

Theme: Nothing but the Truth: Hold Fast to Truth

Title: Stewardship of Creation – Genesis 1:26-31

Aim: The imp of home & how to get there.

Intro: Certainly true that global warming & care of the environment is a hot topic today (no pun intended). At the UN COP27 (or climate change conference of the parties – the 27th such conference of gov & business leaders) on this past Monday, UN Secretary General Antonio Gutteres called for a new climate pact between developed countries and emerging economies. "Humanity has a choice: cooperate or perish," he said. "It is either a climate solidarity pact, or a collective suicide pact." While there is little argument that global warming is real, there is disagreement in different circles about whether or not global warming is the threat that it's made out to be & what our responsibility is as the people of the world. But what about us? How should Christians think about the environment? Calvin Dewitt, who wrote The Environment & the Christian, stated that there are at least "7 degradations of the earth" that should capture our attention: "1) Land has been (continually) converted from wilderness to agriculture to urban, (much of which cannot be retrieved). We've repeatedly paved paradise & put up a parking lot. 2) "As many as 3 species a day become extinct." What does that do to the balance of nature? 3) "Land continues to be degraded by the use of pesticides, herbicides & fertilizers." 4) "Hazardous chemicals & wastes (including nuclear waste) remain an unsolved problem." 5) "Pollution." 6) The atmosphere is changing – global warming, shrinking ozone, etc." 7) "We're losing the experience of cultures that have lived in harmony with creation." So, there are problems to be faced. And Dewitt states that Christianity ought to be good for the environment. What is our responsibility as Christians? What does the Bible say? Theme: Nothing but the truth; sub-theme: hold fast to truth, considering

cultural issues facing the world/Church today. Today we'll consider the cultural issue of environmentalism. Text: Genesis 1:26-31 [READ]. I) **Mankind, created in the image of God, has been given by God the responsibility to be stewards of the earth.** Note again what God's intentions were for mankind from the beginning: vs26 – "Let them have dominion over...Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed...& every tree...You shall have them for food." Vs28 – "...fill the earth & subdue it, & have dominion over..." From "gotquestions.org" we read, "There is a difference between the Biblical view of the environment & the political movement known as environmentalism." From compellingtruth.org we read, "Environmentalism elevates the environment over man, created in God's image, & trusts human endeavor to gain some sort of eternity." The article from gotquestions.org continues: "The Bible is clear that the earth & everything in it was given by God to man to rule & subdue. We are commanded to exercise stewardship, which implies caretaking, not abusing." So, tho we must not exalt environment above mankind, Christians do bear responsibility for the environment. Ray Bohlin, of Bible.org, wrote that "Christians have a sacred responsibility to the earth & the creatures w/in it. The earth is being affected by humans in an unprecedented manner, & we do not know what the short or long-term effect will be. Gen.1:26-28 is not a mandate/license to exploit the earth for man's own purpose. God is creator & man is His image bearer & steward. Responsibility goes along w/bearing the image of God. In its proper sense, man's rule & dominion over the earth is that of a steward or a caretaker, not a reckless exploiter. Man is not sovereign over the lower orders of creation. Ownership is in the hands of the Lord." So, again, we are stewards of the earth. And Bohlin makes the claim that "Christians have responsibility to the earth that exceeds that of unredeemed people. We (Christians) should be showing others the way." But what does that mean to steward the earth? Again, from gotquestions.org: "We (Christians) are to intelligently manage the

resources God has given us, using all diligent care to preserve & protect (the earth).” God didn’t leave us in the dark about this. In Gen.2:15, we read, **“The Lord God took the man & put him in the garden of Eden to work it & keep it”** – take care of it. God gave the responsibility to Adam to name all the animals. Bohlin wrote, “An effective steward understands that which he oversees, & science can help us discover the intricacies of nature.” So we should be students of creation, that we might properly care for it. We have certainly not always lived in harmony w/nature. Bohlin again wrote, “As Christians we must treat nature as having value in itself, & we must be careful to exercise dominion w/out being destructive.” Lev.25:1-12 talks about care of the land, not overworking it, but giving it rest – a sabbath year. Deut.22:6-7 speaks of care of & respect for wildlife, & Deut.25:4 speaks of the care of domesticated animals. Job 38:25-28 & Ps.104:27-30 describe God’s nurture & care of creation. We, bearing His image are to follow His example. Matthew 6:26 & 10:29 teach us that God values & cares for the smallest of animals, like the sparrows. Can we do less? We are stewards of this earth. II) **As stewards of the earth, we can & should “appreciate the functionality & beauty of the environment”** (gotquestions.org). Consider the wonder & amazement that “God has placed on this planet everything needed to feed, clothe & house the billions of people who have lived on it since the Garden of Eden” (gotquestions.org). From compellingtruth.org – “Notice His precision in design & His provision of everything we need for life.” What a marvel of creation – heaven & earth. We are to honor God in our use of the earth, using all its bountiful resources as God intends, w/thanksgiving to God. Instead of worshipping the earth, we are to worship the One who created it in wisdom. As the Psalmist wrote (Ps.19:1), **“The heavens declare the glory of God, & the sky above proclaims His handiwork,”** & (Ps.24:1), **“The earth is the Lord’s & the fullness thereof, the world & those who dwell therein, for He has founded it upon the seas & established it upon the rivers,”** & Isaiah in Is.6:3, **“The whole earth is full of**

His glory.” All the beauty around us should always point us to God, our Creator. And our stewardship of the earth should be & can be a witness to those around us, pointing them to Christ as Savior/Lord. But in doing so, we must also realize, as both compellingtruth.org & gotquestions.org state, that III) **“The earth is not a permanent planet (nor any other planet), nor was it ever intended to be.** The environmental movement is consumed w/trying to preserve [the earth/nature] forever but that is not God’s plan” (from the beginning). II Peter 3:10-12 tells us ***“The day of the Lord will come like a thief, & then the heavens will pass away w/a roar, & the heavenly bodies will be burned up & dissolved, & the earth & the works that are done on it will be exposed.”*** Then we read in Revelation 21:1 these words of John as he describes that amazing vision, ***“Then I saw a new heaven & a new earth, for the 1st heaven & the 1st earth had passed away, & the sea was no more.”*** Again, Ray Bohlin wrote, “Concern for the environment is not on the front burner of most evangelicals (& I would say that it should not be our top priority), but it should be important. Altho the heavens & the earth will eventually be destroyed, we should still work for healing now.” Again I quote from gotquestions.org: “We are to be good stewards for as long as [the earth] lasts – as long as it serves God’s sovereign plan & purpose.” However, quoting compellingtruth.org again, “We must not place concern for preservation of the earth above seeking God’s kingdom.” That familiar verse, Matthew 6:33 exhorts us: ***“Seek 1st the kingdom of God & His righteousness, & all these things will be added to you.”*** Our top priorities should always be to ***“do all things to the glory of God”*** (I Cor.10:31), to ***“grow in the grace & knowledge of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ”*** (II Pet.3:18) & to ***“make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...teaching them...”*** (Mt.28:19-20). Knowing Him & making Him known; expanding the kingdom of God over all the earth – that’s what we are to be about. But that can & should include care for the environment. Tho we are given everything to use & enjoy, we own nothing. We are to be faithful stewards of all that is

around us, appreciating & marveling at God's handiwork, giving Him worship, but 1st & foremost making Him known & awaiting His coming, when all this will be destroyed & replaced w/new heavens & a new earth, in which righteousness will dwell. That's the truth & nothing but the truth.