

The Parish of Wellow

Should we be concerned about looking after our planet?

Genesis 1:26 -31 & Colossians 1: 15 - 20

Passage, Sermon Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these sermon notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during the next few weeks to consider the questions below.

1. Sermon Passages - Genesis 1:26 - 31

²⁶Then 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." ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸God 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." ²⁹Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

³¹God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Colossians - 1: 13 - 20

¹³For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. ¹⁵He 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.

2. Sermon Notes

2.1 Introduction

- Most days there is something in the media about global warming or a situation arising from it.
- As Christians should we be concerned? Where do we start? The Bible is our reference book so let's see what Scripture says about looking after the planet.

2.2 Creation - the very beginning

a) Gen 1:26 says And 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"

- God has placed us as rulers over all the world and the rest of creation.
- Delegated Sovereignty was placed on man
- With this comes responsibility.

b) Gen 1:28-29 says "Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground. "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food."

- God is specifying that He is giving us all the plants and trees for food.
- Later in Genesis we learn that God allowed man to name all living creatures & entrusted mankind with the world and all that it contained.
- What a generous God we have.
- How do we respond when people give us gifts? Do we treasure or wreck them?

2.3 Where did it all go wrong?

a) Gen 2:16 - 17 "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

- The man created by God, Adam was put in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.
- Adam and Eve did eat from that tree and from then on man had to work the ground
- Result of their sin is that the earth is cursed.

b) The only way the earth can be relieved of its curse is through the forgiveness, healing and restoration of Adam's successors.

- The future wholeness of the earth and the whole of creation is bound up with the destiny of the children of God.

- We need to be redeemed and receive God's forgiveness. This can only happen by God appointing a successor to Adam.
- This is Jesus. He undoes the damaging work of Adam - clearly demonstrated by Luke (3:23-38).

2.4 Judgement and Salvation

- a) Matthew in his gospel refers to two earthquakes linked to Jesus death and resurrection
- b) The earth is longing to be freed from the curse in Genesis. This happens through the death and resurrection of Jesus.
- c) Jesus was there in the beginning
- d) 'by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible,..... all things were created by him and for him.' (Col 1:16) Creation is a gift of Christ. Respect and reverence follow.
- e) Creation does not exist for the human family but for Christ. The earth is here for us to delight in, to manage and to serve, but its centre is inhabited by Christ alone and not us.

2.5 What are the implications?

- a) The Son of Man came eating and drinking (Matt 11:19)
 - We are natural consumers and born traders. Our consumption is to be set within limits it is not for us to exploit but for Christ who entered the world as one of us. From the womb to the tomb.
 - He gave us an act of consumption - eating and drinking bread and wine.
 - Imagine if around the table out of 13 people (Jesus + 12 disciples) only four were allowed to partake. Jesus would not have tolerated this and scolds any who ignore the needs and right of others to eat.
 - But on Christ's earth one-third of the world indulges two-thirds of the earth's resources while the majority languishes in poverty and disease.
 - We cannot escape the moral force of the judgement of the Son of Man on all consumers.
- b) Respect
 - **Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. (Matt 10:29)**
 - Respect for the earth, God's creatures and the whole of creation is a hallmark of biblical faith.
 - If a hair cannot avoid the attention of God then a scudding cloud presaging a devastating change in climate, must be a matter of great concern.
 - We have a special obligation to provide moral leadership and an example of caring service to people and to all God's Creation.
 - The call to 'love the Lord your God' and 'Love your neighbour' (Matt 22: 37 & 39) takes on new implications.
 - God has shown us that He is committed to creation and He calls us to the ministry of reconciliation.
 - Human induced climate change poses a great threat the common good, especially the poor, vulnerable and future generations.
 - Human induced climate change diminishes God's creation.
- c) Jesus had a material ministry
 - He fed, healed, raised the dead, inspired crowds and influenced people
 - His attitude to creation was consonant with Genesis - everything God had made was good..
 - Jesus said that He came 'to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour'. This is the year of the Jubilee (Lev 25:10-12) a time for the earth to rest otherwise the land would be exhausted and infertile
 - He knew more than anyone the power of evil and the devastating effects on the material world
 - With his knowledge he prayed not that we should escape but that the earth should be again the place where God's will is done as perfectly as it is done in heaven.

3. Questions to consider back at home

- 3.1 Where would you look in the Bible for guidance about how we should care for the earth?
- 3.2 Jesus 'exercised a material ministry'. What examples would you give of this?
- 3.3 Sustainability is 'enjoying the earth's resources without jeopardizing the welfare of future generations'. How in our personal lifestyles do we practically hold together both joy and jeopardy?
- 3.4 'The beliefs that a person holds about the future of the earth inevitably affect and shape present attitudes to the earth.' How true is that of your own lifestyle?
- 3.5 'By virtue of creation, the covenant and the cross the earth is sacred.' How do these three actions of God affect your attitude to the earth?
- 3.6 What can you do to become more environmentally responsible?

If you would like to discuss these questions further please feel free to call me on 01761 437724

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