

CALLED TO BE CARETAKERS
Genesis 1:26-31, Psalm 8, 1 Peter 4:7-11

(Read Genesis 1:26-31)

Intro: This is the first talk in a month long series on stewardship. I think this a subject that is not very threatening for ABCers. But it is for some. They hear the word, stewardship and cold fear strikes them to their core because stewardship is about money, right? And the preacher's after my money, right? After all they've heard the joke about the preacher who got up to preach about giving and he says to the nervous members of his congregation:

"I've got good news and I've got bad news. The good news is this church has all the money it needs. The bad news all that money is still in your pockets!"

It is true, stewardship is about money – but it's also about much, much more. It's about everything. As the children of the living God and followers of the risen Christ – all we *have* is God's because all we *are* is God's. The other night in worship at DinnerChurch we sang I SURRENDER ALL which begins with

All to Jesus I surrender,

All to Him I freely give;

. . . and while that may be true to a varying extent in our lives and some of us might feel dishonest as we sing it, it is supposed to be true. All we have is God's and we are the stewards of it. So we will indeed talk about money but it will be several weeks down the road – and that's good – because I don't think I've preached a sermon about money since before the COVID lockdown which began three years ago next week.

Today's talk is about God's creation. And in this series, which I have entitled THE CALL – this opening message I've entitled *Called to be Caretakers*, as we look at this earth God has given to us for our safekeeping. It's good for this to be the first, because we have not been very good at caring for our Father's world. Now don't worry, I'm not going to harangue us like a wild-eyed, tree hugging environmentalist. I'm just going to point out, by using just three passages out of many, that we are to be providing for and standing up for the loving care of God's creation.

Now, finally, the rest of the talk. In Genesis 1:26 – 31, which I read as I opened this talk we see that. . .

We are God's highest creation, we have the ultimate responsibility for the care of all there is. That is the very definition of stewardship

- Imagine your parents have paid about \$550 for a beautiful wedding cake. And then a highly recommended and regarded baker who is a dear friend of your best friend and who REALLY loves her work spends hours planning, mixing, baking, icing and decorating your three tiered wedding cake (with macarons per your special request). And then she safely delivers the cake to your reception hall. Everyone Oohs! and Aahs! at its beauty and creativity. But when you and your new husband go to cut the cake, the table collapses at the mere touch of your knife and the beautiful, tasty, and terribly expensive creation becomes a glop of sweetness on the dance floor.

All that work gone in a flash! Mom and Dad's hard earned money is splattered on the shoes of expectant onlookers. And what does this mean?! The cutting of the cake means something doesn't it?! After all, when a cake is about to be cut at weddings I've been to, as the word goes out, cameras come out and the mob runs to the cake table. It turns out there are a bunch of meanings attached to it and in my Google search none of them seemed plausible – but it means...SOMETHING! So is this a bad omen when a cake falls? I don't know, but what I do know is that dessert is on the floor and only the men in crowd who aren't at all worried by the 5 second rule are circling the mess a looking for the best piece to snap up and savor.

But all that loving, creative work – and someone has destroyed it!

- God lovingly created all that there is. He created our earth and everything in it, including us in six days. If you read the 25 verses that lead up to our text, you know that at the end of each day of creation, God looked at his work and pronounced it as good. But he was being modest and the writer of Genesis, who was Moses, really understated the wonder of that creation – because it wasn't just good, it was perfect.
- FB Meyer writes this about God's perfect work. "*Creation reveals God's nature, as the picture the artist. His eternal power and godhead are visible in his works.*" Did you notice that verse 26 begins with Then God said, "*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.*" Genesis 1:26a. Let US make humanity is OUR likeness. It's a picture of the trinity at work in creation and that is why Meyer goes on to say in his

own soaring and descriptive language, “*And all things and beings were made through Jesus Christ. The hands of the Son of God wove the blue curtains above us and filled them with luminaries. The seas are his; he made them and filled them with living creatures. The woodlands are the outcome of his mind, and he filled them with flowers and birds. He taught them to live without worry. He filled the tiny heart of the mother bird with love for her young. His are the cattle on a thousand hills. He molded the red earth into his own likeness and made man. We were made to have dominion. Ask God to put all things, especially all the evil things of your heart, under your feet. The world is good, and if you are good you find it so.*”

