

BEING FAITHFUL STEWARDS OF CREATION

Dear Friends,

In the same way Jesus was entrusted with the welfare of humanity and the salvation of all the earth, people have been given the responsibility of the well being of creation. This is spelled out for us in Gen.1:26 when God tells Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Instead of being good stewards, humanity has twisted the meaning of subdue and rule in such a sinful way that animals, birds and the rest of creation do not see mankind as representatives of God’s love.

Following the covenant God made with Noah and all of creation God had to place a fear of humanity in birds, animals, fish etc. just so they could survive. Because of sin many people kill not just to eat and survive but out of pleasure. Animals are all too frequently treated as mere property not individual parts of a creation made by a loving God.

God loves all of creation and declared each part of it as good in Genesis chapter one. Knowing it was good God chose to have His Son born into this world in a stable among animals. Dr. DeWitt Talmage, that great Presbyterian pastor, pointed this out when he described Christ’s birth. “Behold On the first night of Christ’s life God honored the animal creation. You cannot get into that Bethlehem barn without going past the camels, the mules, the dogs and the oxen. The animals of that stable heard the first cry of the infant Lord. Some of the old painters represented the oxen and camels kneeling that night before the newborn babe. And well might they kneel.”

“Have you ever thought that Christ came, among other things, to alleviate the sufferings of the animal creation? Was it not appropriate that He should, during the first few days and nights of His life on earth, be surrounded by the dumb beasts whose moans and cries have for ages been a prayer to God for the arresting of their tortures and the righting of their wrongs.”

“It did not merely “happen” so that the unintelligent creatures of God should have been that night in close neighborhood. Not a kennel in all the centuries, not a robbed bird’s net, not a worn-out horse on the tow – path, not a herd freezing in the poorly built cow-pen, not a freight car bringing beef to market without water

through a thousand miles of agony, not a surgeon's room witnessing the struggles of the fox or rabbit or pigeon or dog in the horrors of vivisection, has an interest in the fact that Christ was born in a stable surrounded by animals. He remembers that night, and the prayer He heard in that pitiful moan He will answer in the punishment of those who maltreat them."

God cares about His creation. He declared that it is good and He entrusted it to mankind. Winkie Pratney writes, "Even the lilies of the field that perish are arrayed more beautifully than Solomon in all his splendor, by a God who loves beauty and joy, and is willing to bestow it even on a creation that cannot last long. Jesus spoke of the sparrows being noticed and cared for by the Father who is also aware of homes for the foxes and nests for the birds. Jesus compared Himself to "a hen (who) gathereth her chickens under her wings"(Matt.23:37).

Think about all the ways Jesus could have come into Jerusalem. He chose an animal, the donkey that has been the bunt of jokes for centuries. G.K. Chesterton in his poem "The Donkey" put it this way, "With monstrous head and sickening cry, and ears like errant wings' The devil's walking parody of all four-footed things. 'Fools! I also had my hour; One far fierce hour and sweet; There was a shout about my ears, And palms before my feet."

C.S. Lewis explains our role of stewardship this way. "Man is to be understood only in his relation to God. The beasts are to be understood only in their relation to man, and through man to God... Man was appointed by God to have dominion over the beast, and everything a man does to an animal is either a lawful exercise or a sacrilegious abuse of an authority by divine right... The theory I am suggesting... makes God the center of the universe and man the subordinate center of the terrestrial nature; the beasts are not co-ordinate with man, but subordinate to him, and their destiny is through and through related to his."

How we need to fall on our knees and repent for our negligence when it comes to how we have been such unfaithful stewards of God's creation. What if Jesus had abused His privilege of dominance over us in the same way we have abused our entrusted dominance over the rest of creation? How many birds, animals, or fish see us as representatives of God who have been created in His image? No wonder they all flee from us when we come into their presence. We have allowed sin to dominate our lives to the extent we are no longer able to be the stewards of creation that God has called us to be.

Ps. 150:6 says, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.” This is a direct command to human beings to stop their on going destruction of life on this planet. If we only think of the earth as a natural resource and all that lives upon it to be used for our pleasure how are we encouraging Ps 148:7-10 to be fulfilled? “Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, lightening and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds.” All this plus more was created for the prime purpose of worshipping God.

One of the worst forms of blasphemy is to praise God with uplifted hands one minute and then not fight for the rights of all creation to praise the Lord. This is done as we continue our materialistic lifestyles indifferent to our energy consumption and the price it demands from the rest of creation. As a result 1000 species of life each year is destroyed and no longer able to praise their Creator and Provider.

Our unfaithfulness at being earth keepers rather than earth breakers has robbed us of the opportunity to learn from creation. We do not see the sun, moon and stars as our brothers and sister. When was the last time you thanked God for these gifts along with the gift of the earth? God’s response is found in Isaiah 1:15-17. “When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight? Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.” As believers we must seek justice allowing those in need, along with the rest of creation to be able to exist and praise the Lord.

