



Sacred and Inspirational Texts and a Climate Emergency

The following are a selection of sacred texts and quotations from several of the world's religions, by no means exhaustive, that speak to the value of the natural world and the moral duty we share to create a compassionate and just society for all. These two commitments—to respect nature and take urgent action as good stewards of Earth—are the values at the heart of our growing call to declare a Climate Emergency.

Judaism

What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

*The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it.
(Psalm 24:1)*

*But ask the animals, and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.*

*Who among all these does not know
that the hand of the Lord has done this?
In his hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of every human being.
(Job 12:7-11)*

*Speak out for those who cannot speak,
for the rights of all the destitute.
Speak out, judge righteously,
defend the rights of the poor and needy.
(Proverbs 31:8-9)*

Christianity

Jesus answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

(Luke 10:27)

The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

(Revelation 22:2)

Jesus said, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority.

(Matthew 7:24-29)

We love because God first loved us. Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

(1 John 4:19-21)

Islam

And it is He who has appointed you vicegerent over the earth, and has exalted some of you over others in rank that He may try you through what He has given you.

(The Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-An'am 6:165)

Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned, so He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done that perhaps they will return [to righteousness].

(The Holy Qur'an, Surah Ar-Rum 30:41)

Truly, God will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.

(The Holy Qur'an, Surah Ar-Ra'd 13:11)

Hinduism

*May peace radiate in the whole sky and in
the vast ethereal space,
May peace reign all over this earth, in water,
in all herbs, and the forests,
May peace flow over the whole universe,
May peace be in the Supreme Being,
May peace exist in all creation, and peace alone,
May peace flow into us.
Aum - peace, peace and peace!
(Yajur Veda Samhita 36:17)*

*The Earth is my mother and I am her child!
(Atharva Veda 12.1.12)*

*So long as the earth is able to maintain mountains, forests and trees
Until then the human race and its progeny will be able to survive
(Durga Saptashati 54)*

*Ether, air, fire, water, earth, planets, all creatures, directions, trees and plants, rivers and seas, they
are all organs of God's body. Remembering this a devotee respects all species.
(Srimad Bhagavatam 11.2.41)*

*Climate change creates pain, suffering, and violence. Unless we change how we use energy, how
we use the land, how we grow our crops, how we treat other animals, and how we use natural
resources, we will only further this pain, suffering, and violence. ... In doing all of this, we help
maintain the ecological and cosmic order, an order that allows life and existence to flourish.
(2015 Hindu Declaration on Climate Change)*

Buddhism

*May all beings be at ease. Whatever living beings there may be,
Whether they are weak or strong, omitting none, the great or the mighty, medium, short or small,
The seen and the unseen, those living near and far away, those born to-be-born--
May all beings be at ease! Let none deceive another, Or despise any being in any state.
Let none through anger or ill-will wish harm upon another.
Even as a mother protects with her life her child, her only child,
So with a boundless heart should one cherish all living beings;
Radiating kindness over the entire world.*
(Metta Sutta)

To fulfill our wider moral responsibility, we must join with others, stand up to the vested interests that oppose change, and demand that our economic, social, and political institutions be fundamentally altered so they protect the climate and offer nurturance and support for all of humanity in a just and equitable manner.

(The Earth As Witness: International Dharma Teachers' Statement on Climate Change)

Together, humanity must act on the root causes of this environmental crisis, which is driven by our use of fossil fuels, unsustainable consumption patterns, lack of awareness, and lack of concern about the consequences of our actions. ... As Buddhist leaders, we are united by our concern to phase out fossil fuels, to reduce our consumption patterns, and the ethical imperative to act against both the causes and the impacts of climate change, especially on the world's poorest.

(2015 Buddhist Climate Change Statement to World Leaders)

Only when we truly love the Earth will our actions spring from reverence and the insight of our interconnectedness. That's the kind of awareness, the kind of awakening that we need. The future of the planet depends on whether we're able to cultivate this insight or not.

(Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh)

We can call, in unison, for a policy of global generosity in place of rash militarism, for programs that protect the poor and vulnerable, for the advancement of social and racial justice, and for the rapid transition to a clean-energy economy.

(Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi)

Unitarian Universalist, Environmental Justice and Scientists' Reflections

We covenant to affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

(Unitarian Universalist 7th Principle)

Environmental Justice affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction. ...

Environmental Justice mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things. ...

Environmental Justice affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards. ...

Environmental Justice protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care. ...

(Principles of Environmental Justice)

Look again at that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar," every "supreme leader," every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there--on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.

(Carl Sagan)

I used to think that top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that thirty years of good science could address these problems. I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy, and to deal with these we need a cultural and spiritual transformation. And we scientists don't know how to do that.

(Gus Speth)