

Proverbs 1:20-33

Wisdom cries out in the street, in the squares she raised her voice.

At the busiest corner she cries out:

at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:

“How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?

How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing
and fools hate knowledge?

Give heed to my reproof;

I will pour out my thoughts to you;

I will make my words known to you.

Because I have called and you refused,
Have stretched out my hand and no one heeded,

And because you have ignored all my counsel

And would have none of my reproof,

I also will laugh at your calamity;

I will mock when panic strikes you,

When panic strikes you like a storm,

And your calamity comes like a whirlwind,

When distress and anguish come upon you.

Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer,

They will seek me diligently, but will not find me.

Because they hated knowledge

and did not choose the fear of the Lord,

Would have none of my counsel, and despised all my reproof,

Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way and be sated with their
own devices.

For waywardness kills the simple,

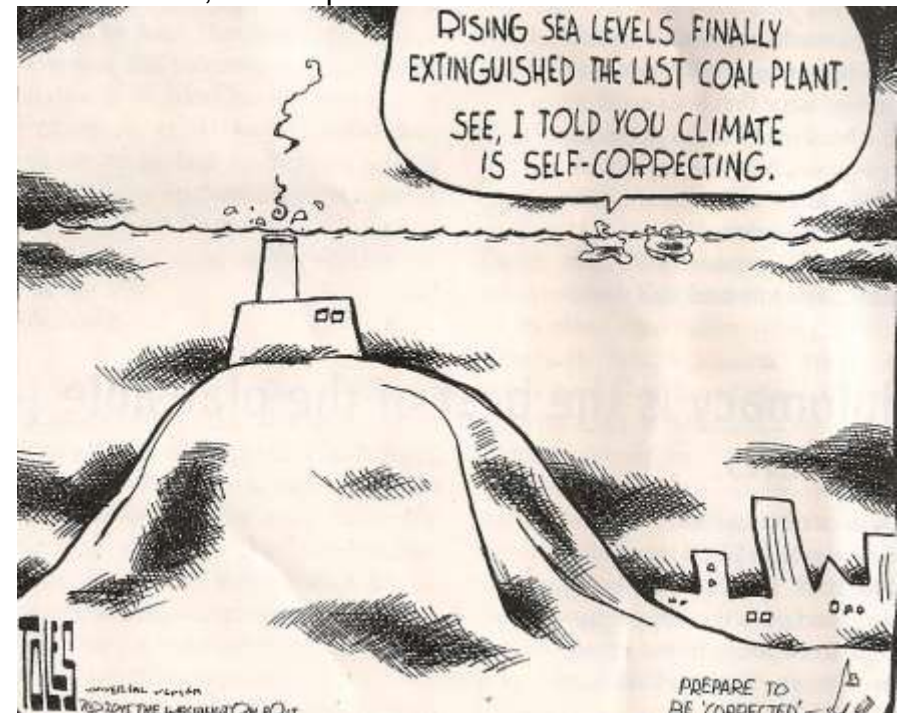
And those who listen to me will be secure

And will live at ease, without dread of disaster.”

Environmental Justice emerged as a concept in the United States in the early 1980's. The term has two distinct uses. The first and more common usage describes a social movement in the United States whose focus is on the fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. Second, it is an interdisciplinary body of social science literature that includes (but is not limited to) theories of the environment, theories of justice, environmental law and governance, environmental policy and planning, development, sustainability, and political ecology.

“Becoming Eco-Justice Activists”

In a recent Late Night TV interview, Stephen Colbert asked Elon Musk how he planned to make the planet Mars inhabitable for humans. In a serious, no-nonsense way he simply replied: ‘We’ll do just what we do here on earth---emit carbon into the atmosphere.’ For years, as CEO of Tesla and founder of Solar City, the earth activist has been trying to clean up the air and to reduce our use of and dependence on fossil fuels. What do you think? Is halting climate change an urgent and priority claiming issue in his mind? Does he fear the truth of this cartoon by Toles entitled, ‘Be Prepared to Be Corrected.’



Be prepared to be corrected. Long before eco-justice activists emerged in the U.S. and United Nation leaders decided to convene for Climate Change Conferences, down to earth people prepared themselves for correction by listening to the wisdom of Mother Earth. In the wisdom sayings from the scriptures today we find that Jesus' forebears in faith taught that;

... (Wisdom) is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness.

Wisdom reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other and she orders all things well (Wisdom 7:26, 8:1).

One of my favorite hymns of faith from the UCC tradition that opens our eyes for correction is “God Marked a Line and Told the Sea.” Through its verse we can deepen our trust in God our Creator who orders all things well for the purpose of sustaining life on earth.

God marked a line and told the sea its surging tides and waves were free to travel up the sloping strand but not to overtake the land.

God set one limit in the glade where tempting, fruited branches swayed. And that first limit stands behind the limits that the law defined.

The line, the limit, and the law are patterns meant to help us draw A bound between what life requires and all the things our heart desires.

But, discontent with finite powers, we reach to take what is not ours And then defend our claim by force and swerve from life’s intended course.

We are not free when we’re confined to every wish that sweeps the mind. But free when freely we accept the sacred bounds that must be kept.

“It was written”, wrote Thomas Troeger, “as a polemic poem to counter spurious ideas of freedom as undisciplined license, and to affirm how the profoundest liberty involves a sense of boundaries and structure.”

Be prepared to be corrected. A few weeks ago, Pope Francis issued an encyclical, ‘On Care For Our Common Home.’ In his 184 page letter he named three climate change denials that freeze our modern minds into inaction.

Climate change is real and it’s getting worse;
Human beings are a major contributor to climate change;
Climate change disproportionately affects the poor.

Pope Francis encyclical letter is his faithful, heart-inspired appeal to practicing Catholics in his flock . . . to become eco-justice activists . . . whose actions are informed by and grounded in trust in God: Creator, Christ, Spirit. As a ‘want-a-be’ better eco-justice activist myself, I like the way in which he prepared the faithful for correction by starting his mind changing, heart inspiring letter with Praise of Earth and call to confession.

1. “Laudato si’, mi’ Signore” ----“Praise be to you, my Lord”. In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs.

2. This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (Romans 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.

In closing, with Rev. Troeger and Pope Francis let us pray: Creator God, help us as individuals and as church, to cherish and take good care of the home you have made for us and every earthly thing that lives and moves and has its being in You. Amen.