

Archbishop of Canterbury: Keynote Address at Lambeth Conference



.. in which he calls the Church to look outwards to the needs of the 21st Century world.

29/07/2022

My prayer for this Conference is very simple.

It is that everyone here, whoever you are, wherever you've come from - observer, steward, ecumenical guests, bishop, spouse, - whatever hopes and fears you may bring with you, may leave with your heart full of desire for friendship with Jesus Christ.

For to desire Jesus is to desire God. To desire Jesus is to desire to be filled with love for God and, by God, love for His people and love for His word.

Whatever else we do over the next two weeks, the one thing that is essential is that we learn again to hunger and thirst for God. And the reason I say this is because, as bishops, there is so much to do and often it is God who is pushed aside, by circumstances, by pressures.

As 1 Peter says: "Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls: (1 Peter 1: 8-9)

Because of the love of Jesus and for no other reason we are being saved.

Peter writes to churches that hunger and thirst for God, that do rejoice with indescribable joy. And yet they experience suffering. Many - perhaps most - come here from places of suffering. Many, perhaps most of the people here, certainly a majority, come from places of suffering. I know that. I've had the privilege of visiting many of them with Caroline. Some may be sitting here this evening, feeling that they are failing in their calling. Or they may come doubting God and his love. Some may come with hidden sins of which they are deeply ashamed. Peter, around whose letter we are gathering, knew fear and failure, sin and questioning.

Yet Jesus Christ stands among us now, looks into my heart and your heart, and offers to bear our burdens, to renew our hopes and faith, forgive our sins and feed us with heavenly food of word and sacrament. He looks deeply into each of us, and there is nothing he does not know. He looks deeply into each of us and love us. So, if you come with inner doubts, inner fears, inner shames, talk to the chaplains, confess, be prayed for, be anointed, receive renewal of your hearts and your love for Jesus Christ.

Many of us come aware of what Peter calls the roaring lions; the sense - and often reality - of attack, hostility, danger and uncertainty.

That is the main subject of this address. Although we can know joy and love from Jesus Christ, the distractions and realities of our fallen world - the fears, apprehensions, pressures, and burdens - can make the lions seem bigger and bigger and bigger, and more important and more powerful than the great and freely given love of God which we seek, desire, long for, and can find in these days together and be changed, our whole Communion changed, by finding.

Archbishop Jackson Ole Sapit, the Archbishop of Kenya told me once - he's a Maasai, he knows a lot about lions - that lions roar when they search for prey or when they seek to drive prey into a trap. But when they are really close and they are stalking you, they are silent.

As shepherds, the bishops, overseers of God's flock, we are commanded to be aware of the roaring lions in order to keep our flocks safe. Sometimes that's easy. At other times the lions are roaring so loudly that we see and hear nothing but danger all around us.

In these three Presidential addresses, I shall look first at God's world, then at God's church, and then at the vocation we have, as bishops and bishops spouses, of leading God's church when we remember that God's church does not exist for us, it exists for the salvation of the world.

Let me say first something about the detailed agenda for this Lambeth Conference.

For many years, churches, Provinces and Dioceses have continued to work marvellously in their own areas. But too often the Anglican Communion has been known best - where it is known at all as a Communion - for looking inwards and struggling with its own disagreements.

Those questions, especially on the Christian and Anglican approach to human identity and sexuality, will not be solved at this Conference. However, my prayer is that, while we are aware of them because they really matter, we turn as a Communion outwards to the entirety of the world that God loves so much that God gave his only Son to die for the world's salvation.

We must look outwards because we meet in these comfortable surroundings, we meet, as most of you know better than me, at a time of world crisis. But crises are moments when our cries rise to God and God hears them. God heard the cry of the enslaved Hebrews. God rescued Israel under the Judges. God brought them back from exile. God supremely has given us a new birth - we are born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and, as Peter says, into an inheritance, a future possession, that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (I Peter 1: 3-4).

In times of crisis, as we all know - personal crisis and world crisis - we depend on God's power, not our own power. And then we find that we can act. Whatever the crisis may be for you - whether it may be in your diocese or your province, whether it's internal to the church or external to the world, this Conference is aimed at calling us to a fresh start of being the church that God calls us into being, of being involved in the mission, the *Missio Dei*, the mission that God prepares and sends us into.

