go. These fuels are instead needed to keep nature and society going and growing. Another conversation I overheard was about disposable mugs. “We just have to stop using them”, a woman said. “Besides the issue of the environment, it also costs a lot,” she stated firmly. The man talking with her agreed and said that it wasn’t really a matter of economics, it was the principle.

Caring for Creation is one of the issues in the center of the Church of Sweden’s concern, relating to God’s love for all created and the mission to spread God’s love and concern to all.²⁴ But I do not find our church addressing the Climate Crisis in any more significant way than other parts of society. The problem does not seem to depend on the lack of engagement, at least not on a national or even international level. The World Council of Churches, with its members’ of 350 churches from all over the world, where the Church of Sweden is one of them, has programs that can be implemented on the issue of climate: Care for creation and climate justice, The WCC and Eco-justice, and Poverty, Wealth and Ecology.²⁵ The Christian Council of Sweden with 26 member churches also has climate and sustainable development as one of their issues. They are engaged in writing debate articles, arranging seminars, and together with other environmental organizations are trying to make impact on companies and state authorities concerning sustainable developments.²⁶

The Church of Sweden has a goal to contribute to the 17 goals of The Sustainable Development Agenda that were agreed upon by the United Nations in 2015 in the 2030

²⁴ “Svenska kyrkan”, Vårt arbete/The work of the Swedish Church, August 16, 2019

<https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/vart-arbete>

²⁵ “World Council of Churches”, What we do, August 16, 2019 <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do>

²⁶ “Sveriges kristna råd”, Klimat och hållbar utveckling/Climate and sustainable development, August 16, 2019 <https://www.skr.org/vart-arbete/hallbar-utveckling/>

Agenda, where climate issues are one of them.²⁷ The Bishops' conference in Sweden wrote a Bishops' letter about the climate in 2014, which was updated during fall 2019. It is a theological contribution to the climate debate and discussion on sustainability in Sweden.²⁸ This letter led to a "Roadmap for the Climate" decided by the Central Board of the Church of Sweden in December 2019, with the aim of the Church of Sweden being climate neutral in 2030.²⁹ In my own Diocese, former Bishop Thomas Söderberg started an eco-theological network due to the release of this letter from the Bishops' conference in 2014. The network consists of people from different contexts and occupations - ministers, lay people and scientists. Also individual eco-theological voices of today are heard from the church, both in common media and in theological books.³⁰ I see the church as a whole taking the matter seriously, but it does not seem to affect everyday life in the congregations. It seems to be a concern alongside everything else that needs attention. You hear the verbal engagement and see some concrete actions but like it is in the Swedish society as a whole, the broader and deeper concrete actions in the congregations are at the same time slow.

The Climate Issue in our Parish

In my own parish, this is also the case - the environmental issue engages our employees and parishioners to some extent, but the lack of will in changing habits also shows. Visible actions are, for example, that we have skipped making new bulletins for each service every week in favor of reusing the same all the time, we separate our waste, we try to avoid

²⁷ "Svenska kyrkan", Så bidrar Svenska kyrkan till Agenda 2030, August 16 2019

<https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/agenda2030>

²⁸ Biskopsmötet 2014, *Ett biskopsbrev om klimatet* (Uppsala: Svenska kyrkan, 2014). Biskopsmötet 2019, *Ett biskopsbrev om klimatet* (Uppsala: Svenska kyrkan 2019)

²⁹ The Church of Sweden, *Svenska kyrkans färdplan för klimatet* (Uppsala, The National Office of the Church of Sweden, 2019, prepared by Rosenberg/Gottberg), <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/filer/2c79414e-a902-41ed-b8c7-f186b1a247b8.pdf>

³⁰ Former Archbishop K G Hammar is one of them, others are Sven Hillert, Peter Halldorf and Per Larsson, following the footsteps of the Swedish eco-theologians Harry Månsus and Stefan Edman who were central figures in these issues in the 80's.

disposables and plastics, and when buying foods and chemicals we look for sustainable items. When renovating our church buildings, finding sustainable solutions to electricity, water supply and ventilation is part of the renovation plans. In efforts to change habits, we try to contribute by arranging Flea market days and events for swapping clothes. At a benefice level, our Church council and leaders are sharpening the policies for employees when buying materials for our activities; items are sent to us, instead of each one of us driving to the shops. Also, in the coming year, our benefice will start working at renewing our Policy for Environmental Issues.

In contrast to this, I observe at times that convenience and economics still often has a stronger hold on us. It is easier to throw garbage in the can where all garbage goes, than to walk five steps extra to separate the waste. It is easier to take your own car to the older church in our parish than to take the extra trouble to travel together, especially when we are coming from different directions. I feel a sense of ‘sighing’ in the room when the issue of care for the environment comes up or when I remind that we have to remember that some people who attend our activities are vegans. And besides this, we do not discuss the Climate Crisis in our preaching more than naming it in a couple of sentences.

I sometimes wonder why this is so. Do preachers not have the Climate Crisis as a core concern because it is of more concern to comfort people? Or because the climate is viewed as a political and scientific issue to solve? Are the smaller details in everyday church life easier to find engagement in than raising your eyes and attention to global matters? Is it hard to discuss the climate as a matter of faith? And do we preachers not preach so much on it, like me, because we don’t really know how to address it theologically and rhetorically?

This painting of both the wider context and the local context comes from my understanding and experience. It is from these reflections and context that my thesis question

grows: Can subversive prophetic preaching help people to stronger connect faith and their action for the sake of the Earth?

Chapter Three

Homiletical Theories of Prophetic Preaching

In the Church of Sweden, prophetic preaching is a relatively unknown preaching form, at least in the context where I come from and work in. Since prophetic preaching is a preaching form with an intention to point to and criticize collective destructive systems in our societies that contradict God's intention and will of justice, peace and love, I have decided to explore prophetic preaching as a way to preach about the Climate Crisis. To understand what prophetic preaching is I have mainly studied the views of Walter Brueggemann. In this chapter I will explore his perspective on prophetic preaching and suggestion of what prophetic preaching contains. His view has shaped my understanding of this preaching form and has laid the ground for my own two prophetic sermons. I will also explore the views of Leah D. Schade. She adds discourses around environmental issues to Brueggemann's pastoral prophetic approach, which has also been helpful to my sermons for my thesis project. She proclaims a Lutheran eco-feminist Christology, where Lutheran theology mixes with Christology to construct a homiletical strategy with a goal to end the dual oppression of women and Earth. I will broaden her perspectives with the help of Norman Habel, who shares the same ground as Schade but specifically gives exegetical perspectives on how to study and view bible passages from the perspective of the other-than-humans and Earth. I will focus on the perspectives from these three biblical scholars since they offer understandings of prophetic preaching that I find serve the Swedish context well in how to address the Climate Crisis.

The Practice of Prophetic Imagination - Walter Brueggemann

In *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination*, Walter Brueggemann begins by stating the hope of his book: "to make a credible connection between the material of "prophetic

utterance” in the Old Testament itself and the actual practice of “prophetic preaching” that is mandated in the actual work of pastors who are located in worshipping congregations.”³¹ His foremost goal is to help make prophetic preaching feasible in the pastoral context of the minister, knowing that it is difficult to speak the truth to people and contexts, since most people often are not willing to hear truths that challenge our prevailing views. He also aims to put prophetic preaching in the category where he states it belongs. He argues that prophetic preaching is a homiletical model primarily grounded in the prophets in the Old Testament and that the prophetic bible texts are the ground of prophetic speech. A preacher who preaches prophetically is therefore one who handles the prophetic tradition in the light of contemporary issues, and not one who is cast a role of a prophet.

I will in the following present the different aspects of prophetic preaching that Brueggemann states belong to the prophetic tradition and that I have used in my prophetic sermons in this thesis: imagination, loss, waiting, God’s empathy, and hope of a ‘novum’.

Prophetic Preaching as Imagination

Brueggemann defines prophetic proclamation as “an attempt to imagine the world as though YHWH – the creator of the world, the deliverer of Israel, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ whom we Christians come to name as Father, Son, and Spirit – were a real character and an effective agent in the world.”³² By this, he means that prophetic preaching builds upon describing and construing an image of reality where God ³³ is a real and living character, and an able force acting in our world today. The word “imagine” is a key word in his definition; we need to tell another narrative about reality than the one we mostly hear of. Brueggemann

³¹ Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipating Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 1.

³² Ibid, 2.

³³ Brueggemann uses the word YHWH. YHWH is not my way of naming God. I will therefore use the word God.

argues that there is actually a contest going on between two narratives of the constitution of the world. The dominant narrative of our world is that there is no divine agent to count on. He names this dominant narrative “military consumerism”.³⁴ This narrative is built by relying on technological inventions as the answers to problems in our world, on consuming to grow in wealth, on self-sufficiency and competitive productivity. It is motivated by the anxiety we carry around having enough, being enough and having control. Prophetic preaching is instead about ‘painting a picture’ of a different reality - imagining, uttering and describing a reality where God is a real and reliable character, much more reliable than this other dominant narrative. The alternative narrative of God tells of God as a “deciding character and key agent in the historical-cosmic process.”³⁵ This narrative tells of God’s promises of deliverance, of resurrection after death, of creation and redemption. Brueggemann uses the words ‘as if’ and ‘were’ when referring to God as a living character in his definition, because it is not evident that God is a real character and an effective agent in the world and our reality. This needs to be established over and over again.

Brueggemann describes the ancient prophets as poets who spoke in an imaginative language by painting metaphors.³⁶ They refused to accept the dominant narrative of their time.³⁷ They dismissed endless consumerism and the notion that wealth and control made the lives of the people safe. Instead they proposed an alternative narrative of reality – the one that spoke of a reality where we are in a relationship with God. The relationship to God was grounded in a covenant established between God and a community (in this case the people of Israel) focusing fidelity to God. One of the pillars of this relationship was grounded in taking care of the fellow human, especially the poor, children, widows and strangers. The images expressed by the prophets contained poetic utterances and descriptions of what the present

³⁴ Ibid, 3-4

³⁵ Ibid, 5

³⁶ Ibid, 24

³⁷ Ibid, 28

reality looked like, how the people - especially those in power - broke covenant rules, and what could happen if this continued. They also presented images of what should be, how atonement and restoration of the relationship could happen, what the will of God was and how not only humans but the whole creation can be healed.

The conclusions for prophetic preaching, according to Brueggemann, besides it being a way to give space for an alternative imagination that contradicts the dominant, taken for granted narrative, is that it needs to find relevant images and metaphors in every new setting. Its task is to trace and connect the personal pain to present collective systems of practice and to center on God being a capable and willing agent.³⁸

The words “image” and “poets” are important insights for me about the prophets and prophetic speech that have shaped my understanding of prophetic sermons. It has laid a ground to how I have prepared and chosen to preach prophetically in this project about subversive prophetic preaching in view of the Climate Crisis. Finding relevant images and metaphors to address both the state of things and to address how God is active has guided me through my sermon preparations.

Loss, Waiting and God’s Empathy

Brueggemann places prophetic preaching as a preaching situated on the Saturday of Easter, in between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. He refers here to the theologian Alan E Lewis.³⁹ Holy Saturday is the space after the crucifixion, the realization of a catastrophe, and in the waiting of what is to come. It is a space of waiting and grieving, not knowing what to expect, but facing loss. Prophetic preaching is not only about expressing images about what is and what can be but also facing the reality of loss.⁴⁰ Loss is something the dominant narrative,

³⁸ Ibid, 41-43

³⁹ Ibid, 143

⁴⁰ Ibid, 45

“military consumerism”, tries to avoid. In the dominant way of looking at reality you should quickly try to find ways to fill loss with self-made success. But for the prophets of the Old Testament, loss is something to be faced and to linger in.⁴¹ For the prophets, loss was theologically meaningful.⁴² The loss meant that the relationship with God was broken. The covenant with God was broken by not doing justice to the widow, the poor, children and the immigrant. Trouble followed automatically by not keeping these laws of the covenant for the people.⁴³ The loss is described in words of anger and judgment by God, and by the weeping and hurting of the people. But Brueggemann suggests that the judgment texts of God’s anger in fact do not imply that God is active in this anger, but rather passive. The trouble that affects people in the Old Testament texts of the prophets come automatically because of the faults in their action and behavior, mainly the rich and those in power. God’s anger and alienation from the people comes from God’s grief over a lost covenant partner. Brueggemann argues that this anger is constituted out of God’s empathy for his people and that this empathy is stronger than a will to punish out of anger.⁴⁴ God’s empathy is what constitutes the active work of God and the way to a new beginning for the people.

The notion of loss and grief in both people and God, and being in a similar space as Holy Saturday, is of importance for prophetic preaching for today and especially for my understanding of this preaching model. Before I started to explore prophetic preaching, my understanding was based on an assumption that it was an angry kind of preaching, craving a total turnaround of us, based on a God willing revenge if we did not repent and change our ways. Instead, Brueggemann has given me new insights of another model of prophetic preaching, not centering on anger and punishments from God but instead on God’s empathy when facing loss and grief through our destructive ways. This can make us face the reality of

⁴¹ Ibid, 49

⁴² Ibid, 60

⁴³ Ibid, 59

⁴⁴ Ibid, 72

loss and grief in both individuals and communities in our society today. In perspective of the Climate Crisis, I find this is a helpful and meaningful aspect of prophetic preaching, which at the same time opens up for the longed-for transformation to something new.

Hope of a Novum

The prophets found hope for the people in the new ways of God in mainly two narratives of the Bible. First, the creation stories tell how God can create out of chaos and bring new worlds to life. Second, in the story of Abraham and Sarah the narrative tells of how God intervenes in our world with an unconditional promise of giving new life and birth to the barren. Brueggemann names this as a God creating a ‘novum’.⁴⁵ God’s ‘novum’ comes out of nothing and is a totally new gift. God is free to make possible what we consider impossible.

The task of prophetic preaching is to empower and to enact hope, to help people receive the new that is coming as a gift of God.⁴⁶ This new may be strange to us and even thought of as less by us. This is why prophetic preaching can be hard, even when it attempts to empower and give new hope. We do not want to give up what we have so easily, even if we realize the faults in our systems that we rely on and are surrounded by. Brueggemann writes that we still need the prophetic ministry of both truth and hope, because we yearn for transformation and restoration beyond what is humanly possible.⁴⁷

Reflections on Brueggemann

When Brueggemann wrote his book in 2012, climate issues were a real and acute problem. Brueggemann considered the environment and the way we are living in the Western

⁴⁵ Ibid, 103-104

⁴⁶ Ibid, 138

⁴⁷ Ibid, 149

world as an issue that needed to be addressed and talked about in a substantial way, but the concerns around climate change have increased since then and I have asked myself if the issue of the larger Climate Crisis can fit into the model of prophetic preaching Brueggemann sets up. My question arises out of the notion of God's agency in the world, especially concerning God's capacity (or incapacity) in the Climate Crisis. If we can imagine our world coming to an end and we believe in God, this image can either contain a God being active or passive in this destruction. We can speak of free will and our own ability to create, these God-given characteristics to human kind, viewing God either passive or at least backing away to let us solve the problems we ourselves have created. But how can we as preachers talk of God being an active agent, creating anew, in face of extinction of species and glaciers, of the burning of the forests in Amazon, and the warming of sea temperatures making the seas inhabitable for fish? When scientists speak of tipping points where there is no longer any hope of restoration, how can we speak of God? These global issues were not a reality of the prophets of the Old Testament, although they faced extinction of their people and culture. Can their model of how to address and construe reality still work?

Catherine Keller argues that God does not fix the climate for us; that is not how God works. God works by being constantly involved in our processes, but does not suddenly intervene as a controlling force.⁴⁸ This view may seem to say something different to Brueggemann when he argues that the theology of the prophets is that God is an effective agent in our world, being able to create a 'novum'. Brueggemann even means prophetic preaching cannot be expressed or heard if you do not retell again and again the narrative of our reality defined of an active life-giving God.⁴⁹ Brueggemann and Keller may both mean that human actions can transform, but it can be interpreted that they believe differently about

⁴⁸ Jonatan Sverker, "Nydanande teolog: "Gud griper aldrig in", *Kyrkans Tidning*, published April 4, 2019 <https://www.kyrkanstidning.se/teologi/nydanande-teolog-gud-griper-aldrig>

⁴⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipating Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 14

God's intervention. I find myself at the moment in between these two standpoints, feeling the reliance of God's ability to create a 'novum' in our world, as Brueggemann speaks of, but also finding a 'partner-in belief' in Keller's standpoint and theology of a God taking place and creating in the processes. Through working with the sermons of this project, and through my own theological reflection, I give expression for both of these beliefs.

Another reflection of mine is related to Brueggemann's notion of waiting and concerns what we are waiting for – a revived world that is the same world or a different world? This has of course impact on how we view the climate issue, and God's and our agency. If we are waiting for an immanent revived world, we can see the climate as an immanent issue and find reason to act ourselves, and we can believe or not believe that God acts. If we instead are waiting for a new different world, the climate can be seen as an eschatological issue and we may then be relying on God as the only one to bring this different world into being. That can lead to inaction and passive waiting. Prophetic preaching as I understand it can have all of these perspectives and can in that way create different kind of waiting. Brueggemann does not focus on action or non-action in his model of prophetic preaching, but still argues that empowerment to deal with the present reality is an essential task of prophetic preaching.

Norman Habel adds to the reflection of what we are waiting for, concerning the images presented in the Bible for that which is coming. He argues that the Bible often gives us future images of a world that is 'unnatural', for example where lions lie down with lambs. The aim is of course to image a perfect world, but instead it gives us the understanding that the Earth (meaning nature and other-than-humans as well), being the way it is today, is not good in God's eyes after all and of little value, even disposable, even though God created it good.⁵⁰ Habel says: "(I)nstead of a sweeping divine intervention that eliminates Earth or transforms the natural into the unnatural, creation itself, together with a groaning humanity and a

⁵⁰ Ibid, 106

suffering Spirit, are anticipating a healing of the wrongs done to creation.”⁵¹ This view helps us to read critically those biblical texts which speak of and imagine an unnatural new world given to us by God as images that solely center on human interest. It helps me to choose which bible texts to connect to when looking for images about a restored creation as a whole, not only for humans, in the preparations of my sermons. I find Brueggemann’s idea of empowerment a vital part of prophetic preaching and aimed for this in my prophetic preaching. This empowerment is vital in relation to the world we have before us, rather than towards an unknown world we do not know of somewhere else in time and place.

To add to my understanding how one can preach prophetically in a more specific way with regards to the Climate Crisis, and to explore a prophetic preaching model that brings in the New Testament and the story and life of Jesus Christ closer to the issue than Brueggemann does, I now turn to Leah D. Schade. I also add Norman Habel to bring in his exegetical approach when preaching about the environment.

