

God's Heart For Salvation Is As Wide As Creation

Genesis 1: 26-28 ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them **rule** over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "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."

What is our created purpose? - To live as God's regents (in the same character, or representing, our Creator) in relationships with our Creator, one another and creation in ways that reflect God's heart for shalom (wholeness, peace, integrity, flourishing).

Genesis 2: 15 ¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to **work it and take care of it**.

What does stewarding the earth look like? - There is work to do. Effort, calling, intelligence and creativity are required to work in the garden and expand its boundaries (fill the earth). We're in a reciprocal relationship with creation, we work and take care of it, and it nourishes and provides for us, and the rest of God's creatures alongside us. This is the Lord's design, gift and grace.

Hosea 4: 1-3 ¹ Hear the word of the LORD, you Israelites, because the LORD has a charge to bring against you who live in the land. There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment **of God** in the land. ² There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed (**human relationships**). ³ Because of this the **land mourns**, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea are dying."

Human rebellion corrupts relationships - The Law, the Prophets, the Psalmists... all call us to reorient our hearts (interior life) and actions (exterior life) to our Creator's intent: we are to be shalom seekers as it related to the whole of created reality. The OT and NT proclaim our main relationships (God, humanity, earth) as inextricably interrelated.

Matthew 6: 9-10 ⁹"This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰your kingdom come, your will be done **on earth** as it is in heaven.'"

God takes on our rebellion in love, with justice, taking the curse on Christ, and restoring our creational intent.

Jesus' vision and life is clear, it is not on just 'doing our best' and biding our time in a broken creation until heaven; no, God, in Christ is at work redeeming His fallen creation (people and places) and we are given the grace of being involved as God's body.

Colossians 1: 15-20 ¹⁵He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; **all things were created by him and for him**. ¹⁷He is before all things, and **in him all things hold together**. ¹⁸And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰and **through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven**, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

What, according to Paul, is the 'bird's eye view' of what God is doing in, through and for Jesus?

God, in Christ, is committed to what He has always been committed to, bringing to fullness His intent for Himself as Trinity to dwell with his image bearers (humanity) in intimate relationship as they steward all the gifts of creation given to their care in ways which worship and honour the Lord. This involves hope, joy, love, beauty, wisdom, patience, peace... the Presence and gifts of the Holy Spirit – who delights in making the character of Christ manifest and real in each and every person.

Romans 8: 19-21 ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and **brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God**.

Inspiring Hope. Caring for Creation.

- Stories:** How did a pastor end up directing A Rocha's Brooksdale Environmental Centre?
- Convicted by God's Word
 - Experiencing creation's brokenness, caused by human sin (rebellion).
 - Seeing the power of God in and through the body of Christ to save and act as witness.
- Creation care as social justice in Kenya (ASSETS)
<http://www.assets-kenya.org/the-vision/>
- Creation Care as social justice in India.
<https://vimeo.com/24190139>

Getting Practical – Creation Care in our Churches

- Tell the whole Biblical story (preach the whole Word to the whole world).
- Plan worship that enfolds all creation, consistent with scripture (prayers, songs, art, media, coffee time).
- Creation care is mission. Bless the people and places in your neighborhood.
eg. See A Rocha Canada's 'Good Seed Sunday' resources online
- God as Creator, as Redeemer (of creation), as Guide (in creation) - Retreats, conferences, VBS.
eg. Anxiety, Education, Science, Intergenerational relationships.
- Missions and church homes: share the stories, make the links, prayerful projects that are integrated that empower stories that transform.
eg. - A Rocha Kenya's ASSETS program.
- Embrace the ways God is calling and stirring the next generation who live in a time where environmental brokenness is real and recognized, people are hurting because of it, and hope is needed.
eg. Food, plastics, habitat and species loss and extinction, pollution (air, water, soil).

Resources:

- Books - *Planted* by Leah Kostamo (the best intro I know)
- *Planetwise* by Dave Bookless (good Bible and praxis combo)
 - *For the Beauty of the Earth* by Steven Bouma-Prediger
 - *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology* by Daniel L. Brunner, Jennifer L. Butler, and AJ Swoboda
 - *God's Good World* by Jonathan Wilson (a 'heady' book; for the person who wants a workout).
 - *Under the Bright Wings* by Peter Harris (A Rocha's roots)
 - *The Mission of God's People* by Chris Wright
 - *Bible and Ecology* by Richard Bauckham (NT scholar)

- Websites: **arocha.ca** Good Seed Sunday: arocha.ca/get-involved/good-seed-sunday/
 A Rocha UK Initiative: [Eco Church ecochurch.arocha.org.uk](http://EcoChurch.arocha.org.uk)

*To drive to extinction something [God] has created is wrong. He has a purpose for everything... We Christians have a responsibility to **take the lead** in caring for the earth.*

Billy Graham

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