> “A genuine revolution of values means in the final analysis that our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. Every nation must now develop an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in their individual societies.”

Those words are from a 1967 speech delivered at Riverside Church by Dr. King about the Vietnam War. He was not, of course, thinking of what was then the obscure issue of climate change. Yet others have drawn the connection between this ethic of human solidarity and the climate crisis.

Here are two other quotations, this time from Pope Francis:

> “The natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone. If we make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all. If we do not, we burden our consciences with the weight of having denied the existence of others.”
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> “Since the world has been given to us, we can no longer view reality in a purely utilitarian way, in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit. Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us.”

Ironically, some of the fiercest opponents of climate action are those who, like House Speaker Mike Johnson, most loudly trumpet their religious faith. The words of Dr. King and Pope Francis seem to fall upon them with deaf ears. Meanwhile, nationalist disregard for the welfare of others seems to be on the rise.

Much of climate policy turns on a single key question, “Whose suffering counts?”. This issue is the undercurrent of many international debates about climate. It is also central to the most technical debates over the social cost of carbon, where conservatives vociferously demand that harm to the rest of the world be ignored and that the interests of future generations be given as little weight as possible.

It is important to be aware of the limits of idealism in the political arena and the dangers of idealism when detached from realism. But is it too much to ask that we

have some shred of concern for those who are distant from us in space or time?