

Time to Deliver

Church talk script

2022

Thank you for downloading our guide to talking about climate change and justice at church.

Whether you've only got time for a quick announcement, or you've got a whole sermon slot, you can help people understand the climate emergency and be inspired to put their love for God and our global neighbours into action. We've also made some slides to go with these talks, as well as extra resources for children's talks. You can download these on our website at:

tearfund.org/timetodeliverchurchresources

Please email us at campaigns@tearfund.org at least two weeks before you speak at your church so we can post you some action cards and pray for you as you prepare. Thank you for supporting the campaign and inviting others to get on board too!

tearfund

Short announcement

If you've only got time for a short announcement, here are our top tips and an example of what you could say.

- 1 If some of your church will be joining online, make sure someone shares the link in the chat or video description: 'Add your voice here: tearfund.org/climate'
- 2 Have a basket at the back for people to put their action cards in at the end.
- 3 If you usually have a time of corporate prayer in your service, you could tie things together by sharing the news of drought in Ethiopia and Kenya with the person leading prayers that week. We also have lots of other prayer resources on our website, which might be useful: tearfund.org/PrayForClimate

Here's how we might give an announcement, to help you write yours:

[Slide 1]

Back in 2009, Tearfund and other organisations ran a campaign that resulted in the UK Prime Minister and leaders of other richer countries promising to collectively provide 100 billion dollars of financial support to lower-income countries each year. This was to help them adapt to the devastating impacts of climate change and invest in a sustainable future. It was a great moment, and provided hope to millions already facing the worst of the climate crisis.

But that money which was promised still hasn't been fully delivered all these years later, and since then the impacts of the climate crisis on people living in poverty have only got worse.

Right now across the Horn of Africa,¹ including Ethiopia and Kenya, people are experiencing the driest conditions and hottest temperatures since current record-keeping began. For three rainy seasons in a row, they've had little to no rain, and now more than 20 million people are facing acute water shortages and are on the brink of severe hunger. Crops are withering and dead livestock lie by the roadside. And in many poorer countries they are now having to divert money away from healthcare and education to address the impacts of climate change. All the while, they're watching the progress they've made to lift communities out of poverty being undone by bigger storms, floods and droughts.

Tearfund is asking us if we'll join them in speaking up about climate change this year, calling on world leaders to finally deliver on this promise to support those already living through the worst of climate change.

On your seats you should find a card, and if you open it up, you'll see there's space for you to add your details and sign their petition about this. It's so easy to do, but can make a big difference to help keep the pressure up.

Please would you sign that with me now? I'll give you a moment to start filling that out and then I'll pray. At the end of the service there will be a basket at the back for your completed cards so we can send them to Tearfund all together.

[Pause for 30 seconds, time yourself]

1: ReliefWeb (2022) '[On verge of record drought, East Africa grapples with new climate normal](#)'
National Geographic (2022) '[Historic drought looms for 20 million living in Horn of Africa](#)'

Lord, thank you for the work of Tearfund and the witness of the churches they work with around the world. Be with those already facing the devastating impacts of climate change. Would you support and sustain them through the droughts, floods and storms? We pray too for our leaders and government. Birth fresh compassion in them to see the suffering that is already happening, and to deliver on their promise to help. Amen

A sermon/main talk

Speaking in a sermon slot is a big deal. It's the main time in the week when your community comes together to learn about God and what it means to follow him. We want to honour that time, and offer you some great teaching content to help your community go deeper in their relationship with Jesus as you speak to them about climate change.

In the last couple of years, hundreds of churches all around the UK have included climate change in their talks. It's a vital topic for Christians to engage with, and it can help us learn more about discipleship, worship, God's justice and much more.

We've broken the talk into three parts, which could be a helpful guide for writing talks of your own on climate change too:

1 The text

Start by rooting ourselves in the truth of God's word and unpacking the Bible passage for today.

2 Our context

From that place of revelation and understanding, consider the world we find ourselves in today and how the truth of this text could inform how we engage with the climate crisis.

3 Our response

Finish by moving from words to action. How do we apply this today and in the days to come?