E.D. Buckaner nearly a century ago wrote this in response to Ps. 148:7—10 and Psalm 150:6, “The animate and inanimate creation all contribute to the true worship of God. All of creation must worship at whatever level they possess. Jesus said if men held back their praise, even the stones might ‘cry out’ in worship.”

The time has come for us to broaden our understanding of worship. It involves being stewards of the earth who can harmonize with the rest of creation in praise unto God. What a privilege it is to worship along with those who Jesus used as an example of faith in Matt. 6:25—34. The birds, the lilies, the animals, the fish and all the rest of creation depend upon God for their daily provision. “The eyes of

all look to you, and you give them their good at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing”(Ps.145:15,16).

As stewards of the earth awaked to the wonders of creation and God’s provision of such we are free to praise Him along with the rest of nature as commanded in Ps 148. “Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens. Praise Him in the heights! Praise Him, all His angles, Praise Him all His hosts! Praises Him sun and moon, Praise Him all stars of light! Praise Him, highest heaves, and waters that are above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were created. He has also established them forever and ever; He has made a decree, which will not pass away. Praise the Lord from the earth, sea monsters and all deeps; fire and hail, snow and clouds; stormy wind, fulfilling His word; Mountains and all hills; fruit trees and all cedars: Beasts and cattle; creeping things and winged fowl; kings of the earth and all people; Princes and all judge of earth; Both young men and virgins; Old men and children. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for His name alone is exalted; His glory is above earth and heaven”(Ps 148:1-13). By being faithful stewards of creation we as human beings can join in worship along with the rest of creation. It is our love for God’s creation reflected through our caring of nature, which reflects to all the earth that we have indeed been created in the image of God.

Being stewards of the earth means being pro-life from the womb to the tomb for all of creation. It means engaging in energy conservation, using clean alternative fuels, and working for policies that will protect all forms of life. By being earth keepers who desire to understand God’s handiwork we can better understand Him. In fact, Romans 1;20 says creation gives testimony to His Creator. “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men (that also includes women) are without excuse.”

When we are unfaithful stewards we lose the opportunity to learn more about God. We are told in Job 12:7-8 to “ask now the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you.” There is so much we have not learned about God and His world because we have not studied His Scriptures or His creation in conjunction with each other. This is done consistently throughout the Scriptures. There, Jesus compares the condition of the soil and its receptivity to the seed, to the preparedness of our hearts to receive the word of God. In that parable our spirituality is linked symbolically to the condition of the earth.

We are faithful stewards of creation as we work for the presentation of all species of life. As this happens while we study the Scriptures, we will learn spiritual truths that will help us grow as human being. Lets take for example the development of courage. In 1 Samuel 14:1-46 we see the courage of Jonathan demonstrated in spite of overwhelming odds. As we learn from his example in past we can in the present learn from the short tailed weasel. This courageous little animal is not big in size but is swift in its attack, giving it enemy no time to retaliate.

By being faithful stewards of God word and His creation we can learn to apply creativity when faced with overwhelming odds. Read 1 Sam. 21:10-22:1 and see how David did just that. Then study the hognose snake. It demonstrates skillfulness in using several tactics to courageously defending itself against strong enemies. The hognose snake is able to catch its prey in bold swift movement.

It takes courage to follow the difficult instructions of being a steward of creation in a culture of death. In 11 Kings 5:1-19 we see Naaman following instructions he found difficult. Because he did such he was healed of his leprosy. As we study creation and in this case the wood duck we learn how this duck teaches its young to courageously obey difficult instructions in order to survive.

As good stewards and students of the Scriptures and God's creations if we learn how to confront an opponent with confidence we will ultimately succeed. David did this as he trusted God and faced the giant Goliath in 1 Sam. 17:1-54. As we face our daily giants we can also learn from the striped skunk. It has confidence in its powerful scent glands to us as an effective weapon against it opponents. The skunk goes through a warning procedure before actually spraying its opponent. Such warning is usually enough to frighten away the opponent. What about the weapon of God's word and Spirit that He has given us to confront those principalities and powers that would destroy God's creation? It is time we confronted the giants of our age by trusting God and using the weapons He has given us.

All of creation is depending on us to be faithful as redeemed people of God and work for creation's survival. We are told this in Romans 8:20-22, "For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and bought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole of creation had been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up the present time." All of creation is groaning for us to be faithful

stewards. Lets us repent from our indifference in the past and now earnestly seek God as to how we can become earth keepers rather than earth breakers. Being a steward of creation is a high calling. May we truly strive in word and deed to be faithful to such a calling. As we do that we will join the angels in heaven declaring, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev.4:11).

Yours in Christ Service

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