The world crisis is complicated. It is a crisis of economics, of war and savagery, of climate change, of international relations and of culture and belief. It is no surprise, therefore, that for so many of us in so many places and in so many ways, that this is a moment of decision. Because crises do not offer you the opportunity of not making a choice. Not to choose is to choose.

As Christians, we believe in a fallen world, where sin and self-seeking, our rebellion against God, opens the way to all the many evils that surround us and always have surrounded us. Crises in both world and church will be normal, because wherever there are human beings, there is sin, and crises are always fuelled by sin.

For those here who came in 2008, since then, in the last fourteen years, we have seen since then the impact of the collapse of western banking system, the end of globalisation of trade, Covid-19, the catastrophe that we are facing and particularly in the global south over world food prices and availability, the biggest crisis in food availability in over half a century - a major war involving a nuclear armed power - as well as hundreds of other conflicts impacting so many of us here; and with growing force and spread, we are affected by climate change.

On top of those global changes, there have been great roaring of lions in so many of our own countries. Wars, persecution, civil disorder, poverty have struck hardest at the weakest and the poorest in the flock, killing thousands who have put their trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

In many parts of the world, especially those of the global north, culture is also changing immensely rapidly. What are so often called culture wars - the rejection of many of the old ways of settling belief, faith or ethics - find their roots in philosophical changes in the understanding of identity and

of what it is to be human. The shock waves of these changes are felt around the world and across the Communion.

Some of the change is good. With most young people in this country, in the global north, there is a passionate commitment that did not exist with what were called the 'baby boomers', people of my age that were born after the war, to justice, to equality, to freedom and not self-seeking so much. There is a deep hatred of hypocrisy -and they see it too much in the church - and there is a prizing, a delight of integrity. There is a real commitment to the most vulnerable.

There is genuine energy around the world, especially by people under thirty, in seeking to ensure that the planet on which we live avoids climate disaster in the next 20, 50, 100 years. These crises, if we look at them as Christians, are in many ways God giving us our choices; that is always how judgement is found - God gives us what we want - and holding a plumbline against us as we have been and against our societies.

There is nothing unusual about crises. For those who are faithful they call us to deeper discipleship, to new directions of obedience and holiness. They transform us and we transform the world around us. That is the aim. But the church that turns inwards, that fails to hear the roaring of the lions, is going to fail.

Look back in Church history. In the 5th Century, North Africa was the heart of world Christianity. 200 years later it was more or less gone, the church almost wiped out. One of the most recent provinces in the Anglican Communion covers north Africa, but there are missionary dioceses there and very, very few indigenous churches. This could happen anywhere in the world today if we ignore the lions, where the shepherds pay no attention to the lions, because they've turned their backs on the flocks, looked at each other and are involved in mutual dispute.

But should we not be focused on our inner differences, especially on those of sexuality? Well, they do matter greatly, they are at the heart of people's understanding of who they are, as Christians, as human beings. We shall look at them both in the context of the Call on Human Dignity. We'll look at them again in the second Presidential Address, and in the context of our studies of 1 Peter. But they are not everything.

We cannot wait until everything is fixed to be God's church FOR God's world, because that wait will go on longer than the wait for Jesus to return. And I have to say from the deepest point of my heart, I believe we will not quickly be forgiven if this is another gathering which focuses mainly on ourselves.

To someone without food, or caught up in war, or persecuted, or suffering from intense poverty, their daily struggle is uppermost in their minds. They want a church that stands with them.

As shepherds we must, as Pope Francis said, "smell of the sheep" because we are among them. We must tend to their wounds, guide them to water, protect them from the lions. Unless we understand what is happening in the world, we cannot prepare for the opportunities or the threats it brings. We cannot teach the people of God properly how to face the crises they experience.

So, in the rest of this address I will look at the near and further future, and speak of some of the roars that reverberate around the world. There is a new roar. The roar of science and technology. Professor Andrew Briggs and his colleagues, he's one of the senior professors in the sciences at Oxford and the bishop of Oxford, Stephen Croft who is sitting right there, has said that the scientific world believes that the next 40 years are expected to see the greatest changes in science and technology in the shortest period that has ever happened in human history.

