

Dear all, this painting 'Everyone who ever lived', is a painting of a photo that was never taken, but could have been. It is made using parts of two images that were made, at least ten years apart, representing views in November 1980 and in February 1990. The first image of the rings of Saturn, was made, sometime since 1980, to represent the view in November 1980, from the Voyager 1 spacecraft as it zipped past the planet on its planet hopping trip through and out of the Solar System. I use it for context, because we all know that Saturn is a long way from the Earth. And because of the ring system it is very recognizable. It is a public domain photorealistic illustration, of a kind in which NASA has become very expert. NASA clearly mark which are illustrations and which photos.

The original sky in the artwork was dominated by a representation of the sun and a whole panoply of lens-based artefacts, faithfully reproduced, plus some rather uninteresting stars. The other component of the painting was made using the same camera, ten years later, thirty eight minutes before that camera was turned off forever because there was nothing of further interest to see and because by turning the energy-draining camera off, the length of time which Voyager 1 could be kept functioning was extended by years. So many years that it is still, astonishingly, functioning, still keeping in touch and now telling about interstellar space. It is by some margin the farthest human artefact from Earth. It is fitting that its last photographs, suggested by astronomer Carl Sagan were a set of images of all of the planets which the camera could image 'The Solar System Family Portrait'. Since at that enormous distance, the area of sky occupied by the Earth was so small, less than a pixel across, nobody really expected it to work, but work it did.

Even that tiny light source emitted enough reflected light for the detector on Voyager 1 to pick up, and as the image exposure continued, one thing became very clear. There was a bright white sunbeam right across the camera, and in that sunbeam was the less than one pixel sized image of the Earth. As the incoming photons, one by one, were detected by the three colour detectors in the camera, gradually an excess of blue merged. Almost incredibly, from the enormous vastness of space, our little planet really is blue. Every human being ever born has been born on that blue mote in the vastness of space.

When God created, he created lavishly, abundantly. No wonder that Jesus says 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.' John 10:10, in the midst of a passage in which he compares himself to the good shepherd, willing to lay down his life for his sheep.

I paint so often of beauty and so often of abundant biodiversity. That is because all of that is intrinsic to this lovely, beautiful, gorgeous, glorious home which God made especially for us and for the other organisms which share it. Reluctantly, because I am fundamentally an optimist and don't like confrontation, I have to tell you that it is because of our foolishness all that beauty is in danger.

And look at that little blue pearl. Look at it because it is all that we have. The only thing that all of us can agree upon is that we live our lives on or very nearby, the Earth. Every single person who ever lived has lived on that little fleck in the sky. We have to look after it. In particular, we have to look after the people who have least. By looking after them, we automatically have to preserve creation, to end the climate crisis, to halt the biodiversity crash, and to deal with some of the things that make life particularly difficult for some of us.

There are billions of human beings carrying around debilitating, painful conditions that limit their lives in so many ways. Some of them are difficult to stop because they are so complex – motor neurone disease is an example of that. Some are difficult to cure because conventional medicine fails to accept their reality, and enduring Lyme disease is an example of that. It is extraordinary that doctors who have no difficulty acknowledging that syphilis endures in the body and gradually

damages and destroys and yet those same doctors will not accept that the closely related Lyme bacteria, spread by ticks, can also endure, can also damage over long time periods. And how can the life of people who live with motor neurone disease or Lyme disease or a hundred other under-resourced conditions truly be called abundant?

So when I talk of caring for the billions of poorest and most vulnerable people on Earth:

