

Your Responsibility to Love the Earth as Your Neighbor

We hear from the Creator in Genesis 1 as the act of creation is unfolding.

God repeats over and over what creation is, saying it is good seven times with the last time saying that it is all very good.

Creation is good. The Earth is good, and God is pleased with the work; that fact alone should draw us to action to protect the Earth.

One constant is that the process of creation is ongoing. Life leads to death and rebirth. God is not finished creating, and we know that creation is good and meaningful.

If we lack care for creation, we disrupt the creativity of God. When we neglect and oppress the Earth, we are working against the goodness of the Creator.

Matthew 22:36-40 gives Christians the great commandment. Toward the end of the passage, it states "you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

We forget our global neighbor. The Earth is our neighbor and our home. All life on Earth is connected and dependent on each other.

When plants and animals go extinct, it negatively affects all life. We have a responsibility to love the Earth as our neighbor.

All faith traditions have a call to protect the Earth. I like a statement from Prophet Muhammad about the importance of caring for our neighbor.

He says, "Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself." The Earth is our "others." We must treat the Earth as God intended, as a good creation.

In the introduction of the Green Bible, Brian McLaren provides a picture of a needed shift from a theology of the creation/fall to understanding that God is in a constant process of creating.

We are a part of the same creative work. We partner with God in creation.

As a follower of Christ, God calls me to love and work toward the full realization of the Kingdom of God for all life. God calling creation good gives the example of how important creation is to the Creator.

We are living during an ecological crisis. The Earth needs liberation from the oppression of human forces. Jesus says that what we do to the "least of these of God's family, we do to me," and the Earth is part of the family.

Throughout history, human activity has shown a disheartening lack of respect for

life.

We live in a time when the greed to produce outweighs the desperate needs of the environment and the dignity of the most vulnerable.

“For God so loved the WORLD...” We see in this verse that God loves all of creation and loves it so much that he sent Jesus to save it.

When we disregard or continue to oppress the Earth, we place ourselves in opposition of the salvific life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus came to redeem all creation. The Kingdom of God is at hand, and as the church, we are responsible to engage with God in caring for the good and meaningful creation.

Luke 5:24 states Jesus was given authority on all of Earth. The Earth matters to God. Life matters to God.

There is another reason why we should be working with God in creation: Future generations depend on the health of the environment.

Sustainability is defined by the current generation’s ability to meet their physical needs while at the same time not impeding future generations’ ability to meet their physical needs.

We must continue to protect the environment to allow future generations to have the resources they need.

There is still hope. Genesis also says that humanity was created in the image of God, so we have the same creative spirit within ourselves; we can and must partner with God to create and solve the current ecological crisis that we face today.

The ecological crisis is a global and local issue and should have global and local solutions to address the needs of life.

All humanity has a stake in the future of the Earth. The problem is caused by humanity, and it is our responsibility to fix it.

We are destroying the Earth. Innocent life is dying at our hands. We are harming the least of these.

However, let us remember Jesus' last miracle before the crucifixion. The story is found in Luke 22:47-53, where we read about one of Jesus' followers cutting off the ear of a slave of the High Priest.

Jesus rebuked his followers and healed the innocent. Jesus heals those hurt by his followers.

The Earth has been hurt by humanity, and God can use us to help heal her.

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Editor's note: This article is part of a series for Earth Day 2019 (April 22). The previous articles in the series are:

[The Only Hope Left to Thwart Climate-Change Disaster](#) by Rick Burnette

[5 Practical Measures to Turn Around Our Declining Environment](#) by Sam Harrell