In the biological and medical sciences we are already seeing extraordinary advances in the treatment of diseases from cancer to malaria. The Covid-19 vaccine was developed in less than 18 months. 20 years ago it would have taken a decade. We already have more power in our phones than NASA had to send astronauts to the moon. Self-driving cars are already a reality. I think our grandchildren or great grandchildren will say 'you had to sit something called a driving test? Didn't the car drive?' We'll say

‘no, in those days, I had to drive’ and they will look with fear and horror at the terrible barbarity of the past.;

With Artificial Intelligence, machines are already producing conversations that sound convincingly ‘human’. At what point do we say they are thinking for themselves and have a soul? Wars are now won and lost because of drones and autonomous weapons. Robotics is advancing rapidly. The list is endless. And these changes give humanity, the whole global population, two possible ways to go.

First, led by churches that are engaged with science and technology we learn as the church, as God’s people and around the world, to give thanks to the Lord who gives us brains to think with and scientific advance to help change lives. In this pathway, this wonderful way, the benefits of knowledge are shared. The ethical questions are thought through. Skills in crop change are spread throughout the world so that countries affected by global warming can still feed their populations. Clean water is made available to countries suffering from drought, and diseases that cause so much suffering and death are eradicated. Drones and good surveillance are used to stop wars, stop bandits, stop poaching and to warn of natural disasters.

The second is the path of power and wealth. The rich gain the benefits of the new technologies and science and they do as they choose. The poor are shut out of the gains and live as they can. The wealthy have choice, the poor suffer the consequences.

There are many bishops here from Sudan. In the 1890s, at the Battle of Omdurman just outside Khartoum, a small British force won, not because they were braver, although they were outnumbered six to one, but because they had machine guns and their enemies had spears and muskets. That difference will be as nothing to the clash of forces where one army fights with automatic weapons controlled from their homeland by people sitting in offices and the others with rifles and artillery face fearless and merciless machines. The militias that gain access to such weapons will sweep to power. Competing power groups will use the supply of weapons to wage proxy wars.

Medicine will be no better in this path. We know that rich countries, to our eternal shame, failed to share the advantages of the Covid vaccine. That will be repeated, in this bad path, with so many diseases, leaving the poor to live short lives serving the powerful. Empires of territory will not re-emerge, I hope, but Empires of Finance and Economy, Scientific and Technological power will. The gifts of God that are offered to the world in these areas will, in this path, be seized for personal and powerful advantage.

That is why we are having a Call to support the creation of a fully funded global Communion network on Science and Technology. So that our schools - one of the greatest things we do is education - our schools and universities will become centres in every country represented here tonight the new knowledge, so we will be those in societies who are scientifically thoughtful, deeply Christian, profoundly worshipping and contributing well to ethical debate.

Above all we will be those who see the wonders of the world of technology and science that are the gift of God and will use them for God’s Glory, and for the good of all the earth.

A church that refuses to or is unable to engage in these areas, my dear sisters and brothers, will have nothing to say to a world whose future is being decided by changes of science and technology.

This lion, I don’t think he’s a real ‘Peter’ lion. Because this lion can be transformed. He can be domesticated and made to serve.

But there’s another even bigger roar. Climate change.

In 1945, at the end of one of the most terrible world wars in human history, there were 25 million refugees. Today, there are around 90 million. The impact of climate change, according to the International Panel on Climate Change, whose chairman gave a speech to religious leaders gathered by the Pope with myself and the Patriarch in Constantinople - we gathered in Rome with religious leaders representing over 80% of the world’s population. The president of the Panel on Climate

Change said that by 2050, thirty years away or soon after, there will be not 25 million, not 90 million people displaced, refugees of climate change, but somewhere between 800 million and 1.2 billion. Most of them will come from countries present here.

