

Creatures caring for the Creator's creation

Message for Sunday, September 24, 2017
by Bruce Fraser

God 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.”

Scripture: Genesis 1:26-28

Children's Message:

Did you ever read *Winnie the Pooh*? What a great story! It's about a bear named Winnie the Pooh (or simply “Pooh Bear”) and his friends, and all the troubles they get into.

Pooh is known for his love of honey (actually he loves to eat *anything*, but honey is his favourite). This is what he said about honey:

“The only reason for being a bee is to make honey. And the only reason for making honey is so I can eat it.”

What do you think of that?

This is what God says to the first people:

Genesis 1:28, New Living Translation:

Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

-) Does this mean we can do whatever we want, since it's “ours”?
-) Ask for ideas on how we can care for the world.

Message “Creatures caring for the Creator's creation”

God appoints us to be in charge over creation

The account of God creating the universe includes this instruction about being responsible for the creation:

Genesis 1:26–28, New International Version:

Then 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.”

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

One way of interpreting this is that humans are superior to everything else in nature—we are the only thing that matters—and our job is to *subdue* the earth, and to *rule* over it. Trees are just lumber that hasn't been cut up yet. Water is a commodity waiting to be dammed or bottled. Who cares if we use it all up? Jesus is coming soon, and then we won't need trees or water. This kind of thinking is still prevalent today in many churches.

There is another way of looking at this passage. Go back and read the rest of that first chapter of Genesis. It is significant that just about every time after God makes part of the creation, the passage ends with the words, “And God saw that it was good.” God is rather fond of this world, and we have been given the job to look after it.

When God put us in charge of the world, there comes with that responsibility to be good stewards, to care for the world, to make sure that there's enough for everyone, both today and for future generations.

Scientists have been warning us for years that our use of fossil fuels will cause the temperature of the earth's atmosphere to increase, resulting in more storms and more powerful storms. Well, this last month we've seen that happen with a vengeance. May it be a wake-up call for everyone.

Next Steps: Ways that we can care for creation

Here are some simple ideas which can make a small difference. Yes, the result is negligible. But if billions of people around the world all do this, the result can be tremendous.

-) **The 3 Rs: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.** Remember that these are in order of priority. The most important thing is to **Reduce** how much we consume. Canadians and Americans use the world's resources vastly out of proportion to our numbers.

-) Reduce your use of water by installing low-flow aerators on faucets and showerheads, and do not leave the water running when brushing teeth, showering, shaving, or washing dishes or your car.
-) Buy fewer prepared foods (and all their excess packaging).
-) Wear a sweater and turn down your thermostat.
-) For lunches at church, use regular dishes and cutlery (your own or the church's). Make a rule: no styrofoam or plastic throwaways.
-) Walk when doing your errands; don't drive between every single store.
-) Plant a garden, plant trees, and stop using poisons to keep things green.
-) Shower with your spouse! 😊
-) Make do, use it up, wear it out. Buy used things from a thrift store. Live simply, so that others may simply live.
-) Take unwanted, reusable items to a thrift shop or charitable organization, and return items such as clothes hangers and plastic flower pots back to merchants.
-) Buy goods made from recycled materials.
-) Keep your vehicle tuned up, to use less gas and produce less pollution.

Robert Tschannen-Moran is a preacher in Ohio. He wrote about a friend of his:

One of my best friends in Chicago for many years was a single woman, about my age, who went from relationship to relationship to relationship. One year, two years, three years. Black, white, brown, yellow. Older, younger. Richer, poorer. She tried them all, but it never seemed to work out. This woman had a lot going for her, but she could never seem to find the right person to settle down with.

Knowing that I was a morning person, Sue once asked me to drive her out at 4:00 in the morning to a far-distant suburb so that she could decorate her new boy friend's door with happy birthday greetings. Before he awoke to leave for work, Sue trimmed the front door with a red-scalloped border, tied helium balloons on the

door knob, and left a basket of presents on the stoop. It was very touching and also rather sad.

On the way back Sue and I stopped for breakfast at a coffee shop, talking about life and love and the things that make the world go 'round. "So is this one the one?" I asked her, "is this the guy with whom you're going to settle down and make a commitment, 'till death do you part?" Sue thought for a moment and said, "Probably not. You know I've done a lot of dating, and I've met a lot of men, and I've come to the conclusion that all men can be put into one of two categories. First, there are the givers and then there are the takers." She looked at me, with glistening eyes, and said, "So far, all I've met have been takers." Then, regaining her composure, she said, "And I have no intention of hooking up with a taker."

I'm sure that you know what my friend was talking about. In life, in every sphere of life, we meet people who are givers and we meet people who are takers. We are warmed by, and we love to respond enthusiastically to, people who are givers. But we get bent out of shape, and angry, and frustrated, and suspicious of people who are takers.

When it comes to how you treat God's creation, what are you? A giver or a taker?