

WEEK 4 — CREATION CARE

Text: Genesis 1:26–28; Psalm 24:1-2

Title: *Stewards, Not Owners*

Big Idea:

Radical disciples care about what God created because it belongs to Him.

Movement:

1. The world belongs to God
2. We are entrusted, not entitled
3. Stewardship is worship

Key Line:

“How we treat creation reflects how we honor the Creator.”

Small Group Reading:

Chapter 4

Response:

Practical stewardship commitments

I. OPENING/ATTENTION GETTER

By now, most of you know the World Cup is happening right now. And if you've been paying attention — not just to the scores, but to the stories — you've seen something remarkable. Christian Pulisic leading his teammates in a player-run Bible study he calls "Bible Time." The entire US Men's National Team gathering in a circle on the pitch after their victory — arms linked, heads bowed — giving glory to God in front of 70,000 fans. Panama, after being eliminated from the tournament, gathering on the field in prayer — not in victory, but in loss — reminding the world that faith is not only for the victories. Germany and Curaçao — opponents minutes earlier — standing together in a prayer circle after the final whistle. Felix Nmecha said it simply: "During the game we are opponents. But after the game we are all Christians and we are brothers."

The biggest stage in the world. And followers of Jesus are refusing to keep their faith off of it

That's what formation does. It shows up.

Now, as far as I know — none of us are professional athletes. But what happened in the stands after one of these matches? That's for all of us.

But I want to tell you one story in particular that will set us up for tonight.

After Japan's opening match in Dallas, something happened that nobody planned and nobody asked for. As tens of thousands of fans filed out of the stadium, Japanese supporters stayed behind — trash bags in hand — and methodically cleaned up every cup, every wrapper, every piece of litter in their section. The video went viral. Over six million people watched it. And then they did it at the next match. And the one after that. Even the players got in on it — leaving their locker room spotless after every game, sometimes with a handwritten thank-you note for the stadium staff.

Reporters kept asking: *why do you do this?*

One fan said it simply: *"We are honored to be here. So we don't want to make a mess and leave it."*

And I can tell you... this isn't a FIFA rule. There was no announcement over the loudspeaker. This was already part of who they were, formed in them long before they ever stepped foot in the stadium.

It came out of them because it was already in them.

That's the picture I want to hold onto tonight.

II. BRIDGE

Because this sermon clarifies one timeless truth: **we are stewards, not owners.** We are managers, not masters. We are entrusted, not entitled.

Now, being a steward is something that has to be formed in us. Growing as a faithful steward is part of our discipleship. And I must tell you tonight that one of the places our formation as disciples becomes visible — is in how we care for the creation God has entrusted to us.

Church, we care for creation not because someone put it on a checklist. But because of who we're becoming and because WHO has entrusted His creation to us.

And that's what tonight is about.

This is the Big Idea... Radical disciples care about what God created because it belongs to Him.

As we prepare to read the Scripture, I want to be clear about what tonight is and isn't. This is not a talk on the environment. This is not a political statement. This is not a call to memorize all the forms of recycling. This is a call to discipleship. This is an invitation to examine what our everyday lives declare about who we believe owns everything..

Would you turn with me to both Genesis 1:26-28 and Psalm 24:1-2

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;

2 for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters. - Psalm 24:1-2

26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

27 So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
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 in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." - Genesis 1:26-28

Two passages. Written centuries apart. But together they tell one story — God owns it all, and He has chosen to place it in our hands.

Prayer

III. EXEGESIS:

Everything we're going to talk about tonight rests on one foundation. And David lays it out in a single sentence. Let's start there.

1. The World Belongs to God (P. Daniel)

- Psalm 24 is an entrance liturgy — sung as worshippers processed into the temple. Before you entered God's presence, you declared who owned everything. The first act of worship was reorientation.
 - The declaration — "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world, and all who live in it." Not part of it. Not the sacred spaces. Everything. Including the people.
 - The reason — He owns it because He made it. Ownership flows from creation. The potter owns the clay.
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- The practical weight — If the earth is the Lord's, then nothing we hold is truly ours. Not our land. Not our resources. Not our time. Not our bodies. We are not owners who occasionally let God in — we are guests who have been entrusted with something that was never ours to begin with.
- The tension — We live in a culture that says ownership is the goal. Own a home. Own a car. Own your future. Own your story. Psalm 24 quietly dismantles all of that. The goal was never ownership. The goal is faithful tenancy. The question shifts from "what can I do with what's mine?" to "what is the Owner asking me to do with what's His?"
- Closing landing — Every time Israel sang this at the temple gate, they weren't just singing a song — they were being re-formed. Reminded, before they worshipped, that they were not the center, not the owners, not the final authority over anything. That's what this text does to us tonight. And it leaves us with one question: If everything belongs to God — what does that make you?

