



Climate Change and the Purposes of God

Session four: What do I need to change?

Why should we care for God's world? Because God does (*The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.* Psalm 145:9). God knows about the fall of each sparrow (Matthew 10:29). We are made in God's image to reflect something of God.

1. Read Psalm 8

This psalm shows us a way into understanding our responsibilities for care for God's earth:

- Psalm 8 is a song of praise to God the Creator. The poet contemplates the glory of the starry heavens (v1), and behind that, discerns the glory of God. He offers praise with the same awe and wonder that a young child shows - a fact that should silence God's opponents. The deep spiritual response of even young children to the wonders of God's world are a sort of audible 'bulwark' against those who oppose God's ways (v2).
- In verses 3 - 4: the overwhelming nature of the poet's experience of God's glory in creation helps him to a right understanding of his own place within God's creation. God's revelation of himself within creation illuminates humanity's status and presses the question 'what are human beings?' The first word about human beings is one of humility before the majesty of God.
- Throughout the psalm it is God who is the subject. In verses 4-6 we read how God has made human beings to be his image. It is God who now gives to humanity a task of royal service. On the one hand we are 'crowned' with the authority of God the king (v 5), and responsible for the care of all 'the works of God's hands' (v6).
- The created order is always 'the work of God's hands', not humanity's to exploit or damage. The task of 'dominion' is that of commission given by God to exercise God's 'rule over' creation on God's behalf, and in line with God's will and God's way. This 'royal' task is to reflect the sort of kingly rule which God exercises.



How does this psalm make you feel about the earth and our place in it?



Think of practical ways of expressing care for God's creation in your locality.

2. Take Responsibility

Climate Change and the Purposes of God says:

Humans, made in God's image, have unique responsibility for the well being of creation (Genesis 1:26, 2:15). We are to care for the earth because it is gift, the product of God's love. No sparrow falls without God knowing. Humanity has always had the capacity to destroy our environment, but today we have this to an unprecedented extent. Whereas previous generations did not know the damage they were causing, we do. We must use our power wisely to promote the flourishing of future generations and the diversity of life on earth. This is the responsibility of every Church and every believer.

? Can you think of ways in which our generation is causing damage to an unprecedented extent? What does that do to our sense of responsibility?

3. Change Direction! Repent!

Climate Change and the Purposes of God calls the church to repentance:

Continuing to pollute the atmosphere when we know the dangers, goes against what we know of God's ways and God's will. We are failing to love not only the earth, but our neighbours and ourselves, who are made in God's image. God grieves over the destruction of creation and so should we.

Repentance means finding creative, constructive and immediate ways of addressing the danger. It happens when God's Spirit enables a change of mind and change of heart, prompting a turn from past wrong and a decision to change direction.

For our generation, reducing our dependence on fossil fuels has become essential to Christian discipleship.

- ? How are we polluting the atmosphere?
- ? What signs indicate the 'destruction of creation' that you are aware of?
- ? What might this call to repentance mean for you / for your church / for your community?
- ? Think of ways in which we can bring creation care back into the centre of the Church's mission? Why is it so often marginal?

Think of examples of how this could be done using:

- Preaching and the liturgy
- Sunday School teaching
- Church schools
- Civic cooperation
- Advocacy actions, both locally and nationally.