Below is an example of a talk you might like to adapt. We've provided two readings for you to reflect on as you prepare. Please do adapt the talk for your church, but we hope the template below is a helpful example. We've also suggested a place in the talk where you might want to use a video instead of covering that part yourself. Finally, don't forget to download the accompanying slides from:

tearfund.org/climate

Readings

Luke 10:25–37

The story of the Good Samaritan

1 John 4:9–11,19

Loving one another

The climate crisis and the Samaritan

Our reading today is a familiar one, the story of the Good Samaritan – possibly the most famous story Jesus tells and one many of us will know.

But sometimes when we become familiar with a story, the power and challenge of Jesus' teaching, its relevance to our world today, and for each of our lives, can be diluted or lost. Today I hope we can look at this text in a different way, and unpack what Jesus' most famous story might be able to teach us about our response to the climate crisis.

In this profound conversation with an expert in the law, Jesus is asked, *'What must we do to inherit eternal life?'* His response is to describe what it looks like to love both God and neighbour in action, before declaring, *'Go and do likewise.'*

And this isn't a one-off. Eight chapters later in Luke's gospel, Jesus is asked the same question by a rich young ruler.

'Good teacher,' he asks in Luke 18, *'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'*

And what does Jesus say this time? *'Sell everything you have and give it to the poor.'*

Jesus knew this young ruler had followed so many of the Old Testament laws, but still had a deep love for money and possessions. And to love God in action meant to give it all away – not to just anyone, but specifically to the poor.

Both of these stories in Luke's gospel are consistent with Jesus' teaching elsewhere in the New Testament. In Matthew 25, Jesus tells a story of the coming of his kingdom on earth, and the people being sorted like sheep and goats. There's a lot to unpack in that passage – but for the purpose of today, I want us to notice one thing.

Jesus doesn't distinguish the sheep he welcomes and the goats he turns away by their church attendance, or obedience to specific religious laws. Listen to what he says to those he welcomes – the sheep – in Matthew 25:35–40:

[Slide 2]

"I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

'Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?"'

'The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

In answer to the question, ***What must I do to inherit eternal life?***, again and again Jesus says: Love me, love God and love your neighbour. Allow your love of God and neighbour to disrupt your life. Jesus says: Love me in action.

Of course there's a risk that we begin to think we need to earn our way to heaven, that God requires

us to earn his love – but that’s looking at these passages in the wrong way. There’s nothing we could do that would ever be enough to earn the abundance of love and grace which God gives to us so freely.

[Slide 3]

1 John 4 reminds us:

‘This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.’

Jesus’ challenge to those listening was to be so caught up in the abundance of God’s love and grace demonstrated on the cross, so lost in worship, that our lives are transformed from the inside out. God’s love changes everything, and in these stories in the gospels, Jesus says that love of God should lead us into a deep love for our neighbours near and far, those like us and those nothing like us.

[Choose which quote is most appropriate for your church context]

- 1 Dr Cornel West, the Christian philosopher, author and activist once said, ‘Justice is what love looks like in public.’
- 2 The theologian John Stott, reflecting on the story of the Good Samaritan, said: ‘There will be times when a person’s material need is so pressing that he would not be able to hear the gospel if we shared it with him. The man who fell among robbers needed above all else at that moment oil and bandages for his wounds, not evangelistic tracts in his pockets.’

Loving our neighbour in radical and generous ways, seeking justice and restoration for both their physical and spiritual wellbeing, is what our love for God looks like on the outside: that’s how people can recognise our love for God, and it’s how Jesus says he recognises our love too, when asked in Luke 10, Luke 18 or in Matthew 25.

Today, let us invite God to lead us into deeper love for him – and allow that love to transform our lives, leading us to the broken and to loving our neighbours in practical action. As it says in 1 John 4:19, we love because he first loved us.

So back to today’s passage of the Good Samaritan. Jesus is asked what we must do to inherit eternal life. He confirms: we must love.

Then in verse 29 we see the expert in the law ask a second question, ‘And who is my neighbour?’

Luke tells us this isn’t a genuine question: the expert in the law is trying to justify himself, to get himself off the hook. He thinks following Jesus shouldn’t cost him too much. And it is in response to *this* question, and the motivations behind it, that Jesus shares that most famous of stories.

An unidentifiable man is left for dead at the side of the road.

