Pastor Jamie's Sermon

Good Shepherd Church, August 30, 2026
"Care for Creation: Climate Action"

Young at Heart Message

Today we are continuing our sermon series on Care for Creation by talking about the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal of taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

From the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, "climate change presents the single biggest threat to development, and its widespread, unprecedented impacts disproportionately burden the poorest and most vulnerable. Urgent action to combat climate change and minimize its disruptions is integral to the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals."

How many of us here have smoke detectors or fire alarms systems of some kind in our homes?

Of course, we all do – or at least, we all should.

Why do we have these in homes and other public buildings?

Well, because they are warning systems.

If a smoke detector goes off in your home, you know that most likely, one of three things is going on:

1. Probably the most likely reason a smoke detector is going off is because the battery needs to be replaced.

2. Or, perhaps you've burned supper and smoke is inconveniently billowing out of your stove.

3. And of course, most worrisome is that there is an actual fire somewhere in your home.

A smoke detector or fire alarm serves as a warning in all of these cases. It is, in essence, a call to action.

In order to get the noise to stop, you need to either:

1. Replace the battery.

2. Remove the smoke by opening windows or fanning the smoke away from the detector.

3. Put out the fire.

If you do not do these things, the noise will not stop.

And, in some cases, if you do nothing, the situation could get quite a bit worse.

If you don't take the burning supper out of the oven, it could go from smoke to fire and you'd have a much bigger problem on your hands.

Likewise, if you don't put out the fire, or get out of the home, your life could be in danger.

But, there are very few of us who would do nothing at all if the smoke detector went off in our homes.

At the very least, the sound is annoying so we want to stop it as soon as possible.

And, at worst, it could mean our lives are in danger, so we want to ensure the safety of ourselves and our families.

But doing nothing is not a viable or wise option.

Let me share an example with you. This example is about a carbon monoxide detector and not a smoke detector, but the example is similar.

I once rented a beautiful old farm house from a family.

One night, I heard the tell-tale beeping of a detector going off somewhere in the house.

Of course, when something like that wakes you in the middle of the night, you are always a little disoriented at first.

So, I couldn't tell where the beeping was coming from.

This beeping was also different from the single short chirp of a low battery warning.

It would beep as though it was going off, and then it would stop. It might start again briefly, but then it would stop again.

Eventually, the beeping stopped and I couldn't figure out where the sound had been coming from, so I went back to sleep.

The next night, the same thing happened again.

This time, I was a little more prepared to investigate.

But again, before I could figure out which detector was going off, the alert stopped again.

This was getting weird.

The third night, the alert started and did not stop.

I finally figured out where the sound was coming from. And this time, because it wasn't stopping and because it was the third night in a row this had happened, I decided I needed to call the fire department.

It was the detector in the basement, directly across from the furnace.

So, finally, the warning system got me out of the house.

It was a very cold night in Wisconsin, so I started my car, and myself - and four dogs - waited there for the fire department to show up.

It was about 3:00am, and this was a volunteer fire department in a small town where I owned a small business.

So, it was bad enough that this alarm woke me up, but it was extra embarrassing to have the fire department see me in my pajamas!

And, of course, by the time they arrived, the detector was quiet.

To my humiliation, they found absolutely nothing to be concerned about.

So, I apologized and I swore up and down that the alarm had gone off for three nights in a row.

They all assured me they would rather I call than not heed the warning, and that's why they do what they do – to keep people safe.

But I was still annoyed at this point, and began to wonder what exactly was going on here.

The next day, the landowners came to inspect.

And, they found in the chimney a dead owl. It had been preventing proper ventilation, so occasionally a shot of carbon monoxide would hit the detector, causing it to alert.

But, the point in sharing this story is that these warning systems exist for a reason, and if we don't heed them, we could end up in a much worse situation.

If we had not found the cause of the issue, it could have caused worse problems, including a potential fire in the chimney eventually.

The Message

Warning systems are an important part of keeping people, animals, buildings, and the environment (among other things) safe and secure.

If we ignore warnings long enough, something much worse may eventually happen.

Now, the Book of Revelation is a confusing and difficult book to understand.

And today's sermon isn't intended to explain every aspect of this book.

We would not have enough time in today's message for this.

But the passage we heard today describes four angels blowing trumpets that send huge (and scary) warnings to earth.

The first trumpet causes hail and fire to fall from the sky, burning up 1/3 of the trees and green plants.