- Dominion means being a caretaker not a taker or a destroyer. This is a beautiful creation that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit put their creative mind together to lovingly fashion and far too often the highest of that creation, mankind has left it a mess on the floor. We must, as long as it depends on us (to borrow some of Paul’s language from Romans 12), make sure we care well for it. Clyde Francisco writes: “In Genesis 1 God is portrayed as freely creating. Just so man, although unable to achieve God’s unique creativity, also has the ability to make a new beginning, to make the world better or worse. The animals live by instinct, but man is made for better things. The animals are told only to procreate. Man has the additional assignments of establishing dominion and subduing. If a man is cold, he may light a fire; if he is hot, he may build an air conditioner. Animals within the limits of their instincts must adjust to the environment they cannot change. Man can change it for better or for worse.” (End Quote) It’s like this, man was to expedite the process of subduing, it was his privilege and challenge. Francisco goes on “It has been the tragedy of man’s history that he has thought the dominion over nature given to him was for his own benefit. As a result he has squandered the earth’s resources. Now man is coming to realize that his dominion consists of the responsibility to help every aspect of nature to attain its highest goal. In a sense, he is to join God in the awesome task of continuing the work of creation.”
- Instead of being destroyers of creation – we get are called to be caretaker of that wonderful creation. This is because . . .

Caring for what is God's brings glory to him

- And it’s good motivation. Let’s take a quick look at Psalm 8 which we heard during our music and worship earlier. The Psalmist is in spasms of joy at a creator God who is so completely otherly yet has included humanity in his plan.
- John Durham comments that “*The song opens with one of the most profound yet simple praise prayers of the Book of Psalms.*” He points out that the word translated as “majestic” in most translations, may also be rendered glorious, powerful, and delightful. That coupled with the fact that Yahweh’s name often represents or is even equal to his very presence in Old Testament thought, the line may be rendered “*Yahweh, our Lord, how delightful is your presence throughout all the earth!*”
- This is a powerful thought. Think about it! Ponder the fact that the glory of God’s presence is not limited to any part of the earth, but encompasses it, is followed by the next line that shows that God’s majesty extends even above the heavens. That’s should not be a new thought for us – but maybe it is. Soak that up. God is present everywhere! That’s what Creator God can do. The extent of God’s wonderful creation is mind-boggling, as is the complexity of his work, and the awesome responsibility is ours to care for that handiwork. It’s God’s gift to us. Being caretakers of creation is our gift.
- Finally, another reminder that . . .

It all belongs to God

- Let’s quickly look at 1 Peter 4:7-11. Listen,
The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:7-11
- Peter doesn’t overtly address Creation here, but he definitely points out that the people of God are to be the caretakers of . . . EVERYTHING! Paul told Colossian slaves *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for*

the Lord and not for men. Colossians 3:23. But, the truth is that is the calling of every Christ Follower. That includes our calling to be caretakers of the earth and everything in it. Oh, it's a tall order, but we are called to it.

- David Wheaton writes “*It is urgent that Christians practice their calling, displaying self-control, mutual love, and a diligent stewardship of the gifts God has given them. This is the life that will bring glory to God.*” There it is again! We are to care for our gifts from God and creation is a gift and the care of it is a gift – AND it brings glory to God as we do!
- Barclay writes this about Peter’s words, “*It is only when we see the affairs of Earth in the light of eternity that we see them in their proper proportions; it is when God is given his proper place that everything takes its proper place. The Christian has to regard himself as a steward of God.*” (THERE’S THAT WORD AGAIN!!!) And he ends with this, “*The Christian must always be under the conviction that nothing he possesses of material goods or personal qualities is his own; it all belongs to God and he must ever use what he has in the interests of God to whom he has always answerable.*”

Conclusion: It all comes down to this: *The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof* Psalm 24:1. That means we are his and as the one who have surrendered our lives and our eternity to him we are also the caretakers of the earth. It is our calling and as we carry out that calling the aim of all we do is that God will be glorified. Amen.