Creation-Crisis Preaching – Leah D Schade and Norman Habel

The background for Leah D. Schade’s book *Creation-Crisis Preaching* is from the same frustration as I carry with me – a frustration about why we as a church do not preach more about the environment and climate challenges we face. Her contribution to make our pulpits ‘greener’ is to bring together the perspectives of Martin Luther, ecology, and gender studies of feminism and Christology. She articulates, in her own words, “a Lutheran ecofeminist Christology that probes the meaning of Jesus’ life, crucifixion, and resurrection in light of the dual oppression and destruction of women and Earth, and then provides a *homiletical model* for how to preach from this standpoint.”⁵² Whilst Brueggemann builds his

⁵¹ Ibid, 111

⁵² Leah D. Schade, *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology and the Pulpit* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2015), 3

prophetic model on the Pentateuchal narratives and the prophets of the Old Testament, Schade points to the New Testament and connects the life, death and resurrection of Jesus to preaching prophetically.

Shade offers many insights on both theology and homiletics, but her homiletical strategies on environmental preaching and her insights on Luther and Christology are the most helpful for my project. This means that I will not focus on the perspective of eco-feminism, since this part is slightly outside the focus of my thesis. Although the part of bringing feminism, ecology and homiletics together may be an important contribution to homiletical theory and practice in general, there is not room for me here to cover this aspect more deeply, only to state that the feminist view as a way of reading critically, erasing traditional androcentric understandings and reinterpreting the bible texts from the perspective of women, she also uses as a way to interpret bible texts to the benefit of focusing on Earth. This is the eco-feminist contribution to the 'greening' of our pulpits.

Norman Habel, in his book *An Inconvenient Text*, also explores the ways of preaching more 'green'. He focuses on the exegetical aspects and I will bring in his views, in relation to Schade, on how to read the bible texts in a more 'green' way.

A Strategy for Environmental Preaching

Schade outlines that one of the main tasks for Creation-crisis preaching is to "help listeners find common ground for communicating with each other about how we may proclaim God's word of justice, hope, reconciliation, and healing for the Earth community, inclusive of humanity:"⁵³ In these words you can see how humanity for her is not the central

⁵³ Ibid, 35

core of things. Humans are inclusive to the rest of the world. We are a part of the whole, not worth more or superior to the rest of Creation.

With the help of social movement theory, Schade outlines three approaches to meet the task for Creation-crisis preaching in sermons. She names these after common processes in nature: Flowering (consciousness-raising), Leafing (calling for specific action) and Fruiting (transforming lifestyles and cultures for long term and sustainable change). A sermon can contain one, two, or all three approaches. They can also be used as criteria to analyze a sermon.⁵⁴

Flowering, or consciousness-raising, is about directing awareness to an environmental issue, letting it be seen and bloom. It can be addressed through images, metaphors, narratives or parables, so the listeners start to think and talk to each other about the issue. This connects to Brueggemann's idea of prophetic preaching using imaginative and metaphorical speech evaluating present reality.

But after the first approach of consciousness-raising comes the need to act. Leafing is the process of letting the short-term aspect of consciousness-raising move into a more long-term transformation by turning the consciousness into action, like the leaf turns sun and water into nourishment through the photosynthesis process. This is done by the preacher in providing resources and giving possibilities to act. It is about giving concrete suggestions of what you can do.

To reach deep transformation and sustainable change there is a need to create a sense of viability. The process of Fruiting is given nourishment through continuous and broad reflection on the Scripture through the eyes of eco-theology. In this way a parish community can be helped to see through bible texts that not only humans but also God is acting in the process of transformation and is caring for us and the Earth. Over time our culture and

⁵⁴ Ibid, 49-54

lifestyles changes and becomes ‘greener’ through this deep-digging in the Scriptures, given long-term life, and creating a trust that transformation is nurtured by God. In the stage of Fruiting, one can connect to Brueggemann’s argument of the need in learning of an alternative narrative of reality where God is an active and able part in our world, to help us feel empowered and see that we are embraced by God’s grace through the changes.

Interesting here is Schade’s pointing to the continual ‘digging’ in the soil of eco-theology in the texts and the preaching. As a slightly different point of view Tubbs Tisdale points out that there needs to be a balance in prophetic preaching because “people tend to hear prophetic sermons louder than others.”⁵⁵ I understand this as a standpoint that there needs to be several ‘comforting’ sermons in between those that are of a more prophetic kind. These standpoints of Schade and Tubbs Tisdale might not in any way contradict each other, due to the question of whether a continuous digging and preaching eco-theology is the same as ‘loud’ prophetic sermons raising resistance. But it raises a pastoral question of how often we should and can preach about the environment prophetically. It connects to Brueggemann’s approach of prophetic preaching not as harsh yelling, even in contradicting the dominant narratives and systems of destruction. I find in these aspects a remembrance to be aware of how we frame our prophetic message and how our hearers receive them, relate to and act because of them.

Mapping One’s Eco-location

To be able to preach about the environment in the first place, Schade suggests one needs to see and know the surroundings and community we are in, and not only in relation to

⁵⁵ Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Prophetic Preaching: A Pastoral approach* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 61

humans. Schade brings up the notion of ‘mapping’ one’s eco-location and asking the question of ‘who is my neighbor?’⁵⁶

One concept in this mapping is to reorient our view to see the other-than-human in our midst. Not only humans are our neighbors but also the other-than-human. In exploring how one can see an other-than-human as a neighbor, although the other-than-human may not have consciousness, the ability to suffer or the ability for emotions or self-determination, Schade turns to H Paul Santire’s modification of Martin Bubers I-Thou concept. Santire proposes a type of relation called the I-En relation.⁵⁷ An En, in contrast to an It, has characteristics of beauty, spontaneity and mysterious activity that evokes wonder in the person who meets the En. The En can be a tree, a rock formation or field of flowers which make the person who meets these feels humility, gratitude and openness towards. An I-En relation is a relation built on an experience of wonder and awe, which creates a sense of us being in a kind of relation to this En. This can also evoke a sense in us of how an En can be a suffering entity. When Jesus speaks of the need to see and lift up the least and those in most need in our communities, it is then not a far stretch to include other-than-human in being these in most need. Seeing the Earth as my neighbor in need can be an understanding raised from our I-En relations.

Another concept in this mapping of our eco-location is to expand our listening to hearing the voice of the unheard, of seeing the Earth as our conversation partner and listening to the testimony of the Earth.⁵⁸ Norman Habel gives this listening to the Earth an exegetical perspective in his book *An Inconvenient Text*. Habel and Schade come from the same understanding in seeing our neighbor in the least of the other-than-humans on Earth and the intrinsic worth and interconnectedness of the whole universe and all its components. His exegetical approach adds to Schade’s strategy of mapping one’s eco-location to broaden it to

⁵⁶ Leah D.Schade, *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology and the Pulpit* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2015), 62

⁵⁷ Ibid, 66-67

⁵⁸ Ibid, 69-72

a kind of mapping of the biblical passages. Habel points to ‘grey’ texts in the Bible that promote a view and theology that sees Earth as under the domination of humans.⁵⁹ In contrast, ‘green’ texts promote the theology that Earth has its own worth and that humans and Earth are intertwined in a fragile web where humans and all other organisms are kin.⁶⁰ He suggests we need to ‘green’ our biblical studies. This does not mean to read what the bible texts say about Creation or Earth. Instead, ‘green’ reading is about seeing the Earth and other-than-human as subjects in the text. To read like this, you must take a first step by reading with suspicion of how we interpret the bible texts traditionally, as the traditional way is often to interpret the text out of only human interest. Secondly, we need to identify or interpret empathetically with the Earth or other-than-humans, and read the text from their perspective. Third, we retrieve the voices of the other-than-human characters in the bible texts, and hear the voices of them and their stories, even if it means listening to the silent voices of the text not heard directly.⁶¹ In this way he seeks to listen to the voices of the Earth, those other-than-humans. His aim is an exegetical approach to the texts of the Bible to a long-term transformation of how we interpret bible texts, transforming our theology in how we relate to our whole Earth community. This approach was an eye-opener for me and guided my exegetical preparations in trying to form subversive sermons about the Climate Crisis.

Lutheran Theology

Schade is a Lutheran and Lutheran theology contributes to her central argument in several ways. One perspective Schade points to being a Lutheran contribution is the notion of Panentheism. This is a belief that God is in, with and under Creation, making Creation sacred. God’s immanence is emphasized but God is not the same as Creation, making the

⁵⁹ Norman Habel, *An Inconvenient Text* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2009), xix

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 43

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 56-60

transcendence of God still apparent. This panentheistic theology lies as a basic ground for her Creation-crisis preaching.⁶²

Another of the Lutheran perspectives that Schade relies on is her insistence not only of a theology of eco-crucifixion (meaning the phenomena of human destruction of environment), but also the importance of eco-resurrection.⁶³ The parallel to the death and life of Jesus is apparent. She means that in the face of the Climate crisis there is a high risk of us falling into the ditch of ‘works righteousness’ when speaking of our ecological sins and a crucified Earth. The risk is that we think we can fix this planet all by ourselves, by our actions and innovations, making the burden of solving environmental problems solely hang on our own shoulders. ‘Works righteousness’ was a belief Luther resisted. Lutheran theology states that we humans can do nothing for our salvation; resurrection is given to us out of God’s grace solely – *Sola Gratia*. Eco-resurrection means this power of God as a life giving force can be applied also in the face of destruction of the environment. Eco-resurrection comes solely through God’s grace as well, for the sake of the whole planet. Schade shares the same yearning as Brueggemann (although he names it through the task of prophetic imagination) for a greater emphasis on God’s actions to bring healing and restoration to our world as a whole, not only humans.

Habel adds to this notion of eco-resurrection when writing about how not only Earth can be imaged as crucified by us humans in our exploitation of the Earth, but also how nature was a part in the crucifixion of Christ.⁶⁴ This connects to Brueggemann’s discussion of prophetic preaching being Holy Saturday preaching. The experience of an earthquake and the description of how the sky went dark show how the Earth was not just a passive background

⁶² Leah D.Schade, *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology and the Pulpit* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2015), 28

⁶³ *Ibid*, 4-5

⁶⁴ Norman Habel, *An Inconvenient Text* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2009), 111

during the crucifixion. As we are waiting for salvation, so too is Creation. Habel points to Romans 8 as a text about how Creation together with us cry and wait for liberation.

Habel writes: “The present creation is an integral part of the process for birthing a green future. Creation continues!”⁶⁵ Habel means that God is not only on humanity’s side but on the entire Earth’s side as well. Eco-resurrection is part of this continuous creation and good news for the whole Creation.

Christology

When it comes to preaching about eco-resurrection, Schade presents the notion of a trickster-theology. She sees in the resurrection of Jesus Christ a shape-shifting trickster-event and means that this notion can be drawn into the hermeneutics of Creation-crisis preaching.⁶⁶ The resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications not only for humans, but for the whole Earth community, as Habel also implies. This trickster theology can open a way to contradict the oppressive powers and hierarchies. Jesus did this his whole life, turning views around and challenging the powers and attitudes of the people. This trickster-notion is rooted in a theology of surprise. God is at the places we least expect God to be. Schade argues this is an essential part of Lutheran theology of the cross and resurrection.

Nature has in itself shape-shifting moments and has a character of being a trickster. Nature is not passive or helpless but has surprising possibilities independent of humans. Earth is beyond our control. This is unsettling for us, but can also contain a sense of humor and surprise. Resurrection is within this ability of nature to surprise, even though it is not consistent with our understandings of the processes of nature.⁶⁷ For Schade, these notions of

⁶⁵ Ibid, 111

⁶⁶ Leah D.Schade, *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology and the Pulpit* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2015), 139

⁶⁷ Ibid, 142-143

trickster aspects from nature and Christ are vital perspectives of Christology to bring in to a sermon, in seeking ways to Creation-crisis preaching.

For Habel, Christology is also vital because it solves which bible texts one should primarily listen to, especially when meeting conflicting ‘grey’ and ‘green’ texts of the bible. He does not speak of the trickster-notion of Jesus but of the Lutheran aspect of ‘what points to Christ’ or as he names it in other words: “What is consistent with the essence of the Gospel: the centre of Christian Scriptures and the ultimate revelation of God in Christ”.⁶⁸ For Luther, and for Habel, Christ exceeds every other interpretation. Habel points to incarnation, that God chose out of love and empathy to become flesh and become one of us as a created being in Jesus. He also points to the fact that Christ served rather than ruled, and that Christ’s way was to suffer rather than conquest. For Habel this means that “the mandate to dominate has been revoked by God in Christ”.⁶⁹ This also means that “God in Christ will no longer violate nature to liberate humans”.⁷⁰ In this way, the primary bible texts to listen to, in apparently conflicting revelations, and the good news to proclaim for the whole creation are, according to Habel, the ones that express these interpretations of the Gospel of Christ.

The Connection between Brueggemann, Schade and Habel

By presenting strategies of how to read bible texts and preach prophetically about the Climate Crisis, and bringing in the theology of Christ and resurrection into Creation-crisis preaching, Schade and Habel have added the perspective of New Testament and Lutheran theology to Brueggemann’s model of prophetic preaching grounded on the prophets of the Old Testament. Schade and Habel have broadened my understanding of prophetic preaching and helped me, both theologically and practically, with tools and expressions in trying to

⁶⁸ Norman Habel, *An Inconvenient Text* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2009) , 119

⁶⁹ Ibid, 122

⁷⁰ Ibid, 122

perform subversive sermons concerned about the Climate Crisis. All three have guided me in finding expressions of faith that I could use in trying to stronger connect the action for the sake of the Earth to faith. Brueggemann gives a foundation of how to understand and model prophetic preaching. Schade adds to Brueggemann the perspective of how to preach prophetically about the Climate crisis. Habel adds to Schade exegetical strategies and theological views that offer helpful insights.

Chapter Four

Climate Psychology and Communication

In the previous chapter, the focus was on the nature and content of prophetic preaching in the face of the Climate crisis. When attempting to frame this message and look at rhetorical strategies on how to empower and give hope in face of the climate, I turn to Per Espen Stoknes, who has made noteworthy impact in this sense.

Per Espen Stoknes is a Norwegian psychologist and economist who, in his book *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming*, tries to bring clarity to why we do not change our ways, despite all we know about climate changes, the technological advancement we have achieved and our capacity to change. He calls this the Climate Paradox.⁷¹ He believes this paradox is resolvable, by looking to psychology and finding tools to overcome whatever is making us reluctant to change for the sake of the climate.

Stoknes is inspired by Aristotle's distinction of the three activities of the psyche: Thinking, Doing, and Being, and builds his argument on these three parts.⁷² In the first part, Thinking, he tries to understand the Climate Paradox. In the second part, Doing, he suggests we try new ways to communicate since we are not successful in our current climate communication. In the third part, Being, he goes to a deeper level in our existential and spiritual needs. I will examine all three of these perspectives in this chapter. The understandings and the strategies he suggests in the first two chapters have implications for the framing and rhetorical approaches to my prophetic sermons about the climate. The third

⁷¹ Per Espen Stoknes, *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming: Toward a New Psychology of Climate Action* (Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015), xviii.

⁷² *Ibid*, 204

chapter about Being has connections to Brueggemann's model of prophetic imagination, although addressed from a different perspective.

Barriers Against Climate Action – Per Espen Stoknes

To get past whatever is preventing us to engage in climate action, we first need to understand the barriers that exist and are triggered when speaking about the Climate crisis. Stoknes looks at four different psychologies for help: Evolutionary psychology, Cognitive psychology, Social psychology, and the psychology of Identity.

Evolutionary psychology highlights the forces in us descending from our ancestors. These forces are self-interest (the closer the risk of something affecting us in a bad way, the more we fight it), status (we collect the things we improve our status by), social imitation (we do what others do), short-termism (here and now is most important) and risk vividness (if we can't see or feel it, we disregard the problem). Stoknes establishes that although these psychological forces are very strong in us, genes are not destiny. We can be helped to be shaped differently.⁷³

Cognitive psychology considers knowledge, learning and how we understand communication. One of the main reasons we do so little for the climate, Stoknes argues, is because it is so distant from us. Facts and figures of the climate all speak of distance in time and space. It is brought to us in abstract terms and it talks about things invisible to us.⁷⁴ People tend to act on risks that are understood as new, much discussed, sudden, and affecting us personally by a clear enemy. In contrast, we tend not to act on risks that have become familiar, that are not discussed, which happen as part of everyday life, are things that don't affect us personally, and when 'the enemy' is hard to perceive and locate. The Climate Crisis-issues are often pressing all of these last buttons.⁷⁵ If we don't talk about climate issues, if

⁷³ Ibid, 28-34.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 40

⁷⁵ Ibid, 45

they are slowly happening imperceptibly in another country far away and do not affect us, and, for example, brought to us through polluted air or water that we cannot see containing toxic contents, we do not see the urgent need for action. Furthermore, if Climate messages are framed by speaking of disasters, meaning loss and costs for us, shaming us for not acting, we tend to push away the information.⁷⁶

Social psychology states that the presence of others affects our behavior, attention and performance, even if that presence is imagined; in other words, we are concerned about what others think. Our attitudes and behaviors are a mix of personal and social factors. Our attitudes are built on information we get, but they are also built on our emotions and how we act. All of these three components – emotions, cognition and behavior - interact in the making of our attitudes, and so do our social relations. When we find ourselves in cognitive dissonance, that is when our thoughts, actions and emotions don't match, we find ways to balance them. So if we behave one way and we hear information that might mean we have to change, it is more likely we fit our attitude to the way we already behave rather than change our behavior. Climate attitudes are in the same way built on both these personal and social aspects. We justify our attitudes and actions for the climate (or not acting for the climate) and keep them in line with ourselves and with our significant others.⁷⁷

With the help of the psychology of Identity, Stoknes explores the roots of denial. The notion of confirmation bias is an understanding of the fact that we automatically find or look for information that confirms what we already know.⁷⁸ Stoknes says that resistance is an “automatic reflex to maintain security and avoid discomfort.”⁷⁹ This does not mean that a sudden break with one's identity and culture cannot happen; it can and it does. But when it applies to a break with deep attitudes, like climate issues can be, it often means a break with

⁷⁶ Ibid, 52

⁷⁷ Ibid, 61-69

⁷⁸ Ibid, 72

⁷⁹ Ibid, 77

significant others and the culture that you have around you, and this is not easy.⁸⁰

He concludes there are five strong barriers to climate action, five D's: Distance, Doom, Dissonance, Denial, and iDentity. Stoknes argues that anti-climate movements have triggered these barriers successfully in the battle against climate science in their framing and communication of climate issues. But he states that climate communicators often trigger them as well, by using abstract facts and long timelines of distance, using framework and storytelling that backfires. It also often provokes "self-protective and cultural cognition by unnecessary polarization."⁸¹

Doing Differently

Stoknes argues that we need to find ways around these psychological barriers. It will not help to simply do more of the things we have done up until now - communicating more facts and figures that still give a sense of distance, framing the message in more storytelling that still seems to make people backfire, and using more framing that provokes self-protective stances towards personal and cultural identity. Instead, we need to communicate the climate issue differently, if we want to bring about action of change. People need to want to live sustainably because they see this kind of living and acting as better than the lifestyle we are having now.