- I include those billions whose poverty is obvious, families with nothing, children dying from malnutrition, people freezing to death in doorways, millions, soon billions, walking across continents in hope.
- I include those billions of women who live with daily injustice, dominated by physically stronger misogynists and institutionally patriarchal bullies.
- I include those billions of us living with eminently curable conditions which still remain incurable for lack of real will, real resource and real belief.
- I include those billions of people of colour, or from certain races, Jewish, Roma or from certain castes, from Dalit to Cagot or following certain religions. All those people still subjected to apartheid and racism, and are still regarded widely and wrongly as inferior, subhuman, animals... really? Sir Lewis Hamilton, 7 times F1 world champion, Black, Christian... really? Albert Einstein, innovative mathematician and physicist, German, Migrant to USA, Jewish Really? Sir Mo Farah, greatest track athlete ever with 10 gold medals, Trafficked from Somalia to the UK, Black Muslim ... really? Barack Obama, successful Civil Rights Lawyer and 44th US President, born Hawaii, raised Indonesia and US, Black, adult convert to Christianity ... really? The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, UK Prime Minister, Born UK, parents of Indian descent migrated from East Africa in 1960s, Hindu ... really? inferior, subhuman, animals... really?
- I include those people subjected to modern slavery, as widespread and pernicious now as at any time in history.
- I include those billions of people with disabilities still treated uncompassionately and unjustly in every country in the world, people who are innumerate, illiterate, live with sensory impairment or other physical disabilities, congenital or inherited or idiopathic conditions. Just try travelling with a powerchair in our supposedly civilised country.
- I include the billions of people subjected to prejudice, hatred, fear, imprisonment, reeducation, simply because of their sexuality or mismatch between societal expectations and their own experience of living inside their own body
- And finally I include all those people who are lonely, excluded from society by ignorance or fear, those who grieve without support or are excluded simply for failing to meet others' expectations about their recovery from bereavement, and anyone subjected to prejudice, exclusion or lack of compassion for any other reason that I have omitted.

Look at the little blue dot. All we have to do is look after it properly. How can it possibly be so hard? It is not even a very big world and yet we struggle to keep it in good shape. We struggle to look after all of those vulnerable people and all those people trapped in poverty, and in so failing, we allow the beauty of creation to be sullied with 370 million tonnes a year of plastic and we allow over 1500 coal fired power stations still to operate, gushing forth billions of tonnes of carbon dioxide and acidic sulfur and nitrogen oxides.

We arm entire nations and then wonder why people walk into schools and shoot children and teachers. We are willing to clap health service workers for their efforts in the pandemic but unwilling to pay more tax to allow them a decent standard of living. We prosecute people for trivial

abuses of the benefit system and yet admire the very rich for 'cleverly' avoiding our taxes by sending their money to the Cayman Islands. If they like the Cayman Islands that much perhaps they should follow their money and go live there.

There are so many ways in which we are currently allowing the rich and powerful people to fail in their responsibility to use their wealth and power to protect beautiful planet Earth and care compassionately those who need caring for. You may well look at that list and those paragraphs and think 'that is a bit radical.'

Of course it is radical! Have you read the Gospels recently? Jesus did not prat about. The Gospel Good News is a radical agenda for change. It is anti-patriarchy, anti-racism, anti-injustice and it is full of compassion for those with least and for those who are carrying the greatest burdens. And the writings of Paul, Peter, James, Jude and John are no less radical. They use words like love lavishly (261 times in the NIV New Testament), joy (90 times in the Psalms and Isaiah alone, 68 times in the NT) save/salvation 132 and forgive 62 times in the NT. If you do not believe that the New Testament is radical, go and read the four Gospels, then read them again, and then come back and tell me I am wrong.

We all need to pull together, 8 billion people need to pull in the same direction because that little pale blue dot in the vastness of space and time is all that we have. There is no planet b. There is only one Earth. We live on it and we owe to the future to pray, pray, pray, and to work compassionately to be a force for good in society.

We need to leave the place better than we found it. I look at my lifetime and the changes that have happened in my lifetime and I do not honestly think that I can say that overall the state of planet Earth is better now than it was 64 years ago. Manifestly there have been improvements, but in so many ways the opportunities to make things better have simply not been gasped.

Well, better late than never. Pray, grasp those opportunities to make things better, pray some more, and love with compassion, your neighbour and your enemy, because this is what Jesus asks us to do. And when you think it is all too hard, step back for a moment, and look at the pale blue dot. It is tiny. It is not too hard. It is never too hard. Jesus never asks us to do that which is too hard, Jesus always gives us the grace to do those things that he wants us to do. Always. Love, Grace and Peace from Rick