Transition to Ian:

Genesis 1 answers that question. God doesn't just tell us He owns everything — He tells us what He's asking us to do with it. And that's where Ian is going to take us next. Would you please help me welcome Ian Hauser ?

2. We are entrusted, not entitled (Ian)

Genesis 1 is the opening act of everything. God speaks light into darkness, pulls land out of water, fills the earth with life. And then — right at the top — He does something He hasn't done before. He makes people a creation in his own likeness. And the moment He does, He gives them a job.

Genesis 1 prefaces this idea, God says "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness." That word image — in Hebrew it's tselem — means representation. As an house may bear a crest that represents the patriarch, or an army a flag the represents their national allegiance, we wear the image of God which represents; Power, Creativity and Care

"Rule over the fish, the birds, every living creature." And before anyone hears that as a permission to use the earth however we please, pause. This is not given for us to be cruel but caring through control. God gives us a mandate to care for the animals, the idea is to reflect onto the animals the authority God has shown us.

God is above us, yet he cares for us. He nurtures us, and heals us. This imagery is made clear throughout scripture;

Psalms 23- The Lord is OUR Shepherd

John 10 Jesus says he is the good shepherd and we are his sheep

Psalms 42 Shares the idea that God satisfies us as water does for a deer

So as a reflection of him we should care for the earth as God has cared for us.

Entrusted, not entitled — God didn't hand over the deed saying do as you please. He handed over a responsibility.

An owner does whatever they want. "I possess this"

A manager answers to someone. "I care for this"

We must answer to God, and our power over this world does not come from our own authority but from God.

God also says, "Rule over." This is not a passive role. God is asking us to actively tend, guard, and represent Him in what He made.

Some of the earliest laws and commands involved this care

Put in the Garden of Eden to work it and and take care of it-Genesis 2:15

Do not eat meat that has life blood still in it. Meaning from an animal that was still alive. Meaning not to torture animals for our hunger. Though we will eat them. - Genesis 9: 4

Family, we were given authority, law, but we have chosen neglect.

And can I tell you... neglect is not neutrality. Walking past what God gave us and doing nothing, that's still a choice.

If you were given the Mona Lisa for a week what would you do? Use it as a napkin for your pizza fingers? Hang it in your bathroom? No, probably not. You would put it in a frame, store it somewhere safe, keep it away from your kids. Why, because you know it has value because of who created it, you know it has value, likely more than you could afford and so you wouldn't just settle for setting it somewhere you would take steps to keep it safe.

Brothers and sisters, an artist greater than Da Vinci has entrusted His beautiful artistry to us... and the question is... will we show Him our appreciation? Will we seek to honor what he has placed in our care or seek to honor ourselves by possessing what wasn't ours to start?

For Entitlement says: *this is mine, I'll do what I want.*

But Entrustment says: *this is His — and I'm accountable for what I do with it.* Which one are we living from?

Transition Statement: (Ian)

Now, an image-bearer who tends what the King made is not just doing a job. They are saying something about the King. And that declaration lived out in the everyday is exactly what worship looks like outside these walls... because...

3. Stewardship Is Worship (Ian)

The connection back to Psalm 24 — We started at the temple gate. People singing: *the earth is the Lord's*. Genesis shows us the other side of that, before there were buildings there was praise in creation. Worship isn't only for the temple but for all creation.

How we treat creation is a statement — It shows what we actually believe.

Care says: *my actions worship the true owner who is God*

Possession says: *my actions worship me and my desire to possess*

Every interaction with creation is either an act of worship or an act of practical atheism. It either says “this belongs to a God I honor” or “this belongs to me and I honor my busyness, labor or control more”

God honors our care in the small things and ways, let me show you here is a list of leaders in the bible and some of their first jobs.

Before Abraham fathered nations he cared for cattle .

Before Moses freed his people, he tended to livestock

Before David slew giants, defeated armies, and united tribes, he was a shepherd boy.

Before Jesus started his ministry he went into the wilderness for 40 days and was with the animals.

Their care for the vulnerable started in pastures not pulpits.

This is where formation shows up. Stewardship must meet worship. One without the other is meaningless... In James 2, tells his readers that faith without works is dead... faith meets works, worship meets stewardship

The more you care for what God made, the more you find yourself in awe of the God who made it. Creation care and worship are not two different things. They never were and they never will be

Our first job was to care for creation and walk with God and so is our last. We will tend to trees and enjoy their crop Revelations 22, Isaiah 11 says we will find rest, true rest in Jesus alongside animals, even the wolves, leopards, lions, bears, cobras and vipers. We will worship forever through caring for God's creation

The closing challenge — *How we treat creation reflects how we honor the Creator.* That's an invitation. Let your everyday life become an act of worship. Let the way you hold things — your stuff, your space, this earth — be a declaration that you know who it all belongs to.

You are also a part of this creation. Honoring God's creation means honoring his masterpiece, the creation he invested his image into. Being a good steward of creation is also being a good steward of others and ourselves.