His climate strategy implies a new psychology of climate action. This strategy consists of three principles:

1. Turn the barriers upside down.
2. Stick to positive strategies.
3. Act as social citizens, not individuals.⁸²

⁸⁰ Ibid, 78-80

⁸¹ Ibid, 83

⁸² Ibid, 90

Stoknes argues for communication strategies that make climate change feel nearer, using framing devices that promote engagement, give small-step solutions, and use positive storytelling that is experienced as enriching. The road he suggests from here is five main strategies for climate communication, five S's:

* Social – this strategy focuses the use of social networks and the fact that we imitate each other. Emissions are local, Stoknes states, and relate to people and places we care about. Social networks not only means social media, but the local communities we belong to, and messages that travel mouth-to-mouth.

* Supportive – this strategy consists of using framing that supports the message with positive feelings. Instead of messages of doom, we can use framing that speaks in a positive way of insurances, health, security, opportunities and ethics. It is about what we gain, not what we lose.

* Simple – we need to make climate action easy. Making environmental-friendly options the default is an easy way to make change simple. For example, setting the copying machine on default to print on both sides of the paper, halves the amount of paper used and people do not have to do anything! Changed behavior changes attitudes.

* Story-based – to use stories to create meaning and a sense of belonging to a community is another strategy. We need to move away from apocalyptic images to attractive images of the future and tell stories of what goes well.

* Signals – this last strategy focuses the use of indicators in feedback so it is easy to see that action makes a difference. These signals can include signs of green growth, re-wilding and good stewardship.⁸³

Stoknes asserts that this new strategy of climate communication is “a shift from a sole reliance on the old, linear one-to-many communication model toward a broader, interactive

⁸³ Ibid, 93

many-to-many communication model that includes practical engagement. Together these new strategies hold the potential of bypassing the barriers against which the conventional approach too long has stalled.”⁸⁴ I find Stoknes’ strategies promote ‘a togetherness’ in society where we encourage and show each other that it is possible and that we can contribute to creating a different world together, at whatever level we find ourselves.

An interesting case to relate to regarding the framing of climate messages is the speech of Greta Thunberg in the UN September 24, 2019.⁸⁵ This speech went viral nearly at once and was highlighted and referred to in Swedish media and around coffee tables. The rhetorics in her speech do in a lot of ways contradict Stoknes. She does not cut down on the catastrophe, does not translate the scientific facts into understandable images, hits with anger the dissonance in our words and deeds, and addresses our non-actions as unforgivable. But why does she still have such impact? People in Sweden consistently mention Greta as a reason why they have come to start changing their ways. I think the most profound reason lies not in her message but in her person. When a young girl of 16, cries, is angry and rages at the grownups and leaders of the world for stealing her future, the climate issue becomes near in another sense than just near in place. She touches our deep emotions and reactions to protect our children from apparent risks. She makes us see the task as near to all grownups, especially those in leading positions, which many grownups are. She personalizes grief and despair over a worsened climate, a grief Stoknes also recognizes.

The Despair Paradox

In the first two parts of his book, Stoknes mainly focuses on the strategies to reach success in bringing about a ‘swerve’ in the cultural identity, with the aim to bring forth a shift

⁸⁴ Ibid, 94.

⁸⁵ Greta Thunberg, “Climate activist Greta Thunberg rebukes world leaders” Youtube, Sky News, September 24, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYxt0BeTrT8>

in climate attitudes. The focus is on Thinking and Doing. But when Stoknes turns to our Being, he says that there is more to the issue of the climate than just Thinking and Doing. He recognizes “The Great Grief” in us. He says that, despite what he earlier said about wanting to find ways past despair to reach optimism, we also need to acknowledge our despair in face of the Climate Crisis. Being in “contact with the pain of the world can ... open the heart to reach out to all things still living.”⁸⁶ When acknowledging this grief we can be helped to see that we are all of us fully dependent of the Earth. Grief makes us slow down, making room for appreciation and our human capacity for love. The gift given to us in grieving is that the process can be healing, making way for new beginnings, and making us find hope again. “There will be times when we fall in to this sadness. What we *can* control is how we choose to get back up again. And how we find the grace to live with it”⁸⁷, Stoknes says. So he concludes that there is not only a Climate Paradox, we have in us a Despair Paradox as well.⁸⁸ We can feel total despair and grief, but at the same time find life fantastic and feel hope.

Hope and Re-imagining

Related to the Despair Paradox, Stoknes explores the notion of hope. Hope is nearly always an issue when speaking of the climate and the different futures that can be. He outlines different embodiments of hope in us. He defines four of them, meaning that these embodiments of hope are not the only ones, but are some he can see. A Passive Optimist-type of person believes that all will turn out well, but does not engage oneself too much. An Active Optimist says that we will make it happen together and engages oneself because of that. The Passive Skeptic argues that we cannot know what will happen so one just needs to wait it all out. The Active Skeptic sees no reason for optimism but insists we need to engage anyway.

⁸⁶ Per Espen Stoknes, *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming: Toward a New Psychology of Climate Action* (Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015), 176

⁸⁷ Ibid, 173

⁸⁸ Ibid, 188

Stoknes calls this last perspective a “Grounded Hope”, since it is “grounded in our being, in our character and calling, not in some expected outcome.”⁸⁹

When focusing on the notion of our Being, Stoknes connects our Being to the Being of the Earth. He gives us an image to help us re-imagine our connection to all living things. This is a deep spiritual part of his book where he describes the Air as holy and sacred, as being a Subject, creating the space where all living beings meet, since the Air flows through and between us all and bringing us all into Being.⁹⁰ He means we have lost this spiritual view of the Air, which is seen in many religions and indigenous beliefs:

“The shift to realizing that we’re deeply embedded in this living air is the deep reframing for climate communication. I hardly ever see anyone in today’s climate discourse speaking of air as something enchanted, beautiful, and sacred...But unless we bring this ancient aspect, the awe for air, we’ll lose something central and powerful – a sense of the sacred that be critical for motivating us in the highly needed transformation that makes climate into something very near, no longer just distant, abstract, technical, chemical. For all amazing things the air does, and daily, it deserves such a sense, no matter how we choose to name it or understand it; Heaven, Holy Wind, Great Spirit, openness of Being, the Imagination, or simply the Air. Otherwise, why bother for a dead blob of gas?”⁹¹

It seems images and imagination is central to Stoknes in finding the framings needed, both in practices and existentially in our Being, to change climate attitudes and actions.

Reflections

It is clear that Stoknes wrote this book before 2018 and was not in Sweden at that time, because I could not relate to what he said about people not changing their ways. I started this thesis by stating that in the summer of 2018 climate change became a reality to many in Sweden and many may seemed to have realized that it is not just something that affects others somewhere else. The ongoing discussion every day in media is often relating to what happens

⁸⁹ Ibid, 222

⁹⁰ Ibid, 202-216

⁹¹ Ibid, 215

in our Swedish forests, wildlife and mountains, caused by climate change. So I have come to the conclusion that Stoknes makes a good point. In the summer of 2018, the barrier of Distance was partly pulled down for many people in Sweden. And the barriers of Doom, Dissonance, Denial and iDentity got some cracks in them too. These cracks are done by the everyday highlighting of the issue as near and of framing the stories not only with doom but also with stories of what others do so we see life-style change as do-able. I sense there are common changes in attitudes and emotions about the necessary and the ethical dimension in climate action, making it not too hard to let climate action be part of a cultural identity. Despite this, action has not changed as much as attitudes and emotions. There is still a long way to go and we of course have climate-skeptics in Sweden too. What you can wonder about is if climate engagement is a trend and will diminish after a while or if it will continue at the same rate or grow to an even a bigger engagement? Hopefully, if it diminishes, sufficient transformation will already have happened and political decisions will have set us in a different direction for the sake of our environment, that we will by then have enough working by default for a sustainable lifestyle.

A perspective I find important but Stoknes does not relate to, when concerned with our barriers to change, is our economic status, both as individuals and as a collective community. Care of the Earth is deeply connected to economic justice and complex economic systems. This is also a strong barrier to climate action. His focus on psychological reactions is really helpful, but I believe the barriers to be larger than purely psychological. If you don't have the finances to buy sustainably grown food which is often more expensive, if you don't have enough money for travelling with train instead of cheap flights, if you cannot buy clothes that are sustainably made in ways that are better for both nature and laborers because they are so much more expensive, the barrier to change is also high. This applies not only to individuals but also to businesses and communities. Stoknes' focus is not on this, but I believe it needs to

be remembered that the perspectives on the Climate Paradox are broader than psychological factors and a communicative lack of success.

Differences and Similarities between Stoknes, Brueggemann and Schade

I will here conclude some of the differences and similarities I have found between Stoknes, Brueggemann and Schade. Since I only have brought in the exegetical approach from Habel, it is not relevant to view him in relation to Stoknes, since Stoknes does not relate to bible texts at all.

In some parts Brueggemann and Stoknes seem to stand on different sides. This is the case regarding the narratives of present reality. Brueggemann argues that the prophetic calling is to contradict the dominant narrative in our societies. The dominant narrative of reality tells us we need to succeed, we want to be and do and have enough. Its base is self-invention and culminates in self-sufficiency. Its characteristics are “an acting out...of the modern sense of an autonomous self that eventuates in a rat race...”⁹² When Stoknes speaks of the barriers we set up and how our communication of the Climate crisis can trigger these barriers, he means that instead of trying harder to communicate using the same framing that seems to fail in leading to change, we can communicate differently. He means we can work with rather than against our natural psychological reactions to come around the resistance and create change. You could say in the words of Brueggemann, that Stoknes suggests we work with the dominant narrative of the community and by this approach seek to find success in how we can move forward by our own action and ability. Stoknes argues for using positive framework as a tool against denial and resistance, which lies deep in our human psyche. Resistance is an “automatic reflex to maintain a sense of security and avoid discomfort.”⁹³ So we need to

⁹² Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipating Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 4

⁹³ Per Espen Stoknes, *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming: Toward a New Psychology of Climate Action* (Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015), 77

work with these reflexes and not against them if we are to succeed. By using Stoknes' strategies, one can of course find oneself in a rat race trying to find the best ways to succeed in climate action. But Stoknes does not only promote urgent action. He realizes the need for action now but he argues that there is also a need for slow action, in order to let our hearts and souls have time to follow.⁹⁴ It is not Stoknes' expression, but I find this connects to some sort of notion about the meaningfulness of waiting, relating to the waiting space of the Holy Saturday. Stoknes does not consider God's agency in the coming, but considers the need of the space where a heart and soul can give place for something new that is reliable. Both Stoknes and Brueggemann seem to meet in this perspective.

Regarding the new climate communication strategy that Stoknes presents, seeing this as a broad interactive many-to-many communication that includes practical engagement, I link this to Schade's notion of Leafing as a strategy in Creation-Crisis preaching. She promotes Leafing as a call for action in a sermon on climate issues, meaning to engage the listeners in some kind of action together. The feeling of doing something together makes the people doing it feel that the action is a stronger one and it gives a sense of belonging to a community. Schade calls it "...*opportunities* to live into the change we seek."⁹⁵

Stoknes and Brueggemann correlate strongly on one perspective, both of them building their contents of communication on this. As a core for both Brueggemann and Stoknes lies the need of images and imagination. Brueggemann sees imagination as the core of prophetic preaching and visioning. Stoknes speaks of storytelling and of the need to move away from apocalyptic images and give way to attractive and positive images of the future. He urges the need of telling stories of that which goes well. These images can be signals that indicate that changing our actions for the sake of the Earth works and makes a difference. He also speaks of the notion of re-imagining, to connect us in a deeper sense to the Earth and the Air that we

⁹⁴ Ibid, 179

⁹⁵ Leah D. Schade, *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology and the Pulpit* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2015), 51.

have lost in our perceived Being. Both Brueggemann and Stoknes relate strongly to loss and grief as emotions to be realized in all of this. Not only homiletics and ministers speak of the importance of imagination, especially when picturing and framing the future to energize people against despair and loss, but also economists and psychologists!

Stoknes' solutions to overcome our human barriers of resistance have been a vital insight for me when trying to frame my message of my prophetic sermons of the Climate Crisis. The correlations between Stoknes, Brueggemann and Schade have inspired me to more effort in searching for ways to preach imaginatively, realizing loss and trying to find hopeful expressions to trigger positive thinking with an aim to bring faith and action closer together for my listeners. I cannot deny that one huge aspect of the inspiration comes out of the fact that despite the differences in the perspective, these three seem to mostly speak the same language. Brueggemann and Schade speak from the perspective of Christian faith. Stoknes has the perspective of secular scientific psychology and communication, although seemingly grounded in spiritual beliefs influenced but not framed nor limited by a specific religion.

Chapter Five

Project Plan, Process and Results

Project Description

Out of my context and concern of the Climate Crisis, through new homiletical insights on prophetic and ‘green’ preaching, and through studying how to frame a climate message through climate psychology and communication, my project plan was set to explore if subversive prophetic preaching can help people to strengthen their connection between their action for the sake of the Earth and faith.

The issue of the climate relates a lot to action, but as Schade implies in the process of Fruiting, the constant ‘deep-digging’ in the Scriptures to see God’s care for the whole Creation creates a viability that can lead us to sustainable long-term actions for the Earth. This viability nurtures from seeing God’s already present care for Creation. In this way, a nurtured faith through eco-theological reflection can be seen as one of the motives for climate action, for those who have faith in God. This motivates an exploring of the connection between faith and action.

The project process in trying to see if two subversive prophetic sermons addressing the Climate Crisis can affect the connection between faith and action, consisted of two main tracks. These were:

1. A Parish Project Group was to have the role of a reference group to help me form and evaluate my two sermons. I also intended to see what impact the two sermons as a whole had on them after they had listened to both, to see if I could find any indication of their faith being stronger connected to action for the sake of the Earth after hearing them.

2. To do a survey with ten people in my congregation before my first sermon. The point of the survey was to see if they have a commitment to the climate issue, what motivates them in that engagement, if faith is a part of that motivation and if so, in what way. This was

to give me a picture of where these ten people were at the start of the project. Since interviewing all ten of them would be a too extensive for this thesis, five of these were after the survey asked to attend and listen to my coming two sermons. After the two sermons, I planned to interview these five to hear of the impact the sermons had on them, to compare their answers to what they wrote in the survey, and see if I could find signals that indicated a shift in their thoughts about the connection of faith and action.

Track One

The Parish Project Group

For my Parish Project Group (PPG) I gathered six people who are active in my church. Half of the group were young adults in the age of 25-35. The other three were in the age of 35-70. I met them at four times – before and after each sermon. For each meeting I had prepared questions to help us in our conversation. The meeting before the sermons was a kind of Bible study together, where I asked them to stretch their reflections on the text and to read it from different perspectives relating to the Climate Crisis. The meetings after the sermons consisted of feedback and reflections. They all received the feedback questions before the actual sermon, so they could have their minds set on the questions when listening to the sermon.

Sermon I – Walking the Extra Mile

My first sermon was preached on September 15, 2019, on the Sunday in the Swedish Church called “The Fellow Human”. Besides a set lectionary, our church also has set themes for every Sunday. This can be helpful but also limiting. In this case, since I had a sermon with a particular aim, I was referred to what André Resner writes in his book “Just Preaching” about “Eisegesis”, which means to read into the text our concerns and presuppositions from

the start. This can at times be a necessary tool in preparing sermons.⁹⁶ “Eisegesis” admits that the preacher is a person with a context and a faith, and that bible texts are undoubtedly read subjectively, even when also read objectively. My intention was to ‘green’ the bible text for this Sunday, to preach out of “empathy with the Earth” as Norman Habel expresses it.⁹⁷ This Sunday the Gospel text was Matthew 5:38-48.

Preparations

When meeting to study the current bible text together with the PPG, we tried to read the Climate issue into the text. They all found this new way of interpretation quite hard. One of them explained that he was a climate-skeptic, relying on science that shows that the changes in climate now are natural, but the rest of them said in different ways that they were concerned about the climate and the impact humans are causing. There came an atmosphere and expressions of hopelessness in the room when we tried to read the text in view of the climate. One of them related the verse in the current text: “He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous”⁹⁸ to climate issues, since climate change has global effects. Some of them interpreted hope in the sense that the text means that people have capacity, that God trusts we can do more than we currently do and that God has a vision of what is possible. Otherwise, Jesus would not ask of us to walk the extra mile or be perfect - these hard things that he asks of in the Matthew text. The sense of ‘pay it forward’ was read into the text by one of the members of the PPG, implying that if we do more for our neighbor than what is asked for, it will bring ripples in the water and spread something good. Otherwise it was quite difficult for them to connect this text to the climate, even though engagement in and thoughts about the climate issue were not lacking.

⁹⁶ André Resner, *Just Preaching: Prophetic Voices for Economic Justice* (St. Louis; Chalice Press, 2003), 12

⁹⁷ Norman Habel, *An Inconvenient Text* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2009), xviii

⁹⁸ Matthew 5:45

In my own preparations, Schade helped me from the start to see the Earth as my neighbor. Schade suggests that it is not a great stretch to include the other-than-human in the concept of our neighbor.⁹⁹ This way of reading the text was also the subversive aspect to me, in which the bible text was read ‘from below’ when viewing the Earth as the exposed one. Using the image of walking an extra mile for the Earth was the outcome of this subversive reading.

The images of walking and shoes became a central part of my sermon. Brueggemann was my main inspiration for this focus through his definition of a prophetic sermon where imagination is a core component to construe present reality.¹⁰⁰ These images connected the text to the ordinary lives of the listeners in the pews, both relating to the beauty of the Earth we experience (a beauty created by God) and pointing to produce of our everyday items, shoes, a product that is both needed and a problematic lifestyle. In search for an image of a hopeful future, I found a helpful input from John Paul Lederach, who Frank A Thomas points to in his book *How To Preach A Dangerous Sermon*. Lederach speaks of moral imagination as “the capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist.”¹⁰¹ I realized I needed to find a hopeful image of peace and joy for nature as a whole, preferably referring to animals, trees and water, and not humans. I found this in Isaiah 55:12 and 43:19, inspired by Brueggemann in turning especially to the Old Testament prophets for images of hope.

