



## Does Jesus Care About Creation?

January 23, 2023 Message Notes

*TEXT: PSALM 24:1, 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17*

As Christians, what is our responsibility, if any, to the environment, climate, nature, the wild, this planet, and beyond? Christians have the clearest mandate of all to lead the world on environmental issues. So let's show our trust in the Lord by stewarding our plot of the garden well.



## NOTES

“The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him.”

*Psalms 24:1 NIV*

As Christians, what is our responsibility, if any, to the environment, climate, nature, the wild, this planet, and beyond?

Last November, the Pew Research group released a nationwide survey that found 61% of deeply convicted people of faith do not believe that present day environmental issues concern them or their faith.

### **World Economic Forum – Top 10 Risks Report**

[www.weforum.org/reports/global-risks-report-2023/digest](http://www.weforum.org/reports/global-risks-report-2023/digest)

Christians have the clearest mandate of all to lead the world on environmental issues.

In the first creation narrative, God created male and female, blessed them, and then charged them twice in verses 26 and 28 “to rule over all creation.”

Underneath the English translation of ‘rule over’ is the Hebrew term ‘radah.’

“Do not rule over them ruthlessly, but fear your God.”

*Leviticus 25:43*

“May the king’s rule be refreshing like spring rain on freshly cut grass, like the showers that water the earth.”

*Psalms 72:8*

In the second creation narrative, the author records a very different word to describe how God invites humanity to relate with his good creation. He calls humanity to ‘*abad*’ or ‘to serve’ creation.

“The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”

*Genesis 2:15 NIV*

These two creation accounts together portray the image of a master embodying the ethos of the servant, or a king embracing the heart of a person subject to him.

Who would do that? Jesus did!



“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledges that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

*Philippians 2:5-11*

Though these two commands seem incompatible, God calls us to hold them in tension together as stewards. A steward is a person charged with the full authority and responsibility to care for something that belongs to someone else.

We steward priceless things like God’s world, our lives, our families and the gifts God has graciously formed in us.

“You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”

*1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NIV*

As God’s steward over the world, you have been charged to *radah* and to *abad*, to rule and to serve. We must be careful not to lean too far to either side.

When we live like owners in a house that does not belong to us, we usurp God’s good order and bring harm to creation and to ourselves as inhabitants of the same ecosystem that God’s creatures depend on us to protect.

“You must not muzzle an ox to keep it from eating as it treads out the grain.”

*Deuteronomy 25:4 NIV*

God treated the foreigner, the land, and the animals with the same covenant dignity as his own people.

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

*Luke 4:18-19 NIV*

In the phrase “to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor,” Jesus referred to a command that God gave to Israel in Leviticus chapter 25 called the Year of Jubilee, which provided a perfect sabbath year at the end of seven: 7-year cycles. Everyone and everything was to rest and reset.



Never once did Israel celebrate the year of Jubilee! Not one single time in nearly 1500 years of history. God gave Israel the ultimate test of trust with the ultimate reward of rest and provision, but the people just couldn't obey it.

Jesus came to free us from sin AND to restore the earth and everything in it back to God's living garden of delight.

The crowd Jesus spoke to wasn't concerned about freedom from sin and global restoration. They were concerned about how Jesus might disrupt their livelihood, personal desires and national identity, and two millennia later we still share the same concerns about Jesus.

If this makes you feel threatened, you might be practicing *radah* without *abad* - ruling over without serving - and seeking to own that which does not belong to you.

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

*Matthew 6:10 NIV*

Jesus' prayer reminds us that we are creatures in his kingdom creation.

"The day of the Lord's favor" - when heaven and earth will become one, according to Revelation 21, and His kingdom is established once and for all.

### **Jesus restored a few to show God's kingdom promises for all.**

"The day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment."

*2 Peter 3:10 NIV*

Peter isn't describing how earth ends. He's describing a deep truth about God's purifying judgment against sin – that seeks to destroy this earth and our lives - and finish the defeat over the evil one, to save His creation.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

*2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV*

### **Our foundation for stewardship is based on the following principles:**

1. All creation belongs to God.
2. God charged humanity to rule over and to serve creation as his stewards.
3. Our sin pride has caused destruction not only in our own lives but also in creation.



4. As our Messiah and King, Jesus will one day redeem all creation from sin, restore all creation back to right, and reconcile all creation with our Heavenly Father.

**Until then, Jesus invites us:**

- 5. To pray for his kingdom to come and will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.
- 6. To lead our lives with the same vision for restoration over creation as the Creator.

**How do we live God’s way with creation?**

- 1. Invite God’s Spirit to renew your passion for God’s original charge on your life.

*“I used to think that the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse, and climate change. I thought that 30 years of good science could address these problems. But since then, I have realized that the top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy, and to deal with these, we need a cultural and spiritual transformation. We scientists don’t know how to do that.” – Secular environmentalist James Gustave Speth, Chairman of the Council of Environmental Quality under Jimmy Carter, at his retirement.*

When we invite Jesus to take the lead on our life, His love frees us from the oppressive shackles of greed to receive his favor!

He gave you the privilege to steward because you are worthy, because you bear his image, and because you carry the family name.

“Instead of shame and dishonor, you will enjoy a double share of honor. You will possess a double portion of prosperity in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours.”

*Isaiah 61:7 NLT*

Christ Jesus removes sin and reverses the sin of “selfishness, greed, and apathy” to restore our whole lives to God.

- 2. Read God’s Word wholly and completely.

The way we rise above ‘s-e-e level’ to the heights of faith is by prayerfully reading God’s Word all the way through - not just the parts we like - in the fellowship of Christ’s Body, the church.

*“From beginning to end, the Bible reveals God’s ideal for a world in which humanity would succeed in building human civilization in the midst of God’s kingdom by directing and harnessing the amazing resources of this planet under the wise direction of our Creator. As a result, progress would not necessitate pollution. Expansion would not require extinction. And the privilege of the strong would not demand the deprivation of the weak.” – Sandra L. Richter, Stewards of Eden: 11–12*



Christians need to lead the way on this matter and, when we do, a watching world sees our witness of love by how we care.

3. Since all of us bear responsibility for God's garden - tend to your part of it.

God didn't charge you to take responsibility for the whole world. That's God's job. He's simply asking you to take responsibility to tend to what he has entrusted to you.

All of us have a plot in God's garden, and in that plot God gave us a portion of the earth on which to rule over and to serve, including people to love. So let's show our trust in the Lord by stewarding our plot of the garden well.