Migration means people movements to other areas. Huge people movement causes huge conflict. Climate change is seen too often as a matter of future concern for people in this country, though the heatwave we've just had of 40 degrees in London is changing minds, but for those in the tropical areas and low lying countries, you do not need telling that climate change is already a matter of life and death. It will become much more threatening. John Kerry the US Secretary responsible for climate change negotiations said on the BBC earlier this week, not only is it an existential question, a question of life or death. He said on the basis of what is happening at the moment, we are not looking at 1.5 degrees, but 2.5 to 3.2, which takes us well past the worst assumptions. That kind of climate change is not peripheral, it's not on the edges, it is the fuel, the food, for the 4 Horses of the apocalypse.

It is also resolvable by campaigning, by science, so the answers will again be found largely in science and technology. For example, every year I burden the people in this country on New Year's day by doing a five minute speech on the BBC on some subject or other. You can tell when it's happening because everyone turns the telly off and puts the kettle on to avoid listening to me. We do them somewhere interesting every year - it's great fun to do, less fun to listen to. This year I went to Kew Gardens, where they have found a coffee plant that can flourish at higher temperatures than any other coffee plant currently being grown. That will enable farmers to produce climate resilient crops, protecting their livelihoods and the global supply chain and the economics of their countries.

Are we capable of campaigning as a Communion in this area? Are we found in leading and influencing. We did last year but are we going to go on? Because our flocks depend on it, or they will not eat. As those who lead the flocks we be those who ensure that the nations of the world face their responsibilities squarely and act decisively. I point you to the very good Call on the Environment and Sustainable Development to be discussed later.

This lion cannot be domesticated and tamed to serve. It can only be killed.

And then there are the roars that go on at the moment, religious extremism, war and conflict. There are many other roars we are deeply and tragically familiar with.

The attacks on the church from religious extremists continue all over the world. Since we last met in 2008, thousands of Anglicans have lost their lives as martyrs.

Religious extremism is a disease of every world faiths. It is not basically theological, it's sociological. It's people who are frightened by the changes of the world and they turn inwards. In every major global faith it has the same characteristics: a small group who are violent and who seek to find a place of false security inside the walls of their faith, hiding from the challenges of the modern world.

That is not biblical Christianity. Rather we venture out, clad in the armour of God, to 'proclaim the wonderful works of him who brought us out of darkness into his marvellous light'. These roars might cause us to hide, fear-filled from the realities of the world, but the Anglican theological method, based above all in scripture, rooted in scripture, guided by tradition and reason, opens us to the Holy Spirit's promptings to be engaged, to go out.

We only have to look around this room - look at your neighbours and you will see those who live amidst war and Government oppression. One of the themes of this Conference is reconciliation. Christians have received reconciliation lavishly, by the pouring out of the blood of God's only son and we are called to be reconciled reconcilers, and many here are. Wars destroy churches, the damage human beings in every way. They make victims of the poorest and least strong.

And then there's economic injustice & poverty. It's not only greater than it has ever been but also more obvious. A person in a slum in Nairobi can go to an Internet café and look at the shops of

Shanghai or Mumbai or London, but they can't go there. The apparent but deceitful temporal treasures of wealth are visible to all, but unreachable for most.

The world economies are joined up financially, so it has never been easier for the rich and the corrupt to hide their money in tax havens or to launder money in the great markets of the world. Wealth has come from the very methods that caused climate change, the despoliation of natural resources. The poorest countries are used for their resources and are then discarded. The only ones who prosper are those in those countries who get a share from corruption.

There are many exceptions, of course, let's not be too down: many wealthy people who are incredibly generous, often moved by the spirit of God in Christ. But they are exceptions. A world of privileged fortresses of comfort cannot exist in stability with a world of want and suffering. It is not the way of the Kingdom of God.

Inequalities lead people into sin. Banditry, theft, corruption, become normalised. I remember in Nigeria being held overnight by one of the militia leaders in the Delta. I'd gone to see him as part of a reconciliation project and I had a safe conduct, I was with a local leader. And when we got there he was drunk and drugged, and we were several hours in a boat form anywhere safe. He said 'take these people out and kill them', and my local colleague persuaded him this was a bad idea. So he said 'okay take him to the hotel', where we were locked in and guarded and he said 'I'll decide whether or not to kill you in the morning.'