God as an active agent in the climate issue was another thing I wanted to express, since God’s active agency also is a core component in Brueggemann’s definition of a prophetic sermon.¹⁰² This is not easy theologically, since the climate issue is a massive and often

⁹⁹ Leah D Schade, *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology and the Pulpit* (St. Louis, Chalice Press, 2015), 65.

¹⁰⁰ Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipating Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 2

¹⁰¹ Frank A Thomas, *How To Preach A Dangerous Sermon* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2018), xxiv

¹⁰² Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipating Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 2

depressing issue, not seeming to go the right way. I landed in the realization that our trust in God in this matter is often too weak. Saying this was uncomfortable for me. Maybe this says a lot about me or a lot about the culture of faith expression in my context of the Swedish church. But whatever you believe in this matter, I wanted to address the need to trust more deeply in God and God's capacity to create a 'novum'.

Stoknes' strategy of not using too many negative facts about the Climate Crisis in our communication, so we do not make people backfire, was helpful. I wanted to avoid building the barrier of doom¹⁰³ when speaking about the shoe industry, and speak in a more positive way, energizing for action instead. At the same time, facts about the current reality needed to be mentioned. Stoknes helped me to find the balance and to frame my chosen facts about shoes by naming disturbing facts shortly, not lingering in them. He helped me as well to see that I needed to place the image of walking not only in the Alps, but also locally to make the image relate to near everyday places in our local surroundings for those listening, making the message more keen.¹⁰⁴

Another input to the sermon came from Schade who speaks of the theology of Panentheism, that God is in everything created but also more than it.¹⁰⁵ This became my main theology in my sermon. We are in the world and in the Climate Crisis together with God. God is in all created, but also more than us and without the limitations we humans and nature have.

Schade inspired me also to call for a simple action we as a community can do together. By connecting the action of mending our shoes instead of buying new ones, to being a partner to God in sustaining life and being a 'co-earther' (a made-up word), I tried to bring an awareness of the connection between action and faith.

¹⁰³ Per Espen Stoknes, *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming: Toward a New Psychology of Climate Action* (Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015), 82

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 90

¹⁰⁵ Leah D Schade, *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology and the Pulpit* (St. Louis, Chalice Press, 2015), 27

I landed with the two verses of Isaiah at the end of my sermon. For me they brought together several of the aspects I had worked with: the metaphor of walking, the future image of the Earth as happy, us humans being ‘co-earthers’ by doing a simple action together connected to the concrete action of shoes, and the image of God standing beside us as our ‘partner-in-action’, but also being the only one who gives life beyond our human capacity.

Feedback and Reflections

The response was very encouraging and supportive. Single reactions from people in the congregation told me of positive surprise that a prophetic sermon could be done in this calm way, and how I used the images in different directions than what was expected, for example, the metaphor of walking turning into the connection to shoes and not to ecological footprints. Feedback from the PPG, and from others, were mainly about the images and how well they worked - the image of walking in local places, of walking an extra mile, and the relating to shoes. It made them relate to their own lives, to their walking, to how many shoes they own, and in seeing a beautiful world. The image of the shoes made the sermon concrete and they appreciated that, not making the sermon ‘go above their heads’, as one member of the PPG expressed it. Also the image of God leaning against the mountain top was well remembered. Some of them in the PPG had related the images to the Creation story. One member of the PPG had reflected about how God, by giving us free will, was leaning back to make room for us to take responsibility for our actions. Only one in the PPG group was a bit disappointed that I had not given more despairing facts showing the seriousness of the matter, but the rest felt that by just mentioning some disturbing facts of the shoe industry, the whole serious issue of the Climate Crisis came to their minds automatically, so nothing more was needed.

The word ‘co-earther’ was referred to as an important and helpful word for them. It seemed to connect their action to God’s action for the sake of the Earth. The call for action seemed to create the feeling of a community doing things together, not making the full weight of change rely solely on their own engagement. They all said they walked from church that day feeling hopeful and energized because of the positive, though not naïve, tone of the sermon as a whole. The message that was heard was that our lifestyle is not sustainable and we must therefore all together help, both us and God. We are not alone and we can trust in God and each other. The verses of Isaiah at the end made one of them relate to the coming of Christ. Some of them in the PPG had trouble in following me logically when the Isaiah verses suddenly seemed to them to come from nowhere but they still perceived the hopeful message of God bringing forth something new, and carried it with them.

I also want to share a comment from an 11 year old girl who listened to the sermon. She had said to her mother, when asked what she had remembered from the sermon – “If you read between the lines, the Bible tells about the climate”.

Sermon II – God Makes the Impossible Possible

My second sermon was preached on Sunday October 20, 2019. The Gospel text was Mark 10:17-27. This Sunday I decided to not take into account the set theme for the Sunday due to my will to preach about the climate. The set theme, ‘To listen in faith’, was not helpful this day.

Preparations

When we gathered in the PPG to look at the bible text together before the sermon, it was clearly an easier text to relate to the climate, and easy, but disturbing, to relate ourselves to the rich man in the text. When viewing the text in light of the Climate Crisis, shopping was

brought up, particularly how everyone assumes that when going to town or abroad, you shop. We talked about the radicalness of Jesus' message advocating a non-materialistic lifestyle, but also that there is nothing romantic about poverty. One in the group reasoned that the challenge from Jesus might have been an individual one, that each one of us probably gets different challenges, depending on where we stand, to take a next step in discipleship. An interesting aspect referred to by one in the group was the fact that Jesus said it was easier for a camel to do an impossible thing than for a rich man to do a fully possible thing. This really implicates the hardship of the matter. Someone mentioned the pressure of doing right that was implied in the text, but also how the text speaks of grace that is given to us in our failures.

In my own preparations, I decided to build this sermon around the distress of the rich man when Jesus challenged him to sell all his belongings. I found this a good connection between the text and the issue of the Climate Crisis, since we as rich (Swedish) citizens of the world can easily relate to this distress when forced to look at our lifestyle. But I also realized I needed to be pastoral about this, since my listeners are mainly pensioners, immigrants and other people who are not especially rich in the sense of having a lot of money. Our wealth must be seen in comparison to other people in the world.

For this text, I practiced Norman Habel's conception of reading and exegetically analyzing the text in a 'green' way in his three-step strategy. I tried to identify with other-than-human members of the Earth in the text, listen to these voices and retrieve these characters story.¹⁰⁶ When doing this I found the 'voice' of the camel. This is an animal owned and used by wealthy people mainly to carry their baggage. The camel is not mentioned in my sermon, but from this way of reading I found the aspect that humans lay a heavy burden on animals and nature in our striving for constant growth of wealth. The animals and the nature are one of the exposed. This became the base of the subversive aspect of my sermon.

¹⁰⁶ Norman Habel, *An Inconvenient Text* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2009), 56-60

The central image I decided to use was the image of grief, leaning on Brueggemann's and Stoknes' aspects of its importance in both prophetic preaching and in climate issues. The importance of acknowledging loss lies in these words of Brueggemann: "In a society either beset by denial (that refuses to acknowledge loss) or committed to despair (that settles in to abiding loss), the prophetic task is the voicing of *the process of loss* that moves through grief to possibility."¹⁰⁷ Stoknes' perspective is that grief over the climate makes us remember how we are connected to and dependent of the earth.¹⁰⁸ Both of them acknowledge how the grief process in time opens up for something new. By focusing on grief, I not only followed the text closely, but found a way to make my sermon prophetic, in direct connection to the Climate Crisis that could open up for hope of something new in the future.

I found hope in the grace of what God is doing in the text, that God makes the impossible possible. But theologically the question for me, as in the first sermon, was how God makes the impossible possible concerning the Climate crisis. The answers I found lied in God's forgiveness, how God can create anew (a 'novum' as Brueggemann calls it) even though we cannot imagine what this new might be (the Holy Saturday-space of our situation Brueggemann also speaks of) and that God is in our processes.¹⁰⁹

In the process of writing the sermon, I found myself wanting to use two narratives from our near history, the story of a funeral of the glacier Okjökull on Island and a story of the dwarf penguins on Robben Island exposed to a massive oil spill. Both of these stories contain critique of current systems in our societies connected to wealth that bring destruction to nature. The point was to raise awareness of this, in connection to the Flowering strategy

¹⁰⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipating Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 96

¹⁰⁸ Per Espen Stoknes, *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming: Toward a New Psychology of Climate Action* (Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015), 176

¹⁰⁹ Catherine Keller helped me here by expressing how God is in our processes but does not fix things for us. She was interviewed in a Swedish Church journal when visiting Sweden in April 2019.

Jonathan Sverker, "Nydanande teolog:"Gud griper aldrig in", Kyrkans Tidning, published April 19, 2019 <https://www.kyrkanstidning.se/teologi/nydanande-teolog-gud-griper-aldrig>

(consciousness-raising) of Schade's Creation-crisis preaching strategy¹¹⁰. I wondered though if two narratives would be too much. But they both had different points. The penguin story brought to us the hope of a new beginning. Leah D Schade speaks of how nature has a capacity to perform 'trickster' events.¹¹¹ A story of a 'trickster' event can be a shapeshifting story connecting to the resurrection and I found the penguin story had this in it. Meanwhile, the glacier funeral connected to the melting of glaciers we hear of today due to the Climate Crisis. Being a narrative relating to something near is an important aspect to Stoknes to overcome the barrier of distance which make people shut off.¹¹² I came to the conclusion that the connection of the two stories through the image of grief was clear enough to make it work. I felt backed up by homiletician Alyce McKenzie, who states that the clear connection between different scenes is important when holding multi-scene sermons.¹¹³

As in the former sermon, my intention was to give a possibility for an action, related to the 'Leafing' stage in a sermon that Schade speaks of.¹¹⁴ I decided to be brave and make the challenge the same as to the rich man in the bible text. I thought of Stoknes presentation of how attitudes can change by changing behavior.¹¹⁵ By challenging to try a change in behavior, our cognitive dissonance (the process of rather changing our attitudes to fit our behavior) might be set aside, and instead make the change in action give way for a change of attitude. Since I put it at the end of the sermon I hoped that by relating to the hope of God making the impossible possible, it would not make them feel too much hopelessness and give them courage to at least try to take a hard step. Expressing how faith relates to this action was done

¹¹⁰ Leah D. Schade, *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology and the Pulpit* (St.Louis: Chalice Press, 2015), 49

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 141

¹¹² Per Espen Stoknes, *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming: Toward a New Psychology of Climate Action* (Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015), 82

¹¹³ Alyce M. McKenzie, *Making a Scene in the Pulpit: Vivid Preaching for Visual Listeners* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018), 84

¹¹⁴ Leah D. Schade, *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology and the Pulpit* (St.Louis: Chalice Press, 2015), 51

¹¹⁵ Per Espen Stoknes, *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming: Toward a New Psychology of Climate Action* (Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015), 61

by repeating the belief that help in building the kingdom of God to not just humans but to all Creation, to let go of our things of wealth, and to follow Jesus, belong together.

Feedback and Reflections

It was striking, again, how the narratives and images work so well in reaching out to people. The funeral and the letter left on the stone were the parts that were clearly remembered, and most especially the story of the penguins. I heard this around the coffee tables after the service and from the feedback of my PPG.

One in the PPG said that he has not really felt climate-anxiety before, but when hearing what the letter said, it was like he was hit in the stomach. All of them in the PPG spoke of a heavy seriousness in this sermon, making some of them feel hopelessness. They expressed grief over how exposed animals and nature are because of our behavior and strive for wealth due to our ways and systems. But they all said that they felt hope in spite of this. A big contribution to the felt hope was the story of the penguins. They came back to this story several times and the hopefulness of finding a way home although disaster was a fact. One in the group referred this story to the parable of the lost son and that we, as lost, all can find home in the end. The repetitive sentence of God making the impossible possible was perceived as important and seemed to help them see light in the dark and feel hope. One of them even said that hope was the central theme of the sermon. I could really see this hope in their eyes when they spoke of it.

The challenge to let go of a thing important to them was another part that really engaged them in the PPG. They seemed to have been challenged in a positive way, although someone said that she pushed back at first. They described how they started to think of how they could meet the challenge nearly at once. They spoke of how the challenge might not only be to let go of things, if you for example do not own that much or are especially rich. It can also be to stop doing something, buying things for example or not to do something out of

comfort. The word sacrifice was mentioned here by one of the members of the PPG in relation to this challenge, as a way to follow Christ, of ‘finding home’. The notion of sacrifice was related to the experience of how you always want more, even when you have a lot, this thing that wealth ‘does to us’, as I had spoken of in the sermon. One of them related the name of the glacier – ‘Ok’ – to the word ‘yoke’ (which is ‘ok’ in Swedish) referring to Jesus message of taking on the burden of the yoke of Christ in following Jesus, to save the climate. There seemed though to be a felt trust, expressed by several of them, that God’s grace is with us in our sacrifice and the hardship of following Christ.

Expressions of the Impact of the Sermons

At the last meeting with the PPG, I asked them if they had any new thoughts regarding their faith or engagement for the environment in comparison to what they had half a year ago, before they began their engagement in the PPG, and before they had heard my sermons. I asked them what kind of impact the sermons had on them and they offered several insights.

One woman in the PPG mentioned that she had realized the importance of rituals in relation to the environment and that the church has a role to play by implementing these rituals, for example funerals for glaciers or for other-than-human species of the Earth.

A couple of them spoke of how the perspective of sacrifice for the sake of the Earth had grown stronger in them. One of the men said he has understood before that things we do can be bad for the environment, but the notion of sacrifice has become stronger in him. He reasoned around this due to my preaching on us being ‘co-earthers’. Another man in the PPG connected this sacrifice to following Christ and how God assists us in our discipleship, making things possible.

For a couple of them, just listening to the sermons made them think more of these matters now than before. It was clearer now that we are in this together and that each one of us cannot do everything, but everyone can do something and contribute.

Someone spoke of how the media and everyday messages of the climate never speak of the impossible made possible in the way we speak of it in church. Others in the PPG spoke of how the role of the church in the issue of the climate has become clearer. The concrete things that were brought up in the sermons made it a lot easier to relate to the issues of the environment, rather than the hardcore depressing facts presented in media. One man in the PPG suggested that this hopeful way the church discusses the climate issues was a method of presenting current reality differently than what is done in the media. It was not only making the issues more concrete but also telling a different narrative of our understanding of present reality. He mentioned that this way, for example, of painting an image of grief in relation to the climate, is not usual but makes it more real, relating to feelings and not only facts. Another one in the PPG added that the image of a hopeful future in relation to the climate gave an alternative image other than the dystopian images presented by the media.

One of the women in the PPG said that the sermons have made her less disillusioned and made her feel that it is possible to bring in the content of the climate substantially to our sermons, in a helpful way. For one of the men, the sermons and the services he has attended through this project has raised his awareness that creation is not only existing there alongside us; all that is created is in relation, all nonhumans and humans. It is a dimension he had not thought of so clearly earlier.

One woman spoke of how she now has more confidence in how to speak in this matter in relation to others, in a debate but also in just meeting the views of others.

Another aspect expressed by one of them was that the world being in a Climate Crisis

has become more part of the religious matter for him. The reflections in the sermons, which framed the present reality of the world as also a religious matter, had been a kind of ‘refill’ for him as he named it, due to the fact that religious aspects are not spoken so much of in the issues of the climate.

The last perspective one of them in the PPG spoke of was the love of God. She has, through the sermons, found more emphasis on the love found in the relationship between God and creation, even though we fail. This love from God has become clearer to her and brought her more hope.

Track Two

The Survey

The Intention of the Survey and the Group Constellation

Chronologically, we now move back to the time before the first sermon and look at the process of the other track in trying to see if subversive prophetic preaching can help people to connect their action, for the sake of the Earth, more strongly to faith. This track of a survey and interviews was also related to my sermons but in another sense, not asking for feedback after each sermon but of the total impact after both of them.

I asked ten people in my congregation to participate in a survey around climate and faith. The group consisted of people of different ages, from 17-77 years old, with a balance in gender, how active they were in my church, how often they celebrate worship and a mix in cultural background.¹¹⁶ The goal of the survey was basically to find out where we are, a kind of starting point, concerning how people are engaged to the issue of climate change, what

¹¹⁶ The ten people consisted of two women and two men in the age of 15-30 years, one woman and one man in the age of 30-50, and three women and one man in the age of 50-80. Two of them come from other cultural backgrounds. All of them are active in one or several ways in my church or have been until very recently – through worship attendance and/or participation in one or more of our groups/activities.

motivates them, if faith is a part of that motivation and in what way. The survey was intentionally made quite easy to fill in. There were no open ended questions and only a few optional questions if they wanted to express themselves more clearly.¹¹⁷ There were 15 questions to answer which were placed in three different sections –their valuation-basis, climate issues and the connection between climate issues and faith. I present in the following a brief conclusion of the results of the survey.¹¹⁸

Conclusion of the Survey

To summarize the outcome of my survey with these ten people, in relation to finding a starting point, I note the following:

- The biggest value-shapers are the church, faith, parents and, to some extent, friends. Values and to some extent faith are the strongest motivators for engagement in issues.
- All of them believe that humans have an impact on climate change and nearly all of them are worried about it. Nearly all have changed their habits during the last two years due to this concern. Most of them are somewhat engaged in the climate issue and a majority of them think they do too little. Almost all of them believe their commitment has an impact.
- A majority of them think that faith is an important part of why they engage in the climate.
- All of them believe that the church has a role to play and a duty to engage and act in the climate issue. Nearly all think the church should do what it can. Some think the church should engage and act more.

¹¹⁷ I have been guided by Tim Sensing in creating my survey.
Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research* (Wipf & Stock Pub, 2011), 115-120

¹¹⁸ In Appendix VI you find a detailed result of the survey.

- A majority don't believe climate change is the end of the Earth and they also do not believe that God will fix the climate for us.

I interpret their answers that among these ten people, who all are engaged in the climate issue, faith seems largely to be part of their motivation for this engagement and they expect engagement from the church. It seems God is not seen as an active agent in the climate according to them and the end of the Earth is not a reality they imagine. Those who see faith as a motivator seem to relate their engagement to the notions of stewardship, all creatures and creation's value, love of the Earth and a commitment that you might say relates to an image of striving for God's kingdom on Earth.