IV. Illustration? Personal testimony?

Before Pastor Daniel leads us in our response time, I want to share my heart. I am a naturalist, I love the woods, the ocean, and the trees. If you ask me about my time in the Philippines or Yosemite, the word I always start with is green. I usually say something like, "it is so beautiful, so green." Then I'll discuss the moving of the spirit, the generosity of the people, and the stories of healing, but I start with that word, "green". In my heart the green is a gift to my weary soul. I pass over 20 trees to leave my street each morning but I never describe them as green, not because they aren't green but because they aren't the same. Within 500 feet of us right now there is probably a tree from the Americas, the islands, Europe and Asia. That we have brought here to try and green up our city. And to me they feel so dead. When you go to the trees and see where they have grown since long before me, they are green. I said it is a gift for my weary soul, and besides a small bit of drama I say that because the green trees encourage my soul; they are so beautiful no man could draw them accurately, yet the leaves I see one year are gone the next. I prayed to God, send me to live where nature abounds and he told me to stay and serve Long Beach, but every year he takes me to the mountains, where I can see that green and share my view of its beauty with young people. And I could ruminate on the stars in their might, and the rivers in their drive to meet the sea once more, but all of it reminds me how small I am, and yet God says I am his handiwork. All creation resounds with beauty that makes us yearn for the beautiful sight of God.

Now, I LOVE nature... sign me up anyday for Yosemite, Joshua Tree, etc... but you don't have to love nature the way I do, However, do you love His creation? Do you love His people?

When you see our neighbors...

When you see our children... do you see

When you think of your body...

Do you see the brush strokes of our creator

In the seafoam.

In the stars.

In the trees so green.

Do you see the fingerprints of the sculptor.

When I look closely, I see something worth caring for, worth stewarding, worth honoring the creator's design intention. Do you.

Pastor Daniel will lead us toward closing

V. RESPONSE (Tie the response to Jesus)

Tonight we're not closing with a to-do list. We're closing with a question: **What is being formed in you?** Because stewardship isn't a program you sign up for — it's a person you're becoming. I want to share with you some signposts of what that formation looks like when it's taking root.

A steward notices - formation produces attention

They begin to see what they used to walk past. The trash on the patio. The dying tree in the neighborhood. The wasteful habit they never questioned. Formation opens your eyes before it moves your hands.

A steward initiates - formation produces initiative

They don't wait to be asked. They don't need a church announcement or a volunteer sign-up sheet. Something in them has shifted — and it shows up in ordinary moments, without fanfare.

A steward improves - formation moves towards renewal

That question — applied consistently — is formation made practical. It works at every scale.

Second Slide

Start where we are

Your immediate space. This sanctuary, the restrooms, the patio, the parking lot. Can I be honest? I've seen many walk past trash on the floor or full cups left on the well and not pick them up. Family, this is where formation shows up first — in the small, unnoticed, ordinary things.

Then outward - your neighborhood, the places you frequent .

Your neighborhood. The park down the street. The block you drive through every week. Stewardship of creation isn't abstract — it's local before it's global. What does it look like to leave your corner of God's world better than you found it? I mean, can you imagine... what if the next time you go to your kids's soccer practice, not only

you clean up after yourself, but you also help lead others in caring for the space you just used?

Then further.

Your habits. What you consume, what you waste, what you choose. This is where stewardship becomes a daily liturgy — the small decisions that either form you toward generosity and care, or quietly form you toward entitlement. Every choice is a practice. Every practice is forming someone.

The question is always the same: *Am I living as an owner or a steward?*

An owner says: *this is mine.*

A steward says: *I am His — and so is everything He's placed in my hands.*

Not because someone is watching. But because of who you're becoming.

That's the radical disciple. Not the person who has it all figured out — but the person who is being formed, day by day, to steward creation with care because they know who it all belongs to.

VI. BLESSING

Would you please stand as Ian and I bless you. We have a tradition in Light and Life, a benediction, a blessing that you can carry with you as you leave this sanctuary:

Daniel:

Go out knowing that the earth is the Lord's — and everything in it.

The world you wake up to tomorrow, the street you drive down, the space you occupy — it all belongs to Him.

So go as stewards, not owners.

Steward faithfully your resources, your time, your space — knowing it was entrusted to you by a God who owns it all and chose to place it in your hands.

Ian:

And you were made in His image.

Not to own. Not to consume. Not to take.
But to represent the King in the King's world.
To tend it. To guard it. To restore it.
Let your life be a declaration.
Let the way you treat what He made
say something about who He is.
Let the ordinary become sacred.
Let the everyday become worship.

Both:

May the God who created it all
form in you the heart of a faithful steward.
May He open your eyes to what you've walked past.
May He move your hands before anyone has to ask.
The earth is the Lord's.
And so are you.

Go in peace, church. Pick up your kids and enjoy some hospitality. We'll see you on Sunday.