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## Earth Stewardship

Genesis 2:15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Psalms 24:1 The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; 2 for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.

Matthew 10: 29-31 29 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. 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Matthew 6:25-30 25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?

26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Job 38:4-18 4 "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. 5 Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!

Who stretched a measuring line across it? 6 On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone— 7 while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?

8 "Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, 9 when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, 10 when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, 11 when I said, 'This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt'?

12 "Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place, 13 that it might take the earth by the edges and shake the wicked out of it? 14 The earth takes shape like clay under a seal; its features stand out like those of a garment. 15 The wicked are denied their light, and their upraised arm is broken.

16 "Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? 17 Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death? 18 Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this.

Matthew 7:12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Romans 8:19-23 19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

2 Peter 3:9-11 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. 11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives

There is a story about a pastor who got ready to hold worship, but there was a great snow. He lived next to the church so he went to prepare worship. Only one person showed up. The person who showed up looked at the pastor, and the pastor, looking back, asked, "Well, it's only you and me, do you still want me to conduct worship, or should I cancel it?" The man who had shown up was a farmer, and he replied, "Well, Pastor, if I go out to feed the cattle, and only one comes to the barn, I still feed that one." So the pastor led worship, the whole service, the whole sermon. As the service was over, he asked the farmer, "Well, what do you think?" The farmer replied, "Pastor, if only one cow shows up, I don't give him all the feed for the whole flock."

The topic I have been requested to preach on that we are examining today from God's Word is Earth Stewardship. Do you see what I have in my hand. This week, a book and a video showed up called, "Environmental Stewardship. I looked at it. There is a danger of saying too much, and not saying enough. The environment a hot topic politically. The church for the most part has addressed this topic after it became a political topic. If I go into the politics, I say too much. If I say nothing, I say too little. Our goal today is to see the simple truths God gives us in the Scriptures about how Christians are to think and act when it comes to caring for our world.

Earth stewardship actually begins at the beginning of the Bible. In Genesis 2:15, God tells us, **The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.** There are a couple of basic truths here. God made the world. God made people. God gives the world to people to live in, and calls on them to both work it, and care for it. People are to use the world, in a way that exhibits care. That sounds like management of our natural resources, or earth stewardship. That is in the very beginning of the Bible.

Psalms 24 can help us to look a little more closely at these truths. Verses 1 and 2 say, **1 The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; 2 for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.** Ultimately, the world belongs, not to people, but to God. Ultimately people, as creatures of God, belong to Him as well. This is contrary to thinking in our culture which says "We don't belong to anyone, and no one can tell me what to do." God's words in Psalm 24 and the rest of Scripture disagree. God made us and we are His.

In fact, there are those who feel that *anytime* people use the world they abuse it. But, look at Matthew 10 and Matthew 6. Matthew 10: 29-31 says, **29 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. 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.** Matthew 6:25-30 says, **25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?**

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Jesus tells us that God watches out for the world, but even more God takes care of people. People are not less important than our earth. In God's eyes people are His primary concern. But that doesn't give people the right to abuse the world either. They are still to care for the world.

Our Old Testament Lesson for today also teaches us a lesson. A couple of years ago, as we were having uncharacteristically warm summers, we heard of changes in wildlife habitat in the oceans. I also heard that this was a reason for a poor return of salmon. The water was too warm. This

summer we have had an uncharacteristically cold summer. I heard one news report say that this summer rivaled 1970 in being the coldest on record, and was indeed on track to be colder than 1970. I then heard people say the salmon weren't coming in because it was too cold. Does that confuse you? It does me. I am not a scientist, so I should watch myself, but I am a student of the Bible. God asks Job how the world works, and then God says, **Surely you know!** and **Tell me, if you know all this.** But, Job did not know. It is good to remember, even as we learn more about the earth, that only God really knows how it all works.

The person who asked for this sermon suggested a quote from a well known Lutheran Theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who is to have stated, "*The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world that it leaves to its children.*" There is real truth in that statement. Jesus actually says it better. In Matthew 7:12 Jesus says, **So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.** All our lives are to bless others. This includes our management of the world.

And based on Bonhoeffer's words and Jesus' words, our world, and our society are faulty, in other words, we are sinful. We do not serve God as we should, nor do we serve others.

We are not the only ones who suffer for all this, listen to Romans 8:19-23 **19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.** Even the created world suffers because of the horrible sin of people and the earth waits for God's deliverance. We really need a Savior. So, God sent Jesus, who died and rose, and who will deliver His people from sin for eternal life in heaven. In the Bible, even when we look at earth stewardship, it all comes back to Jesus.

Please look finally at 2 Peter 3:9-11 **9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. 11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives.** God's primary purpose is for people to learn of His forgiving love in Jesus, and to come to be saved by His grace in Jesus. Ultimately this world will be destroyed. But, in this life, as we wait for God's love, we are to show God's love with "holy and godly lives." One way we do that is to love one another. One way we are to love one another is to work the earth, and care for it.

Hopefully as you came to the trough today, you have received real food. But, in this topic that is so much written about today, I pray that you haven't heard so much as to confuse you, or too little to mean anything. Rather, I pray that God has spoken out of His Word and you have been fed. Amen.

