

The world is still burning

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Ignore Trump for a moment, and all the other calamities going on around the world this Easter. Climate change is still the biggest threat to us all, and we are in danger of ignoring it at our peril.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6F21B2FdU_w?si=NbhqsO7JJ9R7dOX9

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=6ixtn-1881329-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

This is the transcript:

The world is still burning.

I hate to tell you this, because the news has been so distracted by other things - Trump, Ukraine, Gaza, Scunthorpe steel plants - that we've forgotten one of the most important stories that is always and ever present and which should get our attention and which has not enough of late, and that is that the world is still burning.

Climate change is still going on, and it's significant enough to threaten our very existence. That's not an idle threat. It's something that most of the world's leading scientists in this field are fairly sure is true.

We have seen very significant global temperature rises. The 1.5 degree temperature threshold is now being threatened and pushed at on a regular basis. Scientists are now talking about two degrees being the point at which they would now like to hold global temperature changes, but that may be too high.

2023 was, we know, the hottest year on record ever.

2024 almost certainly was as well when every form of data is finally completed.

And right across the world, we're seeing the consequences of this increase in temperature.

We're getting more extreme weather conditions, whether it be hurricanes, whether it be floods, whether it be droughts. These are happening more often and they're affecting people in places where they didn't expect to see such things happen.

We're getting droughts and wildfires in places like California and Australia, but we even had wildfires in Scotland of late. This is something that is coming home to roost. We can't ignore this anymore.

There's extreme weather the world over, and at the same time, we've got melting ice and rising seas.

Both the glaciers in the Antarctic and the Arctic are melting very rapidly. They are literally collapsing into the sea and the consequence is that whilst over the last 150 years, sea levels have risen by eight inches, the prospect is that they will rise by a great deal more over years to come. The rate of change is growing, and as a result, things like, for example, the Thames Barrier are looking to be out of date because quite soon flood waters could go above them. The whole of the City of London is at threat. Where I live in East Anglia, everywhere from the coast, right through the fens past Cambridge and as far as Bedford could flood, if the sea walls are taken out by rising sea water.

And across the world, this has financial implications. Eighty per cent of all bank lending the world over is secured against properties that might flood sometime in the next 30 or so years. That means the world's financial system would fail as a result.

We're seeing other impacts. I. The oceans are changing. The Gulf streams are moving. That has enormous impact for the UK. If the Gulf Stream shifts we do not enjoy the temperate climate that we have in this country, even though we like to moan about it all the time. That will be a massive consequence for us. It's almost unbelievable to imagine what it would be like if we had more extreme cold or more extreme heat, or both, and that is a possible outcome.

At the same time, we're seeing other problems. Coral reefs are being bleached and they're dying. The most obvious is the Great Barrier Reef in Australia but there are

others as well. And ocean acidification is also very real, making it much harder for some types of sea life to survive.

We're also, and I expand that last point now, noticing that biodiversity loss around the world. Animal migration is changing.

I'm a bird watcher. The way in which birds are moving to and from the UK is changing very rapidly. Birds that were rare here only a decade ago are now commonplace and that's the result of global warming. Animals are moving away from hot areas because they know there is no water and there is no food.

We are going to see human populations following their pattern as well, and there's nothing we'll be able to do about it unless we take action to stop climate change.

There's another one when it comes to the biodiversity, and this is also absolutely fundamental. Insects are dying out and we are utterly dependent upon our pollinators to keep the world's food supplies going. If they go, we go to, in a very large degree, because without the crops that they can create for us, the fruit that they can create for us, and everything else upon which we are dependent with regard to these insect pollinators, then we're in deep and profound trouble.

And therefore, I emphasise this point. It's about human lives, human health, and human livelihoods. This is not just a natural disaster, it's a disaster for us.

Despite this, there are economists still going on talking about, oh, what will the impact of three degrees temperature rise be on the world's gross domestic product as if this is a technical exercise they can undertake without any care for the consequences for the planet as a whole, or for the quality of life, or for the fact that life might simply not be sustainable. They just see it as a mathematical exercise. It isn't. We are at threat.

Our food security is at threat.

Our housing is at threat.

Our communities are therefore at threat.

And in some places whole countries are at threat because they won't be able to stay where they are now - the communities within those places won't be able to stay where they are now - because they will need to move because they will simply become impossible to live in, either because they're too hot or because there's no food or because there's no water and the last might well be the critical tipping point.

We could still change this.

We could still take the necessary steps to prevent this global heating.

We could slow down the process of change.

We could limit climate change to two degrees, although we still don't know what the consequences of that are, and they could be extremely detrimental.

We could promote renewable energy.

We could cut consumption of those things that are causing harm.

We could reduce the amount of travel that we undertake.

We could change our diets.

We could reduce the excess consumption of the world's ultra-rich, which drives more of the harm than does anything else at all, because they travel more by jet, they consume more goods, and they waste more than anyone else.

We could do all those things, but if we don't, there is no bright future. It might be hot, but it's not going to be bright as far as we are concerned.

If we are looking for renewal; if we are looking for new starts; if we are looking for the idea that there is hope, which is at the core of the Easter season at the time that this video is coming out, whether you are a believer or not, and I really don't think it makes any difference, if you are looking for those things we have to tackle the fact that the world is still burning. If we don't, we're in the deepest, darkest trouble.