

A Special Responsibility

Rev. Todd R. Lattig / General

A NEW CREATION / Responsibility; Accountability; Creation / Genesis 1:28–31; Genesis 9:8–17
Though we are but one part of a vast creation, humanity has been given a special responsibility by God. As those created in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth that, in turns, sustains us.

Focus Statement

- Though we are but one part of a vast creation,
 - humanity has been given a special responsibility by God.
 - As those created in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth that, in turns, sustains us.

Things to Consider

- What are some of the ways we often define what it means to be human
 - or what makes human beings unique among animals?
 - › **Pause**
- In our message today,
 - we will explore an important part of what it means to be human from a biblical perspective –
 - both the blessing and the responsibility of our humanity,
 - of being created in God’s image (two sides of one coin).

What Scripture Says

- We don’t even get our own day –
 - but we do receive a special blessing and responsibility:

- stewardship of all of God’s good work (verse 28).
- The beauty and resources of the created world are gifted to us,
 - on loan,
 - to aid humanity in our work of filling the earth and growing the human family.
 - Along with these gifts comes the concurrent responsibility of making sure those good resources
 - are equitably available to “everything that has life.” ([Gen. 1:30](#)).
- In the NRSV, the word for “govern” is dominion. That word here is challenging.
 - It sometimes connotes some level of violence and harshness (i.e., domination),
 - although through context, tradition, experience, and reason,
 - we can make a solid case that our special responsibility as humans towards creation is one of “stewardship” not “domination” as we commonly understand it.
 - Dominion means sovereignty or control.
 - Domination is the exercise of control of sovereignty over something...and it is usually done through force.
 - But to rule or to govern is a high office or calling.
 - God is placing us as rulers over nature...to care for it, to live along with it, and to protect it.
 - That is the job of a true and just ruler.
 - To ensure the health and well-being of that which they rule.
 - To do otherwise is a betrayal of a sacred trust given to us by God.
 - Sadly, such passages as [Genesis 1](#) have been misused

- to justify violence against and the exploitation of natural resources, non-human animals, etc.
- In [Genesis 9](#), God sees an earth filled with violence as corrupt ([Genesis 6:11-13](#)), corrupt enough to destroy.
 - Yet God preserves human and non-human life through Noah and his faithful obedience.
 - I want you to NOTE how the covenant God makes after the flood (in [Genesis 9:8-17](#)) is with Noah, his family, *and* “every living creature”.
 - How does this offer a different perspective from what we mistakenly see as a humanity-centered covenant?
 - › Pause
- In the [Genesis 1](#) passage,
 - God’s good nature is revealed as the earth brings forth the first life in the universe.
 - The particular attribute of God as “giver” (natan in Hebrew) is demonstrated in the announcement of why vegetation (plant, seed, fruit) exists:
 - “you shall have them as food” ([Gen. 1:29](#)).
 - It is in the divine, exhibited on the sixth day of creation, that humans are gifted with bounteous good food and the natural resources we need to thrive,
 - a praise -worthy characteristic of God featured throughout scripture.
 - But in the same breath, we hear the very special responsibility of humanity to assure
 - that every beast, bird, and creeping thing (as we see in [Gen. 1:30](#)) has access to what it needs to survive and thrive.
 - The [Genesis 9](#) passage reaffirms God’s commitment to the wellbeing of all creation.

- It follows Noah’s faithful care (stewardship) of the creatures entrusted to him ([Gen. 9:10](#)).
- We humans beings are created in *the image of God* ([Gen. 1:27](#))
 - and are both challenged and made responsible to “image” God in the way that we steward earth’s resources.
 - How do we, today, reflect (or mirror) the divine activity of Yahweh as a provider for all?
 - › **Pause**
 - How do we, like Noah, mirror God’s image as sustainer,
 - while trusting that God will ultimately sustain us and all creation as we do?
- The resurrection appearances of Jesus often picture the disciples “at the table” ([Mark 16:14](#))
 - or specifically sharing in a meal (we see this in [Luke 24:30](#), [35b](#), [Luke 24:41-43](#), [John 21:12-14](#)).
 - In the new creation where resurrection changes everything sorrowful,
 - we see evidence that God has not vacated the earth (perfect in its creation) but continues - daily!
 - through the Holy Spirit and the spirited-filled Church to make provision for all.

What This Means For You

- What action(s) can you take to assume or deepen your special responsibility as stewards of God’s creation?
 - For instance, we might choose to focus on an issue such as food justice
 - to highlight our role as providers made in God’s image.
 - For example, we could encourage food choices which steward our own best physical health.

- We could commit ourselves to making purchases which respect the producers (workers) of the food we eat.
 - We could be advocates of reduction in food waste.
- Do we have gardeners? We could support or start a community garden that helps supply local folks in need with fresh, native vegetables.
- Whether you are seasoned or new to the church,
 - you may be very familiar with ecological responsibility
 - and may be surprised that the church has something to say about it.
 - Friends, there is a mutually beneficial relationship between science and faith.
 - Both the Bible and Scientists tell us that we should be caring for the earth.
 - We have both a scientific and an theological imperative to being good stewards of the earth.
 - Science and faith are not necessarily opposed but can both contribute an important piece to the climate conversation.

What This Means for Us

John Wesley taught that there are three dimensions to humanity's creation in the image of God:

the natural image,

the political image,

and the moral image.

The political image refers to humanity's calling to care for the earth and the other creatures that inhabit it.

Just as God is Ruler over all creation,

so humanity is caretaker and "governor" of this world (Wesley, Sermon 45: 'The New Birth').

Humanity is to be ‘the channel of conveyance’ of blessings of God to our fellow creatures.” (Wesley Study Bible, p. 3)

- Friends our church is already being good stewards of our resources for the sake of others and creation.
 - We are generating electricity via the sun with our solar panels.
 - We are raising food for people in need through the Weekend Bag Program...
 - And we are feeding the hungry literally at Manna House each month.
 - At Treasures of Hope, we are recycling things that people would otherwise throw away and making sure such things find a good home and good use.
 - At our Potluck suppers we are using our resources to feed both people’s bellies and their souls.
 - The need for community is seen at those dinners!
- In what other ways can we, together, become better stewards of the earth and her resources...
 - witnessing to God’s image in us and God’s love for all Creation?
 - Friends, together, we can and WILL make an positive impact on our world. Amen? Amen.