The priest and the Levite – two religious leaders – walk by on the other side of the road. Many people have theorised about their reasons: perhaps they were on the way to the temple and so were just obeying Old Testament law. If he was already dead, stopping to help would make them unclean.

Or perhaps they were worried that the robbers were still nearby, and stopping would put them in danger. Or maybe they thought that the man was a robber himself, playing as bait to catch those who were too compassionate.

Whatever the reasons, the priest and Levite chose not to be inconvenienced. They chose to stick to their own plans for the day, to not be disrupted or risk their own safety, cleanliness or comfort.

In a sermon on this passage, Martin Luther King Junior, the Baptist minister and civil rights leader, explains it like this. He says the first question the priest and Levite ask is, '**What will happen to me?**', and they found plenty of excuses not to stop. Then along comes the Good Samaritan who reverses the question and asks himself: 'If I do not stop to help this man, **what will happen to him?**'

Martin Luther King goes on to say this is the question each of us should be asking in our own lives. Not the question of the priest or Levite, the question of what will happen to our own security or wealth or anything else. Not what will happen to me, but instead: 'If I do not stop to help, what will happen to them?'

Not: 'What will happen to me?'

But: 'If I don't help, what will happen to them?'

For the Good Samaritan, loving his neighbour cost him dearly. Stopping cost him his time and plans, but also risked his comfort and safety. Bandaging the man's wounds and paying for accommodation cost him financially too. He didn't let the question 'What will happen to me?' determine his response, but out of love he asked, 'What will happen to him if I don't help?' and gave generously and sacrificially.

Increasingly on the news and online, we're hearing more about the huge impacts of the climate crisis on people around the world. And for many people the impacts have been just as devastating as they were for the man left beside the road in Jesus' story. Although we're becoming more aware of it ourselves, the climate crisis isn't new. In fact Tearfund first spoke out about the effects of climate change on people living in poverty 30 years ago, because they were witnessing it firsthand. And today their staff and partners continue to raise the alarm about the ways climate change is making poverty worse around the world.

[Slide 4]

The impacts are severe, and only getting worse. Right now across the Horn of Africa, including Ethiopia and Kenya, people are experiencing the driest conditions and hottest temperatures since current record-keeping began. For three rainy seasons in a row, they've had little to no rain, and now more than 20 million people are on the brink of acute water shortages and severe hunger. Crops are withering and dead livestock lie dead by the roadside.

Jesus challenges the expert in the law, and all of us who listen in on their conversation today: Will we love God and love our neighbour in action? Not considering the cost to ourselves but choosing to be interrupted by the suffering of others, and in doing so encounter Jesus himself in the faces of the hungry and the oppressed? How can we as a church stand with and support those who are pushed deeper into poverty by climate change?

We've spoken at length about the Samaritan, but it's also worth turning our attention to other characters. In the story as Jesus tells it, there were robbers who caused the man to be suffering on the side of the road.

As we consider what this story can teach us about loving our neighbours impacted by the climate crisis, we must reflect on who or what has contributed to our modern-day victim being at the side of the road. Who are the robbers in today's reality?

For many years we didn't know the answer to this. We expanded our use of fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas, and saw progress and prosperity in so many ways, without fully realising the consequences this would have. But now it is clear for all of us to see: the cause of our neighbours' suffering, the robbers, are found in the way our society and economy work in the West. Our western lifestyles are so reliant on polluting fossil fuels for how we travel, eat, power homes and industry. As our emissions rise, and the planet warms, it is people living in poverty around the world who are paying the price. It is our convenience and way of living that is robbing others of their most basic needs and pushing people deeper into poverty.

[Slide 5]

In Romans 13, Paul reminds the church of Jesus' teaching to love our neighbour. He writes:

'The commandments... are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.'

To follow Jesus is to love our neighbour, and love does no harm to a neighbour.

Love does no harm to a neighbour.

As we reflect on what the Good Samaritan can teach us about our response to climate change, we must be moved by our love of God to *both* help the people at the side of the road to recover, and also ensure we no longer cause them harm in the first place. In the case of climate change, this means considering how we can each make changes – even if they cost us – in order to better love our global neighbours.

Each of us can begin by making small changes to our everyday lives. Choosing to break from our routine or plans like the Samaritan and considering how we can play our part.

