

Adult School of Ministry

Lesson for Sunday, September 19, 2021

Our Responsibility for God's Creation: God values His creation and commands us to care for it.

Scriptures: Genesis 1:28-30; 2:15, 19-20; Psalms 8:1-9; Genesis 9:1-3, 8-11; Genesis 1:31; Psalm 24:1-2; 89:11; 145:13-17.

The Lesson Overview: This lesson informs and reminds us that this earth, this world, we inhabit, does not belong to us. We live here for a short while, at longest, availing ourselves of the benefits of living in a world that, in fact, belongs to God. We are allowed by God to enjoy the benefits and pleasures that come from living in a world God created for His own glory. Our living in this world is as though someone built a grand house for himself, and then said to you, "The house is mine, but you have my permission to live in it and enjoy it your whole lifetime. All I ask is that you take good care of the house." This is the essence of what it means to be a good steward of God's creation.

Historical Background: This lesson is based on Scriptures from Genesis chapters 1, 2, and 9, and from Psalms 8, 24, 89, and 145. The authorship of Genesis is attributed to Moses, and was likely written during the 40 years he led the Israelites in the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula (1445-1405 BC). Psalms 8, 24, and 145 were all composed by David, who was born about 1040 BC. David, in addition to being a mighty warrior and king of Israel, was also a Holy Spirit inspired prophet and poet (see 2 Samuel 23:1-2). Psalm 89 was composed by Ethan the Ezrahite, a man noted for his wisdom in King Solomon's time, see 1 Kings 4:30-31.

Lesson Outline:

1. Caretakers of Creation: Genesis 1:28-30; 2:15, 19-20.
 - A. On Having Dominion, 1:28-30.
 - B. Keeper of the Garden, 2:15, 19-20.
2. Stewards Over God's Works: Psalm 8:1-9; Genesis 9:1-3, 8-11.
 - A. Stewards of God's Possessions, Ps. 8:1-9.
 - B. Mandate for a New Beginning, Gen. 9:1-3, 8-11.
3. God Values His Creation: Genesis 1:31; Psalms 24:1-2; 89:11; 145:13-17.
 - A. God's Very Good Creation, Gen. 1:31; Ps. 24:1-2; 89:11.
 - B. God Sustains His Creation, Ps. 145:13-17.

Discussing the Lesson:

1. Caretakers Of Creation: Genesis 1:28-30; 2:15, 19-20.

A. On Having Dominion, Gen. 1:28-30.

- 1) Before they fell by sinning, God blessed Adam and Eve, and He commanded them to “Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish (fill) the earth, and subdue it”, v. 28.
- 2) This obviously meant they were to reproduce their own kind (humans) by means of physical regeneration, and, in process of time, humans were to fill the earth with humans by means of reproduction. But what was the meaning of the command to “subdue” the earth?
- 3) The Hebrew word translated “subdue” (v. 28) means “to bring into subjection.” Therefore, God’s command to Adam and Eve to subdue the earth meant that humans, functioning by authority of God’s mandate, are to bring the earth into subjection to themselves for God’s glory.
- 4) God’s mandate to Adam and Eve gave humans “dominion” (v. 26); that is, authority to rule over all the other creatures of God living in the waters, flying through the air, and living on the land (v. 28).
- 5) However, humans are to rule over the creation, not for their own selfish interests, but as God’s servants, doing His will. Many have taken God’s mandate to subdue and have dominion over the earth and its resources to mean they are free to exploit the earth and its resources however and to whatever extent they choose, without regard for the harm they are doing to the earth, its creatures, or other humans.
- 6) Certainly, such irresponsible behavior is not God’s will. The earth and its creatures we humans are commanded by God to subdue and have dominion over belong to God, not to us, and we are to fulfill God’s mandate to please God the Creator, not our sinful selves.
- 7) Before Adam and Eve sinned, only the plants that grow on the earth were their food, and also the food of the animals, vv. 29-30.

B. Keeper of the Garden, Gen. 2:15, 19-20.

- 1) Before Adam and Eve fell by sinning, God gave Adam work to do by placing him in the garden of Eden “to dress (tend or cultivate) and to keep it”, v. 15.
- 2) Also, God gave Adam the task of assigning names to all of the land animals and birds, vv. 19-20. This signified Adam’s God-given authority over the animals and birds, and the names Adam gave them likely indicated something of the beneficial (or esthetic) relation of each animal or bird to Adam.
- 3) The result being that, “for Adam there was not found an help [helper] meet [suitable, comparable] for him”, v. 20.
- 4) God’s making Adam the keeper of the garden of Eden, and the namer of the animals and birds, sheds light on the kind of work God gave him to

do. When God completed the creation of our world, God saw that everything He had made (including humans) “was very good”, Gen. 1:31. When something is “very good,” this does not mean it is “perfect” or cannot be made better.

- 5) Obviously, God wanted Adam (and Eve) to make the “very good” garden of Eden better, by using their God-given intellect, imagination, and esthetic appreciation to make the garden more orderly, more beautiful, and more productive.
- 6) This is exactly what gardeners do today by cultivating and tending the naturally growing plants of earth. By implication, the presence and work of Adam and Eve in the garden were intended by God to make their own lives, and the “very good” lives of the animals and birds even better.
- 7) Humans exercise limited dominion over the earth’s resources and creatures, but all too often that dominion has been corrupted by sinful desires and ambitions, resulting in no good for humans and no glory for God the Creator.
- 8) When we busy ourselves (as we always do) with subduing the earth and having dominion over it, God’s will is that we should do so with reverence for Him who is the Creator and Owner of it all, and with highest regard for pleasing Him.

