

00:00

Hello, everyone. Growing up in my family gives you a certain sense of history. I'm simply the latest in a line that can be traced back generations. This oak tree is close to Windsor Castle, which has been home to my family for over 900 years. Thirty-nine monarchs have lived here and enjoyed these beautiful surroundings.

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I've walked here many times myself, and it always amazes me that some of the trees planted here, living organisms, dependent on soil, rain and sunlight, were here as they laid the first stones of Windsor Castle. That makes some of the oaks here almost 1,000 years old. These trees germinated during the reign of William the Conqueror in 1066, from a simple acorn like this. By the time that Henry VIII lived here, they'd grown into mature, impressive giants. And amazingly, some of those very same trees still survive here today. They're a bit gnarled and hollowed-out, but they're still very much alive.

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While these oaks have been growing, around 35 billion people have lived their lives on our planet. That's 35 billion lifetimes' worth of hope, love, fear and dreams. In that time, humankind has invented air travel, vaccines and computers. We've explored every part of the globe, sequenced the human genome and even escaped Earth's atmosphere. Our speed of innovation has been incredible, but so, too, has the acceleration of our impact.

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Over my grandmother's lifetime, the last 90 years or so, our impacts accelerated so fast that our climate, oceans, air, nature and all that depends on them are in peril. This oak has stood here for centuries, but never has it faced a decade like this.

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We start this new decade knowing that it is the most consequential period in history. The science is irrefutable. If we do not act in this decade, the damage that we have done will be irreversible. And the effects felt not just by future generations but by all of us alive today. And what's more, this damage will not be felt equally by everyone. It is the most vulnerable, those with the fewest resources and those who've done the least to cause climate change who will be impacted the most.

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These stark facts are terrifying. How can we hope to fix such massive intractable problems? It may seem overwhelming, but it is possible. Humans have an extraordinary capacity to set goals and strive to achieve them. I've long been inspired by President John F. Kennedy's 1961 mission to put a man on the moon within a decade. He named it the Moonshot. It seemed crazy. We'd only just launched the first satellite. Putting a man on the moon that quickly seemed impossible. But this simple challenge encompassed so much. He called it a goal to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills. In taking that giant leap for mankind, the team behind the Moonshot united millions of people around the world -- that this crazy ambition wasn't so crazy after all. And along the way, it helped the invention of breathing equipment, CAT scanners and solar panels.

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But now, rather than a Moonshot for this decade, we need Earthshots. We must harness that same spirit of human ingenuity and purpose and turn it with laser sharp focus and urgency on the most pressing challenge we have ever faced, repairing our planet. The shared goals for our generation are clear. Together, we must protect and restore nature, clean our air, revive our oceans, build a waste-free world and fix our climate. And we must strive to do all of this in a decade.

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If we achieve these goals, by 2030 our lives won't be worse, and we won't have to sacrifice everything we enjoy. Instead, the way we live will be healthier, cleaner, smarter and better for all of us.

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The global response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the funds flowing into the economic recovery demonstrate how much can be achieved when those in positions of power come together and decide to act. We built hospitals overnight, repurposed factories, poured billions into the search for a vaccine and better treatments. And we've been inspired by heroes emerging in every community across the world. Young people no longer believe that change is too difficult. They witnessed the world turn on its head. They believe that the climate crisis and the threat to our biodiversity deserves our full attention and ambition. And they're right.

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So now is the time for each one of us to show leadership. Whether you're a farmer in the US, a tech owner in China, a politician in Kenya, a banker in Britain, a fisherman in the Maldives, a community leader in Brazil or a student in India, every single one of us has a role to play in harnessing whatever opportunity we have. I'm committed to using the unique position that I have to help set those Earthshot goals and reward people across every sector of society and in every part of the world who do their bit to help achieve them. Some people are motivated to act by a crisis, but for many, the incentive to act only comes when they believe that change is possible, that it isn't a lost cause. If people really believe that these challenges, these Earthshots, are possible, just imagine all the potential we will unleash.

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I'm determined to both start and end this decade as an optimist. Whilst our generation represents just a blip in the lifetime of these magnificent oaks, we have the power and potential to ensure that they and all life on earth thrive for another thousand years and more. But only if we now unleash the greatest talents of our generation to repair our planet. We have no choice but to succeed.

07:10

Thank you.