In the morning he was sober. He was a polite and hospitable man with a gun, showing us around the town. And as we turned the corner, on one horizon was an oil company platform in the marshes pumping oil for a major company. I could see helicopters flying in and out, lights from good generators. I am sure they had excellent air conditioning, excellent medicine and excellent food and water. Around me, as I stood next to this man, children played in the sewage filled streets.

The militia leader was a very bad man, a killer. But I wondered as I went home, if I had grown up in his town, seeing that flow station, would I have been different?

Inequalities lead us to terrible questions and we as Christians are those who have received grace from God. We are called to be those who overflow with grace in the world that God made. Peter says 'be aware' of the lions; but we are not to fear, for all the lions defeated by the crucified Christ.

My last lion is a hidden one. It comes stealthily. Its bite is so gentle that we are not even aware always that we are inside its jaws. But it is as much a killer of the sheep, a destroyer of the flocks, as any other. It is the culture around us that seeks to construct itself without God.

Whether, in this country, it is the loss of even the memory of Christianity amongst so many of the youth of the West, or the acceptance of the violence of war and child soldiers, or violence against women in conflict, or the access to pornography around the world, the culture that spreads more and more in the world is opposed to the Kingdom of God.

Culture consumes us so cleverly that we do wrong without even being aware of it. One of the most powerful experiences I've had in many years was this April - I was in Canada at the invitation of the Anglican of Canada there, to visit Residential school survivors and to bring an apology for the terrible deeds of the Church of England before the Anglican Church of Canada existed. The residential schools were set up to take the children of First Nations, indigenous people, to take them, steal them, kidnap them away from their homes and ensure that they lost the culture of their people. By eliminating their language, it was hoped that they would forget their culture. Terrible acts were done at the request of the Canadian Government by churches. The Pope has been there this week apologising for the work of the Roman Catholic Churches. In those schools there was abuse, cruelty and loss. Children died and were buried unmarked, their parents never told. Brothers and sister were separated.

That is terrible. From the age of three or five. What is worse, and shakes me to this day, is that through that period, no leading Christians, no archbishops, stood up and said 'this is not Christ'.

They accepted the cultural presupposition that some human beings were more civilised, were better and had a right to do these things. That has been the history of the Church in many times and places as so many of us know. It is always a cause for shame and an urgent call on all Christians and on our Communion to repentance and a commitment to justice and reparation.

To conclude - as pastors we are called, all of us, to be those who understand the lions. We meet together because we have different views of what a lion is.

Let me tell you a story.

A group of people, all blind, went out walking one day along paths they knew well. What they did not know was that a large lion had eaten and then fallen asleep in the middle of their path. As they got close they could hear breathing.

“What is it?” they asked. One found its coat and said “it is very warm and cuddly. It will keep me warm on cold nights.”

Another found its tail, “I can use this to keep the flies away”. A third found its mouth. “I think it is very dangerous and is carrying sharp knives”.

They were all right and they were all wrong. None knew the whole story. But then the lion awoke and devoured them all.

We are shepherds and pastors, co-workers with Peter and the apostles. In our vastly different circumstances we all hear lions. Some are common to us all. Some are prowling only in one Province. Some are in parts of the world but not others. But they are all lions. We may not see them clearly, but we can, together, grow in capacity to deal with them.

“God so loved the world. ...” begins John 3:16.

That is because it is God’s world. It may reject its creator, it may ignore its Saviour. But let us begin this conference with a promise of honesty and love that enables and supports each other to hear the lions, and understand them.

I know within the Anglican Communion, let me tell you I know, that there are many theories of conspiracy and plots and plans, and I would say to you that this Conference, I am not going to deceive you, or say something I don’t believe, or try and persuade you of anything on any of the Calls, because its advantageous or pushes problems onto my successor in whatever time that comes. And I will be honest, despite being British - come on, how many of you do not use the phrase, from the colonial era, that the British practise divide and rule? I’m not going to do that. I won’t divide and I don’t rule.

But we must, as God’s shepherds hear the lions, understand them and be a global church that will face and defeat, in the power of Christ -not by power, not by might, but by God’s powerful spirit - their empty and powerless threats, because at the end, for every one of us here and every one in the flock, and every one in the world, Christ is the conqueror, redeemer and saviour of all.