The Interviews

Since interviewing all ten of the participants of the survey is a too extensive task for this thesis, I asked five of those who had done the survey to listen to my two sermons. These five were, again, a mix of age, cultural background and gender. I did not consider their answers in the survey, when asking them. After the sermons I met each of them in an interview to hear about their thoughts and views. The interviews were semi-structured since my aim was to connect to the questions of the survey and to find out more about their thoughts after listening to the sermons.¹¹⁹ At the same time I wanted to open up for them to speak freely from their own reflections, letting the conversation have a "flow" of its own.¹²⁰ I took notes and taped the interviews.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ The main questions were four: 1. Has your climate commitment changed over the past six months - in what way and why? 2. Tell me about how you look upon climate, God, church, faith - the connection between them. 3. What do you remember from the sermons - has something stuck in you or something you found stuck out? 4. Have the sermons in any way affected you in your faith and your commitment to the climate?

¹²⁰ I have been guided by Tim Sensing in construing the interviews.

Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research* (Wipf & Stock Pub, 2011), 103-113

¹²¹ These notes and transcription of the interviews are found in my archive. To read these, just contact me.

I will in the following describe parts of each of the different interviews that have significance to my thesis question.¹²²

Interview I

My first interview was with a woman, 77 years old. She told me that her consciousness about the climate issues has changed over the last six months, dependent largely on Greta Thunberg's actions and commitment, on hearing more about the climate and by listening to my sermons. Acts for the sake of the environment has been important to her for a long time, but now she reflects more in advance when buying things like meat or clothes. She has also started to talk to people when she notices that things could be improved. When she was at the hospital after an operation for example, she spoke to the nurses about how large the food portions were and that it was a waste. And after my sermon about the shoes, she went home and told her daughters to mend their shoes and not buy new ones. She said that we all have to try to contribute by talking more about it.

Her faith is that God has created everything, but that we must all work together with God to help change the climate to the better. God cannot help us with everything. We have been given the ability to think and to act by God. She spoke of how the message of love is at the center of her faith and that message of love means not only taking care of each other but also the whole planet. She related to the story of the penguins in my second sermon; if the penguins could find their way back home, so too should we be able to fix this in some way. She describes herself as an incurable optimist, always being hopeful, but the story of the penguins gave her even more hope. She is really concerned when seeing how money rules the world and how people just want more and more. The melting glaciers in my second sermon made her feel the heavy seriousness of it all, making her ask herself what we can do about it.

¹²² I refer to earlier presentation that I will not directly quote my interviewees due to the sometimes difficulty in translating spoken language, especially since the interviews were done in Swedish.

She said that my sermons were serious about what was happening but gave hope at the same time. She related to how the beauty of the nature, like in the Alps and like a beautiful sunset at home, can remind her that we can try to keep this beauty of the earth in the future if we work together everyone and together with God try to save it.

She spoke of the church's role and thinks the church already addresses this problem, but the church needs to continue talking about it, showing what you can do and spreading the word of love and of taking care of each other and the world, otherwise we do not stand a chance. She does not believe the earth will end, but she is concerned what the future will be like for her grandchildren.

She said that by listening to the sermons she has connected the climate more to God. She has always prayed every day, but nowadays she includes praying for the climate. She carries a strong faith that God helps through prayer. God wants us to prosper, and for us to cope; we can turn to God and then it will surely turn out well.

Interview II

A woman of 17 was my second interviewee. It is apparent that the sermons have made a clear difference for her in connecting her own faith, the church's role and engagement in the climate to one another. The main thing she remembered from the sermons was the excerpts in the first sermon from Isaiah (referring to when the trees clapped their hands) that made her understand how God, the Bible, church and climate relate, although the Bible was written long ago and the Climate Crisis was not a problem then. The texts from Isaiah were an eye-opener for her, seeing suddenly how the bible texts are 'larger' and can be applied to more than they just seem to be written about. She said that she has never understood before how God was connected to the environment issue, but now she sees that they of course logically belong together since God has created the Earth. Before she felt that she was alone in her

engagement, not realizing that God was connected to the environment issues, and that she engaged because she did not want to look bad in the eyes of her friends. But now she realizes that God is in this together with us. She was reminded that we do not have to do everything by ourselves. She expressed how the support of knowing that God and the church are in the struggle for the climate together with her gives her new energy and a stronger motivation to do what she already does in her engagement for the climate, which is quite a lot today. She is surrounded by the issue in school, at home, in social media and now in church as well. And it meant a lot to her that the church's voice in this matter has become clear to her. She expressed how powerful this realization was for her and the great impact it had on her. The change she sees in her actions is that she is even more engaged now than half a year ago, thinking actively when buying things, studying the items she buys and how they are produced so she knows what kind of produce she is supporting when buying them, and trying to live more minimalistically.

She spoke of the golden rule and how this can be extended to include not only humans, but all things created. She expressed empathy to all created, suggesting that you can put yourself in the situation of the penguins and understand how it must feel to be in their position. And she suggested you can apply this way of thinking for all the animals and the whole planet. She seemed to feel grief over the situation of the planet and took the glaciers and the penguins as examples of that. The story of the penguins was mostly, however, a story of hope for her, of them finding home, and I heard it meant a lot for her to feel that hope. She spoke of how easy it is to be let down and lose hope when reading and hearing about the climate, but that she still feels hope anyway. She believes the role of the church is to speak about how God and the climate are connected (not only about how God and humans are connected) and that we can contribute to a better world together, God working together with us. She saw this as important especially to young people so that they realize this and find

hope. Before, she found that you only met these issues in social media and newspapers, but now she has realized that the issues of today, for example the Climate Crisis, are also connected to the church, to God and Bible. It has given her a new perspective of God.

Interview III

The next person I interviewed was a woman of 68. She argued that God cannot do anything to fix the climate. God is not active in the way that God intervenes. God has already given us the Earth, a clean paradise, with clean soil, water and air, but times have changed. We humans have changed it. God might be sad about it, she said, but she believes God cannot create a new paradise, since God already has done this once. What God can do is to try to change our minds so we don't destroy the Earth. The responsibility for the Earth is given to us. The 'infected' soil as she called it, the burning of the forests in the Amazon, how trees are disappearing and the carbon dioxide is of a deep concern to her. She often came back and related to the raw materials of nature of the Earth in the interview, like the soil, trees, and water, which I linked to her view of the Creation.

She sees teaching others who are not brought up with or have not been taught to care for the environment as a vital part of her actions for the climate, especially those who come from other countries abroad as immigrants and refugees. She herself is an immigrant and teaches Swedish language classes for immigrants. These teachings on the environment are about sorting out garbage, reducing plastics and buying what you need and not what you want. She expressed that she has seen how the church has changed in the last three years and started preaching more about the environment. This has made her think more about it, feel hope and been an inspiration for her to carry on her engagement for the environment she has been doing since she was young, but also to try to teach others to do the same. She expressed how this inspiration has made her do more in this sense over the last six months.

She related a lot to the first sermon in the image of walking. The facts about the shoes seemed to have stuck in her head and she spoke of how important it was not to always buy new things but to mend, and that she has tried to teach her children and grandchildren that.

Prayer is an essential part of her faith and she said that the content of her prayer has changed. Nowadays she prays almost every day for the climate, asking for God's help in finding out what to do. God has done a lot for us until now and she believes God can help now as well, so her grandchildren can live on a clean Earth, drink clean water and breathe better air, like we could when we were young.

Interview IV

The fourth interviewee was a man of 39. He came to Sweden five years ago from a country at war in the Middle East. For him it was a totally new experience to hear sermons about the environment and the climate in church. This was not something he had ever heard in his home country. He related it to the fact that housing, food and helping those in need when there is a war going on, probably sets the priorities differently. But he had not heard about the issue in church in Sweden either before. At first he found it very strange, but after listening to my sermons about the climate, he now reasoned that it was good to preach about it. He believed that the church could contribute in a good way to climate engagement, both in actions and in preaching and explaining about it. He talked about building community, that the church is not only church buildings but the people. He sees church as a part of the society as a whole contributing to a better environment, for example by volunteers in church helping to clean up public spaces. He also spoke of love, which is the base of his faith. In building society, he finds the church means that love is the core and that this love constitutes the community, by loving your family, your children, your friends and your enemies, and taking care of them. He puts family very high and spoke of his love for his family. They are the

reason he cares for the environment. He wants his children to have the same good world that he has been given. He expressed that his own life will not last too long in the future, so if he only thought about himself, there would be no point in engaging. But since love puts the interests of others, instead of your own self, in the center, taking care of the environment for their sake is important.

Since he comes from a country where the environment was not prioritized, he has just started to do some small simple things for the environment nowadays, like using bags of cotton from home when shopping and not the plastic bags in the shops. He spoke instead of how leaders and governments help to change ways. He owns a car care company and spoke of the rules to follow to take better care for the environment. This still means that we as individuals also need to help and so does the church.

He believes that God will fix the climate in the end but does not know how. He has a deep trust in God, but he says that this does not mean that we should ignore or not take responsibility. He carries hope for the future, because of his belief and trust in God. The sermons did not really change his actions for the climate, and did not change how he connected his faith in God to the climate, but he says that they made him see the importance of engagement for the environment and how the church can be a part of it. However, it has made him think a bit more about the climate in relation to faith than he did before.

Interview V

The last person I interviewed was a man of 19. He is engaged in the Church of Sweden's Youth Organization at a regional and national level. He spoke a lot about the need to change policies in organizations and businesses, at the same time as individuals change their ways. He also spoke of how youth organizations can push issues further in the bigger organization and this way contribute to change, for example in the whole Church of Sweden.

Being in this context as he is, working for issues through an organization and seeing change happening gives him hope. He is also hopeful when seeing the impact of activist groups in society as a whole. This hope is needed in him to balance the fear he at times feels about the future of the Earth losing its biodiversity, clean oceans, glaciers and the nature we have today. He wants our children to be able to experience the same beautiful world as he can, not only in documentaries but also in real life. He said that he as an individual has not changed much in his ways due to the climate in the last year, but by being part of an organization that pushes for and creates a change for the sake of the climate, he feels that he still is contributing and working for transformation.

He spoke of how being a part of this thesis project, at the same time that the issue of the climate also is being addressed in the youth organization as an issue of faith, has given him a stronger awareness of the faith perspective on the climate issue, and has become important to him. For him, the main concept of faith related to the climate is the notion of being a caretaker of Earth. His belief is that if we do not take care of it, we are not fulfilling our mission to be caretakers, which we are created to be, in likeness to God. He also expressed that Jesus' message of the golden rule is important, which he linked to the concept of being a 'co-earthier' from the first sermon. He expressed that the role of the church is to speak about faith in connection to the climate, to contribute with this 'other' perspective on the issue grounded on faith, which is not spoken of by others, giving nuances to the debate of the environmental issue. He means that this voice of the church, being a role model at the same time, needs to be heard not least to those of faith. The perspective of faith to the climate issue has strengthened him and made him feel a sense of 'coming closer home' as he called it, since he is a believer. The perspectives of the issue have become more complete for him, he explained. This gives him more motivation and reinforces him. The issue also became 'closer' to him when I spoke of local places in the sermons, and by seeing our need to walk the extra

miles in favor for the Earth. By linking bible passages to the climate issue, he meant the words create a ‘different kind of force’ than it does when you just talk about the climate the usual way, what you should and should not do.

He sees God as a driving force in the issue of the climate. God can be a driving force for our engagement but not the central force in changing the climate. He believes we are created with a free will and that the responsibility to change the climate to the better is ours, but God will help if we ask.

Results of the Interviews

When viewing the interviews together, I realized that context matters. If the issue of climate is brought up in several different parts of and places in your life, the issue becomes more near and important. Nearly all of them spoke of how the context around them, together with the church’s voice, was an impact that made a difference in their life because of the unity of how it was spoken of, even though the perspectives might be from different angles. However, the voice of the church was important for them all. It brought another kind of perspective to the debate and the conversation. The faith perspective of the issue was important to be heard. It was a voice that brought hope in contrast to the despair felt at times.

One of my goals with the interviews was to compare their answers in the survey with their answers in the interviews to see if anything had changed after the two sermons. Their background, age, experience, phase in life and engagement differed, but since their answers in survey was the measuring point, it really did not matter if they between themselves were different. It was the ‘before’ and the ‘after’ in each one of them that mattered for me, to be able to find my answer to the thesis question. Since I did not ask exactly the same questions in the interview as in the survey but instead asked overall questions that covered the same aspects as in the survey, my interpretations of what they expressed in the interviews was the

tool I used to try to see this change or not. A factor to be conscious of is the fact that their answers might be corrected in the sense that they want to be kind to their minister and encourage me.¹²³ This is acknowledged by me when interpreting them, but since the questions were open to let them tell about themselves in relation to the climate and the sermons, I can only relate to what they say. I must acknowledge, but cannot relate to, that there might be thoughts they do not express.

Two of them, the 68 year old woman and the 39 year old man, seemed to show no difference in the answers after the sermons compared to the survey before the sermons, but these two spoke of a larger awareness of the matter and how it made them think more of the connection between faith and the climate afterwards. The questions in the survey did not ask about awareness of the issue so this conclusion is hard to relate back to how it was before the sermons. But both of them expressed clearly how they saw this change of awareness in themselves after the sermons.

In the answers of the rest, I interpreted that there are differences comparing before to after. The 77 year old woman spoke of a larger awareness but also of being slightly more engaged to the climate than before, and meant that the church should also do more in the sense of addressing and making more statements about it. The 19 year old man, I sensed, would now believe that his engagement does make a difference, instead of thinking it does not, as he did when he did the survey. I found these two talked a lot in the interviews about what in faith motivates them, linking them to sentences in the survey about what in faith motivates them, sentences that they did not indicate as true to them before. This can be interpreted that they have thought about the environment connected to faith more due to listening to my sermons, which might have given them new words and new understandings of

¹²³ Tim Sensing speaks of how people influence each other in group interviews. I suggest this can be applied also in a conversation between a pastor and a parishioner.
Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 120

faith in connection to the climate. The last one of these three, the 17 year old woman, talked not only of more awareness, but also of an increase of the motivated feeling of wanting to do more and of a clearly strengthened connection between faith and the climate. She showed a high level of new understanding and talked about how the connection of faith, Bible, God and church to the climate was a powerful and real eye-opener for her, strengthening and motivating her to act more for the sake of the Earth. I interpreted this eye-opener experience as one that lifted a heavy burden from her shoulders by not making her feel alone in the struggle for the climate anymore. Compared to the survey where she wrote that she was unsure if her faith was important to her in her engagement for the climate, I interpreted her answers in the interview that she would undoubtedly write a yes today, ticking several sentences about what in her faith motivates her, while in the survey she did not tick any.

What brings them all five together is that they speak of hope and of togetherness, of being a part of a community that helps, all in different ways, where God is one part. Prayer was something three of them brought up, as I interpreted as a part of this. God can help through prayer. However, the matter of God's omnipotence and agency, and how God can help, is viewed differently. The 68 year old woman said God cannot help the climate at all and has left that to us, but can help us to change our minds and thoughts. Three of them – the 19 year old man, the 17 year old woman and the 77 year old woman - said that God cannot do everything but works together with us. God can, in this case, be a driving force, can help us when we pray or just be in this together with us. The 39 year old man believed that God can fix everything, but that does not mean we should not take responsibility. Whatever belief they carry in this sense, they still all feel hope for the future and see the actions of us as necessary. This need of actions for the sake of the Earth are grounded in beliefs that we are created by God, in likeness of God, and that we are caretakers of the Earth. The message of love to one

another is understood as the core of the Christian faith and the Golden rule can be extended to apply also to nonhumans.

Chapter Six

Evaluation

Outcome and Impact

When establishing if these two subversive prophetic sermons have helped people to stronger connect their actions for the sake of the Earth and faith, we need to clarify what the outcome and impact of these sermons were to the PPG and the interviewees. I chose to write this summary by connecting to the three different parts of my thesis question – subversive prophetic preaching, action for the sake of the Earth, and faith.

Were the Sermons Subversive Prophetic Preaching?

The first part of my thesis question was about using subversive prophetic preaching. A part of the answer to my thesis needs therefore to establish if I succeeded in constructing and making them hear two subversive prophetic sermons. I will in the following present my interpretation by relating the result to the different concepts of the homiletical theories I have relied on of Brueggemann, Schade, Habel, and Stoknes.

Images and Narrative of Reality

The images of the sermons – walking in nature, walking the extra mile, God lying by the mountainside, the funeral for the glacier and the penguins – all seemed to meaningfully connect to their own everyday lives, and evoke different emotions. Placing these images locally and with concrete items in their lives – talking of shoes, local places in Västerås, and relating to our wealth – seemed to make the images feel near to the congregation. The nearness and the images seemed to make a stronger connection between the everyday world and the notions of our faith. Isaiah, the Old Testament prophet, helped to give them an image

of a positive hopeful future and of God being active in creating a 'novum' in the future. Several spoke of the greater awareness this created in them. Starting to just think more about the issue of climate and faith was a part of this growing awareness. In some sense this awareness also seemed to give a greater self-confidence to act. It also seemed to articulate and give words to some of them, so they can express and talk about it when they meet the issue in conversations at work or home. It was expressed as an understanding that the world's problems of the climate moved closer into the space of faith. One man in the PPG spoke of how this connection between faith and the climate had an impact on how he perceived the narrative of present reality. The perspective of faith told another and important narrative of reality than the usual narrative told by other parts of society. All this is a clear reference to Brueggemann's notion of prophetic imagination and how it tells a narrative of reality where God is an active agent, creating a new, that needs to be expressed in our societies.¹²⁴ For both Brueggemann and Stoknes these images are the basis of another important kind of narrative of present reality than the one we hear of through society and media. I find voices from the feedback that support this view.

Related to the images, are the connection between the Bible and the climate which seemed to affect the persons in the PPG and the interviewees in different ways. One outcome was the realization that biblical texts could be connected to the climate, although the specific passages used do not speak of the climate. Another outcome was that passages they knew of, that were other ones than the one that was preached about, were related to when hearing the sermons. This connecting of different bible passages to the climate correlates to Habel's strategy that by reading, hearing, and seeing these texts in view of the Earth, makes these passages 'green'.¹²⁵ It also connects to my aim of preaching subversive sermons and reading

¹²⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipating Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 5

¹²⁵ Norman Habel, *An Inconvenient Text* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2009), 56

the bible text from the view of the exposed, of reading from below, which in the Climate Crisis is the Earth and nonhumans. The subversive aspect was affirmed in the feedback when reaching understandings of how bible passages speak of the climate, at least ‘in between the lines’ as the 11-year-old girl seated in the congregation expressed it.

