

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (January 29, 2023)

FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

This morning is week 4 in our 2023 series of sermons based out of the book of Genesis (the first book in the Bible). This week's focus is not as emotionally charged as was last week's message on gender, or next week's will likely be on marriage. Today we ask the questions, "What responsibility do we have for the planet we live on? What role has God give us in relation to the created world around us? The stakes are high. Regardless of your personal feelings about global warming (and that term IS emotionally and politically charged!) most of us would agree that things aren't as they should be, and we should find ways to take care of the world we live in.

The church of my youth sponsored Boy Scout troop 836. I was a regular and faithful member. We went on monthly camping trips, hiked in the Sierra's during the summer, learned practical skills (ax-throwing, fire-building, rolling rocks down steep mountains ...) and I gained an appreciation for the world I live in.

I'm grateful for those early lessons, and for my love of God's created world. I try to diligently recycle. I try not to litter. I view myself as a renter not an owner of the land (world) I occupy. I understand I will live here for a number of years and then others inherit what I, and others, leave behind. God is the owner, the land Lord, the Creator. He didn't ask for a damage deposit when I moved in ... looking back I'm pretty sure I would have.

We have a responsibility for the world we live in, the life we have been given. Genesis makes that clear. God did not simply create us and then leave us to figure out what He wanted us to do. God left instructions. Some misunderstand, or ignore, those instructions and end up worshiping the world of nature: the rocks, trees, animals, stars. Some bow to the creation rather than the Creator. Others take the opposite approach and minimize or dismiss God's instructions, and their responsibility. They end up using and misusing the gift of creation given to us by God. How do we avoid both extremes and follow God's way? Genesis is a good place to start.

Assignment Earth (Genesis 1:26-31, 2:15-17)

^{1:26} Then God said, 'let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'

²⁷ So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.' ²⁹ And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. ³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

^{2:15} The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'"

What DOES IT SAY?

1. What does this passage tell us about the world we live in?
2. What does this passage say about our relationship with Earth?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

3. What does it mean to have, "dominion over the fish, birds ..."?
4. What does it mean to "fill and subdue" creation?
5. What does it mean that man "was/is to work and keep"? (v15)

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

6. What do you enjoy most about the world around you?
7. How does God want you to relate to (live in) His creation?
8. Do you view yourself as a "renter" or as an "owner"? Explain.
9. What are some ways you can appreciate, and take care of, creation without worshiping it?
10. Are you ready to have honest and kind conversations about the world, about your responsibility, about the question of global warming, with someone who believes/votes differently than you? If not, what will it take to get you to that point?

As you spend time praying remember that prayer is meant to be the most natural, easy, and empowering, part of your day. Prayer is talking to God, and God talking to you. Ask God to help you appreciate the world He has given us. Ask God to give you an understanding of how you can take care for His creation. God will help you because He made you, and He loves you.