The second trumpet caused 1/3 of the sea to turn to blood, killed 1/3 of the sea creatures, and destroyed 1/3 of the ships on the sea.

The third trumpet caused a star to fall from heaven, turning 1/3 of the water bitter and undrinkable.

And the fourth trumpet caused 1/3 of the sun, moon, and stars to go out so that there was 1/3 as much light as before.

Just like the smoke detectors in our homes are a warning system that tell us to pay attention to something, these trumpets similarly invite us to pay attention.

Essentially, the warning here is a call to action – an invitation from God to "wake up! Turn back to Me – I will keep you safe from harm."

The symbolism in Revelation can be difficult to understand or explain, but if we see this passage *not* as some kind of predictor for the climate concerns we are seeing today, but instead as a call to take action – to heed the warning signs and do something before things get worse – we can see how these images in Revelation may feel similar to what we have been seeing in our world recently.

In the passage we heard from Job today, God is responding to Job's question about the nature of God.

And God's answer seems to indicate that perhaps humanity is not the centre of the natural world.

Instead, there is a sense that the world was not created *for us*. Rather, *we* were created to *care for the world*.

There is a difference here between these two things.

Thinking that the world was created *for us* puts us at the centre of things. It makes us feel entitled to use natural resources irresponsibly.

But if we think of ourselves as being created *to care for the world*, we can approach our role in the world very differently.

And we can approach our use of the resources the earth provides differently, too.

If we consider our role in the world in this way, we can see and know that what we do *to* the earth has consequences.

Care for creation should be intuitive, spiritual, and filled with respect and awe.

But often, our systems of production, consumption, and exploitation have blinded us to this.

Over and over in scripture we are asked to open our eyes.

This passage in Revelation is asking us to open our eyes.

And, it's not just opening our eyes that's important.

We are also being asked to take action. It is not enough to simply see.

Likewise, it is not enough to just ignore our smoke detectors when they go off.

We must take action when the warning system indicates there's a problem – even if we cannot see the root cause of the problem immediately.

The earth can only give us so many warning signs before something worse happens.

In Calgary, one of our favourite topics of conversation is… the weather.

And every time I talk with anyone about the summer weather, the smoke comes into the conversation.

And it seems that most everyone agrees that we can expect to be dealing with summer smoke each year going forward.

It is hard for us, as individuals, to do anything about this. We know that.

And yet, these recurring fires are a warning sign. One of many warning signs, in fact.

So how long do we allow these warning signs – these metaphorical smoke detectors – to wake us from our slumber before we begin to take action?

What action can we take?

The answer may not be completely clear to us right now. But God has given us beautiful minds and hearts to care, to think, to plan, and to listen.

And I want to reiterate Dr. Seuss's famous words from last week: "Unless someone *like you* cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

I received a call from someone in our congregation this week sharing some ideas they had about things we could do as a church to take small action steps.

And I am so grateful that some people are starting to think about these questions.

What I challenged that person to do was to start having conversations and sharing these ideas with all of you.

In fact, we have already made a recent change that will have an impact on the environment: we recently installed automatic faucets in the washrooms.

I immediately noticed the water savings the first time I used them.

If more of us start thinking these things through, there is likely much more we can do. We *all* have to care a whole awful lot.

And that is our call from Revelation.

We must be alert, aware, and mindful of Earth's warning systems.

And we are called by God to care for our world.

There is a song by Matthew West called "Do Something." In that song, he sings:

Well, I just couldn't bear the thought of
People living in poverty, children sold into slavery
The thought disgusted me
So, I shook my fist at Heaven
Said, "God, why don't You do something?"
God said, "I did, I created you"

God created us to take action.

So, may you leave here today with a passion in your heart.

May you leave here wondering about what actions we are being called to take.

May we continue to have conversations with one another about these important topics.

May we heed the warning signs and, rather than waiting for them to become louder and more persistent, may we continue to take the steps to do something now.

It is not an easy task, I know that. God knows that.

But God created us to care – a whole awful lot.

We have the power to begin to make things better.

May we live into our power, our care, and our concern for others and for our world. Amen.

Let us pray:

God of steadfast loving-kindness, you show mercy to generation after generation. Forgive us for the ways we have harmed your creation, and help us to see a way forward by guiding us to make wise choices both personally and as a community. Let our eyes and minds be open toward restoration and stewardship of this gift that you created and have called humanity to care for. Amen.