Perhaps it's choosing to cycle or walk instead of drive, perhaps it's reducing how much meat we eat or switching to a bank that doesn't invest our money into more and more fossil fuels. Whatever the actions, let's do them out of love for God and for our global neighbours.

But there's also a need for us to speak up – to call on our government to change. Our small actions in worship are important, but we need much bigger changes to prevent many more people from being left on the side of the road because of the climate crisis.

[Slide 6]

Back in 2009, Tearfund and other organisations ran a campaign. It led to the UK Prime Minister and other leaders of richer countries – those most responsible for the crisis – promising to collectively provide 100 billion dollars a year of financial support for lower-income countries. This was to help them adapt to the devastating impacts of climate change and invest in a sustainable future.

It was a great moment, and provided hope to millions already facing the worst of the climate crisis. But that money which was promised still hasn't been fully delivered. At the Glasgow climate talks last year, the world was waiting to see governments finally fulfil their promise, but yet again they failed to deliver. In the meantime, poorer countries have had to divert money away from essential public services such as healthcare and education to address the impacts of climate change.

[If you are going to use Tearfund's short campaign film, you can find it at: tearfund.org/climate]

We're going to watch a short film now in which we'll hear from Promise, one of Tearfund's staff in Nigeria, and a young campaigner. In the film he explains the impacts of the climate crisis on his country, some of the ways people in Nigeria are tackling them, and how important, some of the ways they're tackling them and how important this finance is for people in poverty.

[Watch film]

Right now, energy, food and fuel are so expensive and many of us are feeling that struggle, but we can't afford to ignore those fighting to survive through extreme droughts or record-breaking storms. As Martin Luther King preached, we must not ask 'What will happen to us?' but 'What will happen to them if we don't help?'

[Slide 7]

That's why today I would love to ask you to join me in signing Tearfund's petition that says it's time for wealthy nations to deliver on this funding promise, and make sure the money reaches the communities most impacted.

If you pick up the action card on your seat, you'll see there's lots of information that I've already shared with you. Then if you open it, you can see Tearfund are calling on the UK Government to use their leadership and influence other countries to deliver climate finance to frontline communities, including the money that is long overdue, and making sure it is used in the right way.

It's an easy action, something each of us can do, but such an important act of standing with our global neighbours and putting our love for God and neighbour into action. So please do sign that now. I'll pause for a moment to let you fill out the form. At the end of the service there will be a basket at the back for your completed cards so we can send them to Tearfund all together.

[If you have people online you can also address them]

If you're joining us online, you can also add your voice. Just type into your browser **tearfund.org/climate** and you'll see the link to the same petition calling on leaders to finally deliver on this promise.

[Pause for 30 seconds, time yourself]

You'll also see that the card directs you to Tearfund's website to give a donation. Your gift can help families and communities being hit hardest by the climate crisis – those facing droughts, floods and storms that destroy homes and livelihoods, and threaten people's very survival. Tearfund's worldwide network of partners and local churches are delivering practical solutions to support the most vulnerable. As Christians, this is one way we can show our commitment to stand with our brothers and sisters around the world, as we call on governments to deliver the funding they've promised too.

So please, if you feel able, do consider giving a donation today.

[Pause for 30 seconds, time yourself]

So as we close, let me remind us of Martin Luther King's two questions. The priest and Levite hurried on by, allowing their response to be led by asking 'What will happen to me?' but the Samaritan, who demonstrates radical love for God and neighbour, asks a different question: not 'What will happen to me?', but 'What will happen to him if I don't stop?'

Let us be a people so captivated by the love of God, demonstrated on the cross, that we choose not to ignore the climate crisis but instead choose to love our neighbours near and far, sacrificially and in action.

Amen

tearfund.org

Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE, United Kingdom

☎ +44 (0)20 3906 3906 ✉ campaigns@tearfund.org 🌐 @ /Tearfund

Registered office: Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE. Registered in England: 994339. A company limited by guarantee. Registered Charity No. 265464 (England & Wales) Registered Charity No. SC037624 (Scotland) 00669-(0522)

The logo for Tearfund, featuring the word "tearfund" in white lowercase letters on a teal rectangular background.