Broader Understanding of Creation

Some of the interviewees and the PPG seemed to feel greater empathy for the Earth after the sermons, by relating us humans more strongly to other-than-humans and feeling both grief for their sake and love of all created. This correlates to the notion of the I-En relation Schade presents, where empathy towards the other-than-human comes out of awe in view of and feelings of a relationship with different species in nature.¹²⁶ The bigger picture is a connection to the theology of Panentheism Schade speaks of as one of the central Lutheran notions at the base of her understanding,¹²⁷ which I also set out to communicate. The reminder that we are all created by God and the understanding of how this makes us all humans and nonhumans stand in a relationship with each other seemed to be brought to their minds, either again or clearer. That God was ‘in’ all created was not explicitly expressed by anyone, but the fact that persons in the PPG and the interviewees for example perceived God as being a part of the process of bringing the penguins back home, maybe as a part of how the penguins are created, can be interpreted that these persons view God as part of the immanent world.

The word ‘co-earther’ seemed to land in many in the PPG and the interviewees as a helpful word in seeing their relation to the rest of the Earth as created by God and how their actions for their sake is an action out of love and empathy. Most of the persons in the PPG

¹²⁶ Leah D. Schade, *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology and the Pulpit* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2015), 66

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 27

could not say after the first sermon if they had any new insights about faith connected to the climate, but I interpret that this notion of being a ‘co-earther’ was in fact something new that connected faith and action for them, they just could not express this consciously.

Hope and Eco-resurrection

The strongest feeling the people I interviewed and those who were a part of the PPG all express is that they all feel hope. Even if they at the same time are put down and feel hopelessness by the facts of the Climate Crisis, even though they sometimes felt angst and got sad when listening to the sermons, they still felt hope when walking home from church. Most of them related to the message of God working together with us, not making us lonely in our struggle for a better climate, as the main reason for this. Hope lies also in the feeling that we are many doing this together, realizing that we are a community doing things for the sake of the climate. Other words used were feelings of being “energized” after the sermons and feeling “wonder”. A different and a kind of deeper felt motivation by the trust that God is working with us was also expressed. Inspiration to move forward was another word used and wanting to do more.

For Brueggemann, bringing hope is a central part of prophetic preaching, especially hope brought to us through trust that God is an active agent in our world, creating something new, beyond our ability.¹²⁸ Those listening to the sermons seemed to have felt this trust. They realized and perceived God as an active agent in the climate together with them, but with the power of going beyond and creating a-new, of making us ‘find ways home’. When Stoknes speaks of hope, he mentions different varieties of hope we can carry in us.¹²⁹ Being grounded in hope, not by our doing but in our calling and being, which was essentially the

¹²⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipating Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 128

¹²⁹ Per Espen Stoknes, *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming: Toward a New Psychology of Climate Action* (Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015), 220-222

hope Stoknes carries, seems to correlate to some of the kind of hope expressed in the PPG and by the interviewees. One of them views herself as an incurable optimist, which points to another of Stoknes' personality types concerning hope. I have not tried to interpret what kind of personality type they are according to Stoknes' definitions. However, what I do see is that my listeners seem to be energized to action by their felt hope.

When people in the PPG and the interviewees spoke of finding inspiration and motivation, one can sense that the barriers Stoknes argues we set up when hearing of climate issues were overcome in a sufficient way. Framing my message with the help of Stoknes' strategy of nearness and positive images seemed to work to overcome the barrier of distance.¹³⁰ Also the many-to-many communication¹³¹ seemed to rightly be a helpful strategy, since they felt hope rather than despair as an outcome. Schade's notion of Leafing in a sermon to give resources for action together, as a strategy for a community to feel the strength of the many¹³², correlates to this many-to-many communication. It created the feeling of a community doing things together, not making the full weight of change rely solely on an individual's own engagement. Furthermore, it helped them feel that both actions they were challenged to do – mending shoes and letting go of something valuable – were doable.

The story of the penguins was a strong story to nearly all of the interviewees and the people in the PPG, giving them hope for the future. This story can be seen as a 'trickster' story of nature's ability to heal, when the penguins by themselves returned to their home island thousands of miles away after the catastrophic oil spill. The penguins even avoided the area inhabited by sharks, although one might think that they should know nothing of where the sharks were, since it was so far from their home. This relates to Schade's notion of trickster events where nature's way of being able to shift to surprising turnouts, can be a way

¹³⁰ Ibid., 82

¹³¹ Ibid, 94

¹³² Leah D. Schade, *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology and the Pulpit* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2015), 50

to speak of eco-resurrection, making it connect to Christology.¹³³ It also relates to Stoknes' climate communication strategy of telling stories that signal green growth and that our actions make a difference having positive impact for the environment.¹³⁴

Loss and Grief

Loss and grief were not a specific outcome or an impact the people in the PPG and the interviewees expressed when they had listened to the sermons. The major outcome and impact was overall hope. But especially when they had listened to the second heavier sermon that pointed to the exposure of nature due to human strife for wealth, some of them expressed they for a while felt the hopelessness, angst or grief that they already carry in them or hit them as a new feeling. By speaking of disturbing facts of the glaciers, of the shoe industry or massive oil spills, and lingering in them for a short while, loss and grief were acknowledged, as Brueggemann says is important.¹³⁵ This part can also be connected to Schade's strategy of Flowering, consciousness-raising, when preaching about the environment.¹³⁶ Stoknes speaks of how feelings of loss can bring despair but also the feelings of interdependency of us all created.¹³⁷ Brueggemann expresses it as a situation of living in Holy Saturday which I correlate their feelings to.¹³⁸ The hope lies in what is coming. Stoknes does not speak of this coming hope by relating to Christian terms, but relates instead to the grief process and the possible outcome of something new out of that process.¹³⁹ I find my listeners, in spite of the

¹³³ Ibid, 140

¹³⁴ Per Espen Stoknes, *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming: Toward a New Psychology of Climate Action* (Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015), 152

¹³⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipating Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 84

¹³⁶ Leah D. Schade, *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology and the Pulpit* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2015), 49

¹³⁷ Per Espen Stoknes, *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming: Toward a New Psychology of Climate Action* (Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015), 176

¹³⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipating Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 143

¹³⁹ Per Espen Stoknes, *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming: Toward a New Psychology of Climate Action* (Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015), 185

felt hopelessness at times, seemed to acknowledge this coming new and how this acknowledgement constituted the hope they were filled of, including both a trust in God and a trust in the actions and abilities of humans together.

Conclusion about the Subversive Prophetic Sermons

All in all, I interpret that I succeeded in constructing and making my listeners hear two subversive prophetic sermons. I conclude this because I find that the participants' expressions and feedback affirm the concepts of Brueggemann, Schade, Habel and Stoknes I set out to build my sermons on, as seemingly functioning as they are intended.

What Kind of Actions for the Sake of the Earth?

Another part of my thesis question is about action for the sake of the Earth, but what kind of action? Through the interviews and in conversation with my PPG, I have heard that actions can be more than actions done by consumers or production companies in the areas of food, shopping, housing, transport or investments. They have given me a broader picture of what action can consist of than I had in the first place. I realize I mainly thought of actions as concrete actions by our hands and body mainly, like bicycling or shopping. I will in the following briefly present only this broadened view I interpreted as also being actions for the sake of the climate.

Teaching and learning others can be an action. To talk of the issue of the climate is another way of acting. To preach or even to hold rituals relating to the environment is a way of acting to bring issues of the climate to a common awareness and realization. The perspective of another voice, a voice of faith, that gives hope of God being with us in all this, is needed. To think about the climate and your actions can be an action. To think about it creates awareness and this can help you to change your habits, even in small ways.

Action is not only an individual choice but also a collective choice. Rules and policies made by organizations, governments and leaders of companies is a way of acting collectively. This helps individuals to act, either through the fact that you have to follow the rules set by laws protecting the environment, or by just seeing that people in leadership also contribute and do their part of it. By acting together you build community. The church can contribute in building community where love and taking care of each other and the Earth is at the base.

All of these different actions named here were mentioned by those I interviewed and the persons in my PPG as actions they connected to the climate. These were actions that they found themselves relating to and doing more, due to the sermons they had heard.

Which Expressions of Faith?

Faith is the third part of my thesis question. To deepen the aspect of faith, we therefore view what content in faith the persons in the PPG and the interviews seem to relate to in the issue of the climate.

The notion of love is expressed as a core aspect of faith in the issue of the climate for several of those I interviewed and in my PPG. This notion of love is grounded on the belief that God loves all creation and all created. The message to love one another and to do to others what you would like others to do to yourself, is broadened to include also other-than-humans. Seeing yourself as not only a fellow human to other humans, including coming generations, but also being a ‘co-earthier’ seemed to deepen their own understanding of our relation to all created. The feeling of a ‘togetherness’ with all humans and with God became strong in many of them.

Prayer was expressed by some of them to be an important part of their faith. The climate issue has become an issue they often raise in their prayers. Asking for help was the main content in this prayer. Many of them expressed a belief that God is working with us for

the climate. The story of the penguins had a large impact on them in this sense. Others believed God could not do anything or at least stepped back, because of free will or that the mission was given to us to be caretakers and take responsibility of the consequences of our choices. Some believed that God is not a central force in the transformation to a better climate, but can be a driving force to change our minds and thought. All those that spoke of prayer believed though that if we asked for help, God would help.

Sacrifice was a notion brought up by a couple of them and connected to the mission of being a disciple and following Jesus. The challenge to let go of something valuable in the second sermon was connected to sacrifice. It could be hard but with the belief that God could make it work and happen, you could trust sacrifice was an achievable and important action.

In listening to the sermons, bible passages were at times related to in their own minds. The images of the beauty of nature were connected to the Creation stories and the image of Eden. The story of the Lost Son was related to the penguin story in finding our way home in the future. Jesus' word of carrying a yoke was connected to the glacier funeral. The words of Isaiah became an eye-opener to how God was acting in the world also in relation to the climate.

These perspectives of faith in relation to the climate issue were for my interviewees and my PPG important aspects for the church to bring into the conversation about the climate in the society. It seemed to connect experiences of grief, beauty, hope and love in their everyday lives to faith and the bible, and to the climate crisis in a helpful way. Not everyone of the interviewees and in the PPG mentioned all of the perspectives. Instead different perspectives were important to different ones of them. The perspective of faith was though for many of them spoken of as a necessary voice not heard of anywhere else in our communities or social media.

Indicators about the Connection of Faith and Action

My evaluation model for this thesis is the “Logical Model” presented by Sarah Drummond. This model takes in the different factors in a transformation process – resources, inputs, outputs, impact and indicators.¹⁴⁰

The resources put in to explore my thesis question were, besides my own time and study, using a Parish Project Group to prepare the sermons together with and receive feedback from. The ten persons who did the survey, of which five of them were interviewed, were another resource. A third part were the authors of the books I studied. The input to reach an answer to my question was my two sermons, the survey and the interviews. I described the outcome and the impact in the former chapter through the results I have seen and interpreted them as. So what indicators do I see through these five persons I have interviewed and the six persons in my PPG?

I can see in them all a shift in their thoughts about faith and action for the sake of the Earth. The one who expresses it least says that just starting to think about how actions for the climate are connected to faith is his change. The one indicating it most says that there is a powerful new insight in how God acts together with us in relation to the climate and how this is a strong new motivator to her in her action, lifting burdens off her shoulders. The others express shifts of different grades that I interpret are in between these two. Realizing, understanding and making new connections between the climate, bible passages, notions of faith and everyday life is one of these shifts. The notion of sacrifice and the word ‘co-earther’ were the most noticeable connections made here as I interpret it. Finding inspiration and greater awareness to something they are already doing is another of these shifts. All of them

¹⁴⁰ Sarah B. Drummond, *Holy Clarity: The Practice of Planning and Evaluation* (Virginia: The Alban Institute, 2009), 60.

express finding more hope through the faith expressed in the sermons which affected them, in larger or smaller ways. This gave energy to future action and words to speak, by realizing we are many in this struggle for the climate together, inclusive of God.

Answer to Thesis Question

I started my thesis by asking if subversive prophetic preaching can help people to strengthen their connection between their action for the sake of the Earth and faith? The answer is a quiet and nuanced Yes. A few congregants indicate a profoundly stronger connection between faith and action with new insights in faith and the Bible which inspires them to action. For others faith is not profoundly changed, but by hearing the Bible and faith being connected to the climate crisis, the awareness of it has increased and the will to do more and act out from it is felt and done. For a few congregants the change is instead about starting to think about it more - how God, faith and climate engagement connect, not namely leading to a change in action or faith, at least for now. There is not any voice I have interpreted as a No as an answer to this thesis question.

Chapter Seven

Homiletical significance

Impact of the Thesis Project

This thesis came out my frustration and a longing to find a way to preach about the Climate Crisis, since I found this was not substantially addressed in my church context in the pulpits, even though it is a huge issue in the broader Swedish context. My thesis project was directed to explore if prophetic preaching could be a way to address the Climate Crisis and help people to more strongly connect faith and their actions for the climate. I decided to call my sermon form subversive prophetic preaching. During the process of working with the thesis I have become profoundly less frustrated since I found that this sermon form seemed to work, due to the feedback I received along the way. Another factor decreasing my frustration is that I see a change in my church context during the time I worked with this thesis, with both theological literature and articles produced, and sermons in my nearer context addressing the climate to a larger extent.¹⁴¹

At the beginning of the process, I was prepared that doing only two sermons would probably not give many answers to as to whether my preaching had succeeded in strengthening the connection between faith and actions for people. However, I did believe subversive prophetic preaching about the climate could make a difference in the longer run, if I kept on preaching about it. I thought more time was needed, since transformation often is a slow walk. I am a bit surprised having reached the answer that yes, after two sermons I can see that it has made a difference for people in finding a stronger connection between faith and

¹⁴¹ For example: Peter Halldorf, a Swedish theologian, has produced two books that correlate to the Climate crisis, "Himlens alla fåglar har flytt" (The birds in heaven have all fled) and "Därför sörjer Jorden" (Therefore the Earth grieves). Archbishop Antje Jackelén wrote an article about how the Climate crisis also is a spiritual crisis which was published in national newspaper. And several sermons I have heard address in a larger extent the Climate crisis.

action for the sake of the Earth. This has strengthened my will to continue to use the theoretical, theological and homiletical learnings from Brueggemann, Schade, Habel and Stoknes as a way to preach about the climate. I imagine these learnings also can be applied to other current issues that need to be addressed and critically viewed, and when hope, peace and justice need to be proclaimed in these other issue.

Prophetic Preaching about the Climate in the Swedish Context

What are the implications of my thesis project to the context in Sweden, locally and more broadly? After preaching just two sermons it is hard to make a more extensive conclusion, but I find that prophetic preaching seems to work, as modelled out by Brueggemann and Schade. It works in the context in Sweden as a way of preaching about the climate. Prophetic preaching, as Brueggemann and Schade understand it, is a model of preaching more oriented to content than how it is performed. I argue this is an important understanding that can help prophetic preaching become a useful tool in the Church of Sweden. It is not angry preaching or predictions of the future. It is instead built on a content of images and passion, meaning acknowledging feelings of grief, loss, anger, while encouraging people towards empathy and love, like the Old Testament prophets modeled their messages according to Brueggemann. The point of the message is to address injustice and collective destructive systems of human ways. And the words that describe and express this content should often be poetic language, using images, with the knowledge that imaginative poetry is a form that can be used to express present and future reality. The poetic and imaginative words used should not be interpreted fundamentalistically or literalistically but still viewed as words spoken out of an experienced truth. Prophetic preaching contradicts other ways of describing or understandings of present or future reality that do not count on the power and love of God. It proclaims a God who is with us, and who has not abandoned us.

I do not say that prophetic preaching does not exist in Sweden. If it is built mainly on content with imagination as a tool to present this content, prophetic sermons are preached in Sweden even if not acknowledged as this. It is though not established or spoken of as a model of preaching used consciously in the church of Sweden. It is all the same a preaching model needed, and therefore it needs to be named and learned more explicitly. The future of prophetic preaching in Sweden lies in spreading knowledge of what this kind of preaching is and can be, to overcome preconceptions and to come to an understanding of how preachers can offer prophetic sermons that suits our Swedish culture. What our Swedish culture is demands an essay of its own. It must also be said that a culture always consists of individuals with different ways, personalities and preferences. But if I briefly refer to the words said by my parishioner after the first sermon, that it surprised her that prophetic preaching could be done in the calm way I delivered it and that she was glad for this, this could be saying something about our culture of preaching in the Church of Sweden.

Practice is demanded when you aim to deliver prophetic sermons about the climate. I find this focuses the preparation of the sermons. You need to look more deeply into the content, the framing/form of the sermon and the theology of what you are preaching, besides having some knowledge of the collective systems and ways that need to be addressed and criticized as unjust.¹⁴² Frank Thomas argues, like Brueggemann, that prophetic preaching is imagination, but Thomas adds the word ‘moral’ to imagination. He defines the practice of moral imagination as “the ability of the preacher, intuitive or otherwise, in the midst of the chaotic experience of human life and existence, to grasp and share God’s abiding wisdom and ethical truth in order to benefit the individual and common humanity.”¹⁴³ When first reading this definition I hesitated over the burden it laid on the preacher to preach prophetically, since

¹⁴² For example: Adam Hamilton argues that when preaching about controversial issues, you need to be quite informed of the different sides of the issue, giving them equal space and fair summaries of the different views. Paul Scott Wilson, ed, *The New Interpreter’s Handbook Of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008), 118

¹⁴³ Frank A Thomas, *How To Preach A Dangerous Sermon* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2018), xxiii

this correlated to my presupposition that prophetic preaching was mainly a performance style the preacher acted out in the preaching moment. After completing this thesis work on prophetic preaching, I find his definition is true. I find that prophetic preaching is an ability of the preacher but not acted out as a performance style by the preacher in the preaching moment. The ability of the preacher lies in the preparations of the sermons, where a preacher has the capacity to give the sermons content and framing which makes the sermons prophetic. The ability of the preacher can also be an intuitive gift of being able to give words to and share God's wisdom and truth that benefits all, in times when especially needed.

The ability to preach prophetically about the climate lies initially in reading the bible passages with different eyeglasses than the ones we usually read with. The learnings from Habel I find are important. He argues that 'greening' the bible texts means we need to view not only the texts that support Earth-care as 'green', but also view other bible texts in this sense and bring ecology to our bible studies as a whole.¹⁴⁴ What I brought with me from the preparation with my PPG was that trying to 'green' a text is not so easy. If the passages speak of things like the sun, grass, trees, it is of course easier, but not if nature is not mentioned. The stretch to interpret a text in view of the climate can be overcome, I sensed, by training the eye and mind to dig deeper in the texts, as we had tried to do together.