2. Stewards Over God’s Works: Psalm 8:1-9, Genesis 9:1-3, 8-11.

A. Stewards of God’s Possessions, Ps. 8:1-9.

- 1) By definition, a steward is a person employed by the owner of a household or estate, to manage the household or estate for the owner. This is the principle that applies to human stewardship of the earth, its resources, and its creatures. God is the owner of everything, and we are to be wise and faithful stewards of His possessions.
- 2) This psalm by David expresses his amazement that God, the Creator of heaven and earth, vv. 1-3, has given humans dominion over His earthly creation and creatures, vv. 4-6.
- 3) This God-given stewardship responsibility extends to domesticated and wild animals, v. 7, to birds and fish, and to all creatures that live in the seas, v. 8.
- 4) God’s purpose in placing this stewardship responsibility on humans is that His excellence may be declared, vv. 1-2, 9.

B. Mandate for a New Beginning, Gen. 9:1-3, 8-11.

- 1) After God destroyed all the wicked inhabitants of the earth by means of the Flood. He gave Noah and his family a mandate for a new beginning on earth.
- 2) The covenant God established with Noah, his family, and “every living creatures”, Gen. 9:8-10, is identified by Jews and Christians as the

Noachian Covenant. The God-given sign of this covenant is the rainbow, vv. 11-17.

- 3) After the Flood, God gave the same command to Noah and his family He had given originally to Adam and Eve: “Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish [fill] the earth”, Gen. 9:3 also compare Gen. 1:28.
- 4) Next, God signified human dominion over the other creatures on earth by saying to Noah and his family, “The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every fowl [bird] of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat [food] for you; even as the green herb [plants] have I given you all things”, Gen. 9:2-3; compare with Gen. 1:29-30.
- 5) In the original commandment given to Adam and Eve before they sinned, only plant products were given as food for humans and animals. After the Flood, God gave both animals and plants as food for humans.
- 6) Nevertheless, God requires that we hold all life sacred (Gen. 9:4-6), and this is the basis of the practice of Kosher (dietary) law among the Jews.
- 7) It is apparent from Scripture that God intended in the beginning, and after the Flood, that His human creatures should have dominion (rule) over the earth as His stewards.
- 8) The problem with this always has been, and still is, human sinfulness. All too often, humans choose to ignore God, who is the owner of the whole creation, to go their own way with indifference to God or outright rebellion against God.
- 9) Jews say that, in the Noachian Covenant are seven God-given Precepts for all people:
 - a) Reverence God;
 - b) Do justice;
 - c) Hold life sacred;
 - d) Abstain from idolatry;
 - e) Abstain from murder;
 - f) Abstain from theft;
 - g) Abstain from sexual immorality.

These precepts embody the universal moral law by which humans are to live as good stewards of the earth with responsibility to God.

3. God Values His Creation: Genesis 1:31; Psalms 24:1-2; 89:11; 145:13-17.

A. God’s Very Good Creation: Gen. 1:31; Ps. 24:1-2; 89:11.

- 1) In the beginning, before humans sinned, God saw that everything He had created, including His human creatures, “was very good”, Gen. 1:31.
- 2) The most obvious consequence of human sinfulness is that all living things on earth (humans, animals, and plants) must eventually die. The consequences of human sinfulness are also seen in disease, decay, and

suffering. In spite of all that, much of the goodness with which God blessed His whole creation in the beginning still shines through.

- 3) The beauty of the earth and its creatures is amazing to behold, and the benefits derived from the earth and its creatures are God's providence for the existence of all living things on earth. For all of this, the glory of God the Creator, who proves continually that value He places on His creation and creatures.
- 4) Our whole world belongs to God: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness [abundance] thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein", Ps. 24:1; see Ps. 89:11.
- 5) Many secular-minded people do not acknowledge there is a God who created the universe. In their thinking, the earth and the universe do not belong to God, and, therefore, they do not accept the idea that they have any responsibility to God for how they live in this planet or what they do with its resources and creatures.
- 6) On-the-other-hand, if we take seriously the belief that God the Creator owns everything, and conduct our lives by this faith, our living will bring glory to God, while also being beneficial to ourselves and others.

B. God Sustains His Creation, Ps. 145:13-17.

- 1) For this lesson, the two key verses of this passage of Scripture are 15-16. These verses tell that God sustains "every living thing" on earth, v. 16. All wait on God for the provision of those things essential for our life on this planet, v. 15.
- 2) All that is essential for our existence come from the hand of God, v. 16. Some would say, "I provide for myself. I earn money, and I buy the things I need and want." It is easy to forget that all the things we may buy would not be there for purchase without God's gracious providence.
- 3) Food, clothing, shelter, and all the things that make our lives easier and enjoyable do not happen simply because of human endeavor. They happen in response to human endeavor because, in the first place, God provides, sustaining all living things on earth.
- 4) Rebuking some of the Corinthians for their sectarian arrogance, the Apostle Paul asked them a question we all do well to ponder: "What do you have that you did not receive?" 1 Cor. 4:7 NKJV.
- 5) The fact is, all of us have received everything we have from others, and of most importance, we have received from God everything that makes our existence on this earth possible.
- 6) The Apostle Paul stated to the Greeks in Athens: "God, who made the world and everything in it,...gives to all life, breath, and all things", Acts 17:24-25 NKJV. The investment God makes in our lives reveals the value He places on His creation and creatures.

Call to Discipleship: Fulfilling our responsibilities to God is central to what it means to be a disciple of Christ. Jesus lived and died to do the will of God His Father, giving us an example to follow in pursuing complete obedience to God in all aspects of our living.

Ministry in Action: As believers in Christ, encourage one another by example, and pray for one another to be good stewards of all the things of God's earth with which He has blessed us.