

Coach House Church

BEACONS

GOOD STEWARDS

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It's been very warm recently. Warm weather seems to divide us into two camps, those who like it hot and those who don't. I have to say that I am in the latter group, hot weather slows me down and I can't get anything done. As I write this beacon it is 28 degrees in my house so it is a miracle that I am even writing at all.

Now one topic that always seems to come up during times of hot weather is "Global Warming". Global warming seems to get blamed for any type of weather that is anything other than bland. We have seen some terrible natural events recently, including flooding in Germany and a heatwave in Canada and America. Our hearts go out to those people who lost loved ones in these terrible tragedies but are we right to blame ourselves for these events or is it just a part of the natural world?

When God created the world 6500 years ago the Bible tells us that it was very good. It was created perfectly, it was in balance and was designed to function for all eternity. Unfortunately man came along and made a mess of it, so I suppose in that sense it is our fault, but that isn't what is being taught to us by the scientists and the philosophers of this age.

Scientists teach us that we have created a lot of Carbon Dioxide gas and that it is this gas that is making the world warm up. It is certainly true that we are burning stuff faster than ever so to most people it would seem logical that if the scientists say that this is the problem then it must be, right?

What is often forgotten in this discussion is that it was a lot warmer during the medieval period. Crop grew more strongly and grapes were widely grown throughout England. This wasn't the only time in history when this has happened, it was equally hot in the years just before Jesus was born. At neither of these times were we producing much of the so called "Greenhouse Gasses" So maybe it isn't the gas that is causing the problem.

I expect some of you who are a bit older will remember that in the 1970s all the scientists were telling us that we were on the verge of a mini ice age. They were just as convinced of that back then as they are about the warming just now. How can there be two such extremes so close together?

At the heart of all these issues is the environmental lobby. People who appear to have the best interests of our planet at heart, they appear to want to do the right things, it is hard to argue against looking after what we have and placing a value on the nature around us, but is this always right? Fundamentally the problem here is the viewpoint that environmentalists are coming from. They see the earth as "Mother earth", the source of all our well-being, the one who gave birth to us.

Unfortunately this is a complete opposite of what we as Christians believe. God is our Father, not a mother, and the earth was made by Him for us, we were not made by the earth.

Psalm 24 opens with the line "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it". The beginning of the book of Genesis tells us in great detail exactly how God made the earth and also why. God made the earth as a place for us to live. And did this life come with any instructions? Yes. Firstly God gave man dominion over the earth. Dominion means mastery, and to rule over, but also to care for. God's very first instructions included the command to look after the earth that God had created. Remember "The earth is the Lord's". The apostle Paul reminded us in his second letter to the Corinthian church that whatever the circumstance "our goal is to please Him".

So how should we respond to this challenge? Should we strive to keep everything exactly as it is or should we take a more balanced approach? Well right away, shortly after Adam and Eve had sinned God told them that they would have to work the land. Clearly God expected them to make changes and the reason for this was to glorify Him. Abel could not have made the sacrifice he did without making changes to the way the land was used. Ecclesiastes tells us that there is "A time to sow and a time to reap" "A time to keep and a time to throw away" "A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones". God expects us to take a balanced approach to the way we look after His world.

So more than having dominion over the earth we are expected to be good stewards of the resource God has lent us. In the gospel of Matthew Jesus a parable about three stewards. Each was given a sum of money, they all had different amounts but the expectation was the same. They were not expected to keep the asset in exactly the same condition that they were given it. They were expected to grow the asset. When the master returned he was pleased with the two stewards that had gained extra for him, but was very angry with the third steward even though he returned the masters asset in exactly the same condition as he was given it.

So keeping the earth preserved as it is is not God's plan, God expects us to make use of the asset and to improve it to His glory.

One final point to consider is this. The life of the earth is limited. Jesus has told us that He is coming back, after which the earth will be destroyed. The earth has a finite life, so there is no point in worrying about whether we can preserve the earth for ever as that would be pointless. When you are thinking about selling your car you don't do expensive maintenance on it just before you sell it.

So how should we respond to this? Should we stop re-cycling, forget about trying to use less water or trying to drive less; should we stop trying to eat less meat?

Probably not. There are two reasons for this. First, God hates waste. We should make an effort to keep the earth tidy whilst we are here, but also if, as Christians, we are seen to be wasteful it isn't a good witness. We can always testify that we are looking after someone else's estate.

Should we worry about these things or campaign against anything that appears damaging. In this case no. We need to keep all things in perspective. The viewpoint of the environmental lobby idolises the earth. They see it as a wonderful system, which it is, but in doing so they worship the created rather than the Creator.

Going back to Psalm 24 we remember that "the earth is the Lord's" but the Psalmist also asks "Who may stand in His holy place?" He is asking us who may be in the presence of Jesus for all eternity? The answer given is "only those whose hands and heart are pure, who do not worship idols"

A pure heart worships God alone and does not idolise anything that God has created, especially the earth itself.

So whether God has given you much or little, remember that God expects you to be a good steward, and to use the resources that you have been given, for His glory alone.



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