Beyond Habel's work, Catherine Keller speaks of how the Creation story can be read as not only seeing the human status of the *Imago Dei* as exceptional. She points to the bible text of Creation where it speaks of how the Earth in creation is invited by God to the creative process, to 'bring forth', and how this is praised as good.¹⁴⁵ "Earth and ocean seem to mirror more directly than the human the character of the creator – to create"¹⁴⁶ Not only humans

¹⁴⁴ Norman Habel, *An Inconvenient Text* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2009), 40

¹⁴⁵ Genesis 1:11-12

¹⁴⁶ Catherine Keller, *Political Theology Of The Earth: Our Planetary Emergency And The Struggle For A New Public* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 76

have the ability to create, but also other parts of Creation have this ability, given to us all by invitation from God. This partly correlates to Schade's notion of trickster events in nature.¹⁴⁷ Keller does not speak of resurrection in this case, but it correlates in the sense of both Schade and Keller pointing to nonhuman's ability to create. Another biblical text Keller mentions is the parable of the feeding of the hungry multitude¹⁴⁸, which can be read "as a parable of human/nonhuman integration under desert conditions of greatly reduced resource use..."¹⁴⁹ This kind of different interpretation of biblical texts, relating them to environmental issues, even Climate Crisis issues, I have chosen to call 'subversive', as being read from below. I find it requires either a preacher's own ability to use other glasses when reading bible texts or the inspiration of others who can inspire us to do so, as a starting point for preparations of the sermon. The point in reading a biblical passage 'from below', viewing the voice of the exposed, is to create a new meaning of the text in the face of the Climate Crisis.

Preaching about the Climate Crisis also demands a conscious framing, like the insights given to us by Stoknes, to not make people backfire but instead energize to action and change. I find working with the rhetorical form is another conscious and vital task in the preparations. Paul Scott Wilson speaks of how the tendency in our sermons is that it is dominated by the trouble and hardship of life, and that God's grace often just gets spoken of at the end, maybe in just a few sentences.¹⁵⁰ He argues in his 'grammar' of preaching Four Pages that the message of God's grace in the biblical text and finding this grace in the world should get as much space in a sermon as speaking about the trouble in the text and the world.¹⁵¹ This correlates with Stoknes when he argues we need to find the positive framings and stories to

¹⁴⁷ Leah D. Schade, *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology and the Pulpit* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2015), 141

¹⁴⁸ Matthew 14:13-21

¹⁴⁹ Catherine Keller, *Political Theology Of The Earth: Our Planetary Emergency And The Struggle For A New Public* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 93

¹⁵⁰ Paul Scott Wilson, *The Four Pages Of The Sermon: A Guide To Biblical Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2018), 23, 156

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 1

energize people and give hope, and not linger in catastrophic facts.¹⁵² I agree we need to find and express the grace we receive in this world, even in a Climate Crisis. Doing this requires some definite work not only with content but also with the framings of our sermons.

To give time for deeper preparations for the sermon work is often discussed by ministers in the Church of Sweden. We function differently in how, for how long and when we prepare our sermons. However, I do see that in presenting models and strategies for prophetic sermons on the climate during education and further training, you might inspire ministers to work more consciously and give more time for preparations on the sermons about the climate. I find this is needed to be able to preach in helpful ways about the Climate Crisis, leading to hope and long-term transformation.

Voices of Hope

A meaningful outcome of this thesis is the recognition of church as an alternative and important voice in society. I have been reminded by my participants in this thesis project that we as a church need to be self-confident that our voice is wanted and meaningful, even in the conversation and debate of the Climate Crisis. Words create worlds. Our world was brought into being through a word by God.¹⁵³ Our words can also create worlds in the sense that we can create understandings about reality, understandings that can be world-shaping. William J Barber II writes in the foreword of Frank Thomas book *How to preach a dangerous sermon* that “...prophetic imagination is a... message meant to shape, not reflect public opinion.”¹⁵⁴ When we as a church tell a different narrative in face of the Climate Crisis that other parts of society do not speak of, we can be part of shaping a reality where restoration and justice can

¹⁵² Per Espen Stoknes, *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming: Toward a New Psychology of Climate Action* (Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015), 90

¹⁵³ Genesis 1:3

¹⁵⁴ Frank A Thomas, *How To Preach A Dangerous Sermon* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2018), xvi

have a bigger chance of being implemented, if this can be felt and experienced as possible by those listening. Awareness and self-confidence in how to speak and act in positive concrete ways for the climate, seem to have increased in my listeners. Preaching words of grace and hope that include the concrete realities in our life might help people to implement and use these words in their own lives, hopefully spreading ripples in the waters. And is this not one of the church's major missions – to speak of and spread hope in a hopeless world?

I have seen through this thesis project that the experience of a togetherness seems crucial, to know that you are not alone in your despair or your actions. My participants nearly all spoke of this, in words like building the church out of people, acting together lifting the burden of having all weight on your own shoulders, contributing your part of the whole, and being strengthened in realization that we are many, not at least together with God in it all. The church can be a strong culture of identity. Our words can shape, for better or for worse. Preaching seems to have the ability to create a sense of togetherness and an identity-shaping community. Preaching not only nurtures our own souls and consoles us in our troubles. I find the future of connecting faith and action for the sake of the Earth lies in remembering that our togetherness is a strong factor that we have to consider with humility and with courage to speak into and with. Humility and courage is needed not least in consideration of the different views of the Climate Crisis in a congregation.

When speaking of words, theology must also be mentioned. What kind of God shall we speak of in face of the Climate Crisis? Does God act in the Climate Crisis or not? Can we speak of God's omnipotence? Have Christ and the Holy Spirit anything to do with the climate? Is there really hope? This thesis has not dug deeper into the theology that is connected to the Climate Crisis by different theologians, or different opinions believed by people in the pews for that matter. It has just referred to what has been brought up by the participants and the theologians studied. This thesis has not explored eschatology, apocalyptic

views, or other theologies as negative theology, process theology or theologies of eco-feminism, all being theologies I have come across during my studies for this thesis. There are several paths you can travel on forward to explore this deeper. I leave this deeper theological research in the climate matter, in the Swedish context, to future possibilities.

For now I just conclude that I and my listeners have found more hope, through listening to other voices, both past and present voices, expressing hope.

Appendix I

Sermon 1, Sept 15, 2019 - Walking the extra mile

Text: Matthew 5: 38-48

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; 40 and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; 41 and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. 42 Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you. 43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers and sisters,[a] what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

The sun was shining in the blue embracing sky. Some lazy clouds were floating quietly. But one cloud was kind of leaning against one of the mountaintops, as if God leaned his back against the high mountain edge and rested. As if God was lying there calmly looking at everything created and seeing that it was, after all, mostly good.

I was walking on a small winding serpentine path down the mountain. The ground was covered with grass and flowers. In the distance were some cows with bells around their necks that sounded as they moved . It was fantastically beautiful. The view I was surrounded by on all sides, with miles of mountain tops , green pastures, tiny houses down in the valley, small waterfalls over the edges - everything took my breath away, made me feel small but also so blessed, being a part of all this incredible wonderfulness that is our home.

We humans have always been walking. Miles after miles we walk on the ground. We stroll on the grass over the lawns of Löga , walk on the asphalt pavements on Hammarbacksvägen, jog on the gravel paths along Svartån , thousands of steps every day, countless steps for all 7 billion people on earth .

And we ask of the earth and land to walk with us. Not only do we ask people for favors, we ask the land, the nature and the animals for favors all the time. To give us water, cotton and linen, so we can make that shirt that we sometimes need, but also just because we want it without needing. To give us rubber and leather so we can make shoes, shoes we need but that we also want, sometimes just because they are so neat. 24 billion pairs of shoes are manufactured annually. Made of tanned leather, oil-made synthetic materials, rubber, wood. A shoe-industry that provides jobs and prosperity but which also handles a lot of toxins, an industry that is not nearly as regulated as other clothing industry and which of course affects its environment and affects the people who work there .

There is nothing about shoe manufacturing in the Bible, nothing about environmental sustainability issues, we cannot turn to the Bible for advice on how to deal with the impact we are making on the air, our lands and our climate today, but the bible does say something about the smallest. About how the most vulnerable needs someone who gives them a voice, who defends them and lifts them up. How we should give to those in need.

Today the earth is one of the vulnerable. It is the earth we need to defend, lift up, give a voice, try to listen to what it says to us. The earth walks many extra miles for us, in the service of giving, for our sake. Now is the time for us to walk the extra mile the earth asks of us, in service for its sake.

We may simply need to broaden the concept of our neighbor to include the earth. I have played with a word I myself made up - that we should be 'co-earthers' Not only our neighbor, our beloveds, our grandchildren, our enemies do we need to see and care for. We need to attach ourselves to the ground and the earth we walk on, see to and care for the well-being of the earth, be a 'co-earthier', attached to the ground .

It may feel demanding to have to change our habits for the sake of the climate, one can feel resistance to it, sometimes we just want to be able to continue doing what we have become accustomed to. But if the earth wins by us changing, we win too. And besides, we might even find new exciting things along that extra mile we have never walked before!

What if we could do something together for the sake of the earth, we who are here today. What if we could all do the simple act of fixing our shoes the next time they break, take them to the shoemaker, even though we think they can't be fixed, so at least try. And when we have done that, don't tell me but tell it to each other. That it worked! That you were a 'co-earthier' and walked an extra mile for the sake of the earth by fixing your shoes instead of buying one of the 24 billion pairs of shoes made each year. That you walked an extra mile for life's sake.

And when you walked this extra mile for life, you were at the same time God's partner. For God's specialty is this thing called life.

While God rests against the mountain edge and looks out over the world and sees that it nonetheless mostly is good, God turns to the goats, rowan trees, lakes and salmons. They all agree when they talk. There is a limit. A limit for us humans, for nature, for the earth. But what differs us all from God is that God has no limit at all. God can go by far longer than all the extra miles we and the earth can go.

We know nothing of what is to come, about when the limits have been reached, but many of us also have quite little trust in God. Most people probably think that God does not fix things for us, however much we would like God to, neither does God fix the climate for us. Why is our faith in God weak? If we now believe that God is boundless and can create out of nothing?

Sometimes my trust in God is also weak and it's so easy to be disillusioned and despair because of the climate. But we are in this together, you and I and God, all human and non-human together. God doesn't fix everything while I can just rest from responsibility, but I don't either have to feel all the weight on my shoulders of having to work on change for the

sake of the climate. God is with everything, in everything, but also more than everything. And God is opportunities beyond what we can think of. God doesn't just rest silently waiting by the mountain edge. God creates where nothing lives. God creates when and where everything dies, without asking for anything in return, more than that we are in this together. God knows all about this thing called life. It's God's thing, you could say. And if we can trust that God is with us and also in the act of shaping at the same time as us, then it might just be easier to keep going.

The book of Isaiah says:

For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Maybe the trees will clap their hands in joy when we come walking with our newly mended shoes.

And God stands there besides us and says, with words also phrased by Isaiah, God says : I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

Note:

The word 'co-earther' is a play with words that works in Swedish but unfortunately not as well in English. A word we use for 'neighbor' is a word that if you translate it wordwise is the word 'co-human'. So broadening the word of "co-human" is easily said as 'co-earther'. At the same time the Swedish verb 'to earth' is the word used when you "ground" electricity to make it safer. So that is another reason why I express that being a 'co-earther' is attaching us to the ground.

Appendix II

Predikan 1, 15 sept-19, 13 e tref – Att gå en extra mil

Text: Matt 5:38-48

38Ni har hört att det blev sagt: Öga för öga och tand för tand. 39Men jag säger er: värj er inte mot det onda. Nej, om någon slår dig på högra kinden, så vänd också den andra mot honom. 40Om någon vill processa med dig för att få din skjorta, så ge honom din mantel också. 41Om någon vill tvinga dig att följa med en mil i hans tjänst, så gå två mil med honom. 42Ge åt den som ber dig, och vänd inte ryggen åt den som vill låna av dig. 43Ni har hört att det blev sagt: Du skall älska din nästa och hata din fiende. 44Men jag säger er: älska era fiender och be för dem som förföljer er; 45då blir ni er himmelske faders söner. Ty han låter sin sol gå upp över onda och goda och låter det regna över rättfärdiga och orättfärdiga. 46Om ni älskar dem som älskar er, skall ni då ha lön för det? Gör inte tullindrivarna likadant? 47Och om ni hälsar vänligt på era bröder och bara på dem, gör ni då något märkvärdigt? Gör inte hedningarna likadant? 48Var fullkomliga, så som er fader i himlen är fullkomlig.

Solen lyste på den blåa omslutande himlen. Några moln svävade slött och stilla. Men ett av molnen liksom låg och lutade sig mot en av de höga alptopparna, som om Gud lutade sin rygg mot den höga bergskanten och vilade sig. Som om Gud låg där och lugnt såg ut på allt som skapades och såg att det trots allt var för det mesta gott ändå.

Jag gick på en slingrande liten serpentinstig nerför berget. Marken var täckt av gräs och blommor. På avstånd stod några kor med bjällror som klingade när de rörde sig. Det var vidunderligt vackert. Utsikten jag omgavs av på alla sidor, med vy över mildals av bergstoppar, gröna vidder, små hus därnere i dalen, små vattenfall ut över kanterna – allt tog andan ur mig, gjorde att jag kände mig liten men också så benådad. Tänk att få vara en del av allt detta oerhört vackra som är vårt hem.

Att gå har vi människor gjort i alla tider. Mil efter mil går vi på jordens marker. Vi strosar på gräset över Lögastrand, går på asfalten på trottoaren på Hammarbacksvägen, löper på grusstigarna längs Svartån, tusentals steg varje dag, sammanlagt oräkneliga steg för alla 7 miljarder människor på jorden.

Och vi begär av jorden och marken att gå med oss. Inte bara våra medmänniskor ber vi om tjänster, vi ber jorden, marken, naturen och djuren om tjänster hela tiden. Att ge oss vatten, bomull och lin, så vi kan tillverka den där skjortan som vi ibland behöver men också bara för att vi vill ha den utan att behöva. Att ge oss gummi och läder som vi kan bygga ihop våra skor med, skor vi behöver men också som vi tycker att vi vill ha, ibland bara för att de är så snygga. 24 miljarder par skor tillverkas årligen. Byggda av garvat läder, oljetillverkad syntetmaterial, gummi, trä. En sko-industri som ger jobb och välstånd men som också hanterar en massa gifter, en industri som inte alls är lika reglerad som annan kläindustri och som förstås påverkar sin omgivning och påverkar de människor som arbetar där.

Det står inget om sko-tillverkning i bibeln, inget om miljöhållbarhetsfrågor, vi kan inte vända oss till bibeln för att få råd hur vi ska hantera den påverkan vi gör mot vår luft, våra marker och vårt klimat idag, men det står om de minsta i bibeln. Om hur de utsatta behöver någon som ger dem röst, som försvarar dem och upprättar dem. Hur vi ska ge åt den som behöver. Nu är jorden en av de utsatta. Det är jorden som vi behöver försvara, upprätta, ge röst åt, försöka höra vad den säger till oss. Jorden går många extra mil för oss, i tjänst för att ge, för vår skull. Nu är det tid för oss att gå de extra milen som jorden ber oss gå, i tjänst för dens skull.

Vi kanske helt enkelt behöver vidga begreppet medmänniska till att också omfatta jorden. Jag har lekt med ett påhittat ord – att vi ska vara med-jordare. Inte bara våra medmänniskor, våra nära, våra barnbarn, våra fiender behöver vi se och värna om. Vi behöver fästa oss vid marken, se till och värna om jordens välbefinnande, vara med-jordare, fästa vid marken. Det kan kännas kravfullt att behöva ändra våra vanor för klimatets skull, det kan ta emot, ibland vill vi bara kunna fortsätta göra som vi vant oss vid. Men om jorden vinner på att vi ändrar oss, så vinner också vi på det. Dessutom kan det vara så att vi samtidigt kan hitta nya roliga spännande saker längs den där extra milen vi aldrig gått på förut!

Tänk om vi kunde göra något tillsammans för jordens skull, vi som är här idag. Tänk om vi alla kunde göra den enkla handlingen att laga våra skor nästa gång de går sönder, ta dem till skomakaren, även om vi tror att de inte går att laga, så i alla fall fråga. Och när vi har gjort det så berätta inte för mig utan berätta det för varandra. Att det gick! Att du var en med-jordare och gick en extra mil för jordens skull genom att laga dina skor istället för att köpa en av de 24 miljarder par skor som nytillverkas varje år. Att du gick en extra mil för livets skull. Och när du gick denna extra mil för livets skull, så var du samtidigt medpartner till Gud. För Guds specialitet är det här med liv.

Medan Gud vilar sig mot den där bergskanten och ser ut över världen och ser att det trots allt ändå mest är gott, vänder sig Gud mot getterna, rönnbärsträden, sjön och laxen. De är alla överens när de samtalar. Det finns en gräns. En gräns för oss människor, för naturen, för jorden. Men det som skiljer oss alla från Gud är att Gud inte har någon gräns alls. Gud kan gå långt mer än alla de extra mil både vi och jorden kan gå.

Vi vet inget om det som kommer, om när gränserna har nåtts, men vi har också många av oss rätt klen tillit till Gud. Det flesta tänker antagligen att Gud inte fixar saker hur som helst åt oss, hur gärna vi än vill, och inte heller fixar Gud klimatet åt oss. Varför är vår tro på Gud klen? Om vi nu tror att Gud är gränslös och kan skapa ur inget?

Ibland är min tro på Gud också klen och det är så lätt att bli desillusionerad och känna hopplöshet för klimatet. Men vi är i det här tillsammans, du och jag och Gud, allt mänskligt och icke-mänskligt tillsammans. Gud fixar inte allt medan jag bara kan vila från ansvar, men jag behöver inte heller känna att all tyngd av arbetet med förändring pga klimatkrisen hänger på mina axlar. Gud är hos allt, i allt, men också mer än allt. Och Gud är möjligheter utöver vi kan tänka. Gud vilar inte bara tyst väntande mot bergskanten. Gud skapar där inget lever. Gud skapar när och där allt dött, utan att be om något tillbaka, mer än att vi är i det här

tillsammans. Gud kan det här med liv. Det är Guds grej liksom. Och kan vi ha tillit till det, att också Gud är med och formar samtidigt med oss, så kan det nog bli enklare att fortsätta gå.

I Jesajas bok står det:

I glädje ska ni tåga ut, ledas hem i trygghet. När ni kommer brister berg och höjder ut i jubel, markens alla träd klappar händer.

Kanske träden klappar sina händer i jubel när vi kommer gåendes med våra nylagade skor.

Och Gud står där bredvid och säger, med ord också formulerade av Jesaja, Gud säger: Nu gör jag något nytt. Det spirar redan, märker ni inte det?

Appendix III

Sermon 2, October 20, 2019 - God makes the impossible possible

Text: Mark 10: 17-27

17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.' " 20 He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." 21 Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." 22 When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. 23 Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." 26 They were greatly astounded and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?" 27 Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible."

They were dressed in thick jackets and thermal pants. The wind blew cold around them. It was a funeral. An unusual funeral. And in the same way we can write letters to put in the coffin of a loved one who has died, a letter was also left here. Although this letter was left for everyone to see, for the people of the future to read. And those who left the letter did so because they were distressed.

Distressed was also the rich man when he walked away from Jesus. He had, since he was a young man, followed everything that his Jewish tradition asked of him to keep the commandments they received from God. Now the question was whether it was enough. I think Jesus saw the man's honest will to keep the relationship with God so unspoiled it could. That his relationship with God would be secured for all future and save him to heaven. Jesus knew that what he was going to say would be hard, really hard for the rich man. Because there is something that wealth does to us people. And there is something about following Jesus, which is harder than we humans can handle sometimes. Go and sell what you own, became this rich man's challenge. Distressed he walked away. We don't know what happened after. We know only that Jesus looked at the man who walked away from him along the road and Jesus also grieved. For one can sense the sadness in his voice when he talked about the eye of the needle. It was a high demand!

I think the scientists, adults and children who were at that funeral also feel that demands are high on us now. The funeral ceremony was in Iceland and it was over Iceland's first glacier that has melted down and died. The letter that was written down on a memory plate, which was screwed onto a stone, says:

“ Okjökull is the first Icelandic glacier to lose its status as a glacier. For the next 200 years, all of our glaciers are expected to meet the same fate. This monument is a reminder that we know what is happening and what we must do. Only you know if we did. August 2019. 415 ppm Co2 ”.

There are different views on carbon dioxide and emissions in the world. If they are natural fluctuations in the climate or unnaturally much now depending on human lifestyle and emissions. But questions have come close to us.

Do we have to give up what we have for the sake of the climate crisis?

Do we have to refrain for a poorer standard of living?

We are rich, most of us, here in Sweden, by comparison. And the demands are becoming high for us, both as individuals and as a community. It feels impossible to meet the high demands of radical environmental change and lifestyle change in just a few years. It's no wonder we react by pushing back: I don't want to! We can't change everything! I don't want to lose what I have! It costs us too much! It is impossible!

But God makes the impossible possible.

The high demand on the rich man in the text also made him react. He wanted to do right and he wanted so much for it to be enough. The impossible lay in the insight that there was more to do. One more thing, as Jesus said. He had probably said the same to anyone, one more thing. Whatever we do, there is always more to do.

But God makes the impossible possible. That is our salvation. God does not break the relationship with us because we cannot do everything. God is with us in our processes but also far more than we can. For God everything is possible. It does not take away our responsibility, but it opens up for grace and hope.

Jesus looks at the man with love and challenges more.

Jesus looks at the man with sadness and love has not disappeared.

Jesus looks at the disciples' distress and says with love: It is impossible, if it only were up to you, but it's not just up to you. God is in the process and it is not impossible when God is involved.

On Robben Island in South Africa in 2000, distressed people saw the large colony of dwarf penguins being hit hard by a massive oil spill off the coast. It was decided that they should try to save as many as possible and thousands of penguins were relocated to an island on the other side of the cape, thousands of kilometers away. Some of the penguins were marked to be able to see what happened to them afterwards. And what they saw was that after a few weeks, when the island had been cleaned from most of the oil, the penguins began to return home by themselves. Not only did they swim for thousands of kilometers, they also took a detour in one place to avoid having to swim through a large shoal of sharks. The penguins found their way home.

Maybe someone would say it was the natural instincts of the penguins. Maybe you can also say that it is God who is involved in the process through the qualities created in the penguin. We have put our burdens on animals and nature. They must bear the burden of our human strive for wealth. That makes many of us so distressed. So sad that it is possible to talk about

climate grief. We see what we lose, as a society but also what the animal world and the natural world lose.

Grief does not only make us feel powerlessness and hopelessness. From grief comes eventually energy and we can see that we not only lose. In the coming of the new, we can find something we did not think we could, we can find home. God makes the impossible possible!

I would like to send you off with challenge. The same challenge Jesus gave to the rich man. But now it's you he says it to. Let go of what you own. I don't mean that we should get rid of all our belongings, there is nothing romantic about being poor. But letting go of ONE thing you have that you like can be difficult enough. Try!

Because sometimes we need to take difficult steps to contribute to the kingdom of God getting larger here on earth . A kingdom of God not only for us humans, but also for our Swedish mountains, for our lake Mälaren and the chanterelles. To help build God's kingdom for them, and not just us humans, is to follow Jesus. To help build the kingdom of God to them, to let go of our things of wealth and to follow Jesus, belong together.

Will we then be saved when we let go of our things that we have in our wealth? That we don't know. Yet. But God, who looks at us with love, wants to save both us humans, animals, nature, the entire planet earth. And to save us all, our efforts are also needed, together with God. We do not yet know what this new coming is. But our hope is every moment that for God, unlike us, everything, both in heaven and on earth, is always possible. That goes for both you and me, glaciers and penguins.

Appendix IV

Predikan 2, 20 okt-19, 18 e tref – Gud gör det omöjliga möjligt

Text: Mark 10:17-27

De var klädda i tjocka jackor och termobyxor. Vinden blåste snålkallt omkring dem. Det var begravning. En ovanlig begravning. Och precis som vi kan skriva brev för att lägga ner i kistan till en älskad som dött, så lämnades också ett brev här. Fast det här brevet lämnades för alla att se, för framtidens människor att läsa. Och de som lämnade brevet gjorde det för att de var bedrövade.

Bedrövad var också den rike mannen när han gick ifrån Jesus. Han hade sedan han var ung följt allt som hans judiska tradition bad av honom för att hålla de bud de fått av Gud. Nu var frågan om det räckte.

Jag tror Jesus såg mannens ärliga vilja att hålla relationen till Gud så oförstörd det bara gick. Att relationen till Gud skulle vara säkrad för all framtid och rädda honom till himlen. Jesus visste att det han skulle säga skulle bli svårt, riktigt svårt för den rike. För det finns något som rikedom gör med oss människor. Och det finns något med efterföljelsen till Jesus, som är svårare än vi människor kan klara ibland.

Gå och sälj det du har, blev den här rike mannens utmaning. Bedrövad gick han därifrån. Vi vet inte vad som hände sen. Vi vet bara att Jesus tittade på mannen som gick ifrån honom längs vägen och Jesus sörjde också. För man kan ana sorgen i rösten när han pratade om nålsögat. Det var ett högt krav!

Jag tror att de forskare, vuxna och barn som var på den där begravningen också känner att kraven är höga på oss nu. Begravningsceremonin var på Island och den var över Islands första glaciär som har smält ner och dött ut. I brevet som skrevs ned på en minnesplatta, som skruvades fast på en sten, står det:

”Okjökull är den första isländska glaciären som förlorat sin status som glaciär. I de kommande 200 åren förväntas alla våra glaciärer att gå samma öde till mötes. Det här monumentet är en påminnelse om att vi vet vad som händer och vad vi måste göra. Bara ni vet om vi gjorde det. Augusti 2019. 415 ppm Co2”.

Det finns olika syner på koldioxiden och utsläppen i världen. Om det är naturliga svängningar i klimatet eller onaturligt mycket nu pga mänsklighetens livsstil och utsläpp. Men frågorna har kommit nära.

Måste vi börja avstå det vi har för klimatkrisens skull?

Måste vi avstå till något som är en sämre levnadsstandard?

Vi är rika de flesta här i Sverige, jämförelsevis. Och kraven börjar bli stora på oss, både som individer och kollektiv. Det känns snudd på omöjligt att på några få år möta de höga kraven på radikal miljöomställning och livsstilomställning. Det är inte konstigt om vi reagerar med ryggmärgen: Jag vill inte! Vi kan inte ändra allt! Jag vill inte förlora det jag har! Det kostar oss för mycket! Det är omöjligt!

Men Gud möjliggör det omöjliga.

De höga krav som ställdes på den rika mannen i texten gjorde att han också slog ifrån. Han ville göra rätt och han ville så gärna att det skulle räcka. Det omöjliga var att det fanns mer att göra. En sak till, som Jesus sa. Till vem som helst hade han nog sagt, en sak till. Hur vi än gör och agerar, så finns alltid mer att göra.

Men Gud möjliggör det omöjliga. Det är vår räddning. Gud bryter inte relationen med oss för att vi inte klarar av allt. Gud är med oss i våra processer men också långt mer än vi kan. För Gud är allting möjligt. Det tar inte bort vårt ansvar och det svåra vi måste göra, men det öppnar upp för nåden och hoppet.

Jesus ser på mannen med kärlek och utmanar till mer.

Jesus ser på mannen med sorg och kärleken har inte försvunnit.

Jesus ser på lärjungarnas sorg och säger med kärlek: Det är omöjligt, om det bara vore upp till er, men det är inte bara upp till er. Gud är med i processen och det är inte omöjligt när Gud är med.

På ön Robben Island utanför Sydafrika år 2000 stod bedrövade människor och såg hur den stora kolonin av dvärgpingviner drabbades hårt av ett massivt oljeutsläpp utanför kusten. Man bestämde att rädda så många som det gick och tusentals pingviner omplacerades till en ö på andra sidan Godahoppsudden, flera hundra mil bort. Några av pingvinerna märktes upp för att kunna se vad som hände med dem sen. Och det de såg var att efter några veckor, när ön hade rengjorts från de mesta av oljan, började pingvinerna återvända hem av sig själva. Inte nog med att de simmade hundratals mil, de tog även en omväg på ett ställe för att undvika att behöva simma genom ett stort stim med hajar. Pingvinerna hittade tillbaka hem.

Kanske någon skulle säga att det var naturliga instinkter hos pingvinerna. Kanske man också kan säga att det är Gud som är med i processen genom de egenskaper som är skapade i pingvinen.

Vi har lagt våra bördor på djuren och naturen. De får bära bördan av vår mänskliga vilja till rikedomar. Det gör många av oss så bedrövt ledsna. Så ledsna att det går att tala om klimatsorg. Vi ser vad vi förlorar, som enskild människa, som samhälle men också vad djurvärlden och naturvärlden förlorar.

Sorg ger inte bara kraftlöshet och hopplöshet. Ur sorg kommer så småningom kraft och vi kan se att vi förlorar inte bara. I det nya som kommer kan vi hitta något vi inte trodde, vi kan hitta hem i det. Gud möjliggör det omöjliga!

Jag skulle vilja skicka med er en utmaning. Samma utmaning som Jesus gav den rike mannen. Men nu är det är dig han säger det till. Släpp taget om det du äger. Jag menar inte att vi ska sälja allt vi har, det finns inget romantiskt med att vara fattig. Men att släppa taget om EN sak du har som du tycker om, kan vara tillräckligt svårt. Försök!

För ibland behöver vi ta lite svårare steg för att bidra till att Guds rike får mer plats här på jorden. Ett Guds rike inte bara för oss människor utan också för våra svenska fjäll, för Mälaren och trattkantarellerna. Att bidra till att bygga Guds rike för dem, och inte bara för oss människor, är att följa Jesus. Att bidra till att bygga Guds rike för dem, släppa rikedomssaker och följa Jesus hör ihop.

Blir vi räddade då om vi släpper taget om saker som vi har i vår rikedom? Det vet vi inte. Än. Men Gud, som ser på oss med kärlek, vill rädda både oss människor, djur, natur, hela planeten jorden. Och för att rädda oss alla behövs också våra ansträngningar, tillsammans med Gud. Vad det nya blir vet vi inte än. Men vårt hopp är varje stund att för Gud, till skillnad från oss, är allting, både i himlen och på jorden, alltid möjligt. Det gäller för både dig och mig, glaciärer och pingviner.

Appendix V

Survey on your commitment to climate issues

The background to this survey :

In the fall of 2019, I will write a paper on preaching and the Climate crisis.

As a starting point for the essay, I want to do a short survey with ten selected people. You're one of them. Thank you for your participation!

I will use the survey in my essay and may refer to your responses.

By participating in this survey, you are agreeing to let me use your responses in my paper.

But, please be assured your name will not be used. However, age and possibly gender will be stated.

Gender

(put a ring around your answer)

Man Woman Other

Age

.....

Name:

(will not be published in the essay)

.....

Valuation Basis

1 . What would you say has shaped your overall values the most ?

(Put an "X" after what you relate to. Please place an "X" after all that apply)

Political parties

School

Your church / congregation

Your faith

Your parents

Your friends

Your role models

Artists and musicians

Influencers on social media

Other

Other things such as

I do not know

2 . When you make a decision to get involved in an issue, what is usually the basis for your commitment?

(Put an "X" after what you relate to. Please place an "X" after all that apply)

Politics

Faith

Valuations

Affected by the commitment of others

Other things such
as

I do not know

3 . Would you say that you have a faith that is fairly consistent with Christian faith?

(put a ring in around your answer)

Yes No I don't know

The Issue of Climate

4 . Do you think that humans have an effect on climate change?

(put a ring around your answer)

Yes No I don't know

5 . Does climate change worry you?

(put a ring around your answer)

Yes No I don't know

6. Have you changed anything in your habits during the past 2 years due to climate change?

(put a ring around your answer)

Yes No I don't know

7 . If you were to assess yourself, how committed to the climate issue do you consider yourself to be?

(put an "X" after your answer)

Not at all committed

A little committed

Somewhat committed

Significantly committed

Very committed

8 . What do you think about your own actions for the climate?

(put an "X" after your answer)

I do too little

I do enough

I sacrifice some things

I sacrifice a lot of things

I do nothing for the climate

I have not thought about it

9 . Do you think your commitment to the climate makes a difference?

(put a ring around your answer)

Yes No I don't know

Christian faith and the Climate issue

10 . Do you think Christian faith or other beliefs in general are important for people's commitment to the climate?

(put a ring around your answer)

Yes No I don't know

11 . If you are committed to the climate - is your faith important to you in your commitment to the climate?

(put a ring around your answer)

Yes No I don't know

12 . If you answered yes to question 11, what in your faith is motivating you to get engaged in the climate?

(put an "X" after your answer. You can put an "X" after several if you want)

The earth and all that is, is created by God

We humans have been given a responsibility by God to take care of the earth

Jesus gave us the mission to love one another and also all that is on earth

Not only people but also animals and nature have value in God's eyes

To sustain the earth in a sustainable way is to work for God's kingdom on earth

As one of its perspectives, the climate has unjust structures that we should counteract to promote the Kingdom of God on earth with peace and justice for all.

I am not very committed to the climate because I think the earth will end anyway and then Christ will come back and put everything right again

Other things such

as

I do not know

13 . What do you think is the role of the church in the climate issue?

(put an "x" after your response. You can put an "X" after several if you want)

It is the responsibility of politics and science and not the responsibility of the church

The church has a responsibility to follow the issue and do what it can

The church should engage more on the issue than it does today

The church should act more than they do today for the sake of the climate

The church should make more statements about the climate issue linked to faith

Other things such

as

I do not know

14 . Do you link climate change with the end of the earth?

(put a ring around your answer)

Yes No I don't know

15 . Do you think God can fix the climate so it will work out in the end after all, no matter what we humans do?

(put a ring around your answer)

Yes No I don't know

16. If you answered “yes” in question 15, how do you think about it? *(optional)*

.....
.....

Anything you want to clarify / add to any of the questions? *(optional)*

.....
.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR VALUABLE PARTICIPATION !!!

Magdalena

Appendix VI

Results of the Survey in Detail

This is a detailed summary of the results of the survey done for my thesis, with ten people in my congregation. There were 15 questions to answer which were placed in three different sections –their valuation-basis, climate issues and the connection between climate issues and faith.

Basis for Value and Faith

Concerning their valuation-basis, the options mostly ticked in the question of what has shaped their values were the church, their faith, their parents and their friends. Mainly faith and values were a basis for commitment when deciding on engaging in an issue. Eight of them said that their faith is fairly consistent with Christian faith, one of them said it isn't and the other one didn't know.

Climate Engagement

In regard to climate issues, all ten of them believed that humans have an effect on climate change. Eight of them were worried about climate change and nine of them have changed something in their habits during the last two years due to climate change. Concerning commitment, they assessed themselves as being in the range of little, somewhat or significantly committed to the climate issue, none of them were not at all or very committed. Six of them thought of themselves as doing too little for the climate, one of them said they did enough and three of them said they sacrifice some things for the climate. Eight of them figured that their climate commitment made a difference, one believed it doesn't and one did not know.

Climate and Faith

Concerning the connection between faith and action, nine of them believed that faith in general is important for people's commitment to the climate but only six of them said faith was important for their own commitment. Three of them responded that faith wasn't important to them in this concern and one didn't know. When those six who responded that faith was important for them in their climate commitment were asked what in their faith motivates them and given several sentences where they could tick one or more of the alternatives, four of the six answered that humans have been given a responsibility by God to take care of the Earth. Three ticked the each of the following three sentences: "Jesus gave us the mission to love one another and also all that is on Earth", "Not only people but also animals and nature have value in God's eyes", and "To sustain the Earth in a sustainable way is to work for God's kingdom on Earth". One of them also added an own sentence saying that we were created in likeness of God and given God's power to care for the Earth.

Nine of them meant that the church has a responsibility to follow the climate issue and do what it can, two said the church should engage more in the issue than she does today, four said the church should act more than she does today and two wanted the church to make more statements about the climate issue linked to faith.

Seven of them didn't link climate change to the end of the Earth, one of them added "possibly mankind". Two of them did link it to the end and two didn't know. One of them gave both a "no" and a "don't know" response to this.

Seven responded that they didn't believe God can fix the climate so it will work out in the end, no matter what we humans do, but two did and one didn't know. One of them that answered yes to this question, added that this trust came out the belief that God created us but it doesn't mean that we therefore should be careless.

Aspects of the Responses

What stood out when analyzing the survey was that sentences about Christian faith that could be connected to the climate, that in the survey was expressed "As one of its perspectives, the climate has unjust structures that we should counteract to promote the Kingdom of God on earth with peace and justice for all", or "I am not very committed to the climate because I think the earth will end anyway and then Christ will come back and put everything right again" or even the simple sentence "The earth and all that is, is created by God", didn't get any ticks. Nobody meant that the church has no responsibility in the climate issue. It was mainly elderly women who meant the church should engage and act more than she does today but in the case of making more statements about the climate issue linked to faith, those two who ticked that sentence were both young. Those who linked climate change to the end of the Earth were both young and those two who believed that God can fix the climate in the end, no matter what we humans do, were both men of different ages. I could not see any difference in the answers relating to cultural background.

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