

To Care or Not to Care...and to Care about What?
(Gen.2; A mos; Matt. 20:1-16; 21:33-43; Ja s 5:1-5)

1. Fill the earth with the blessing of God by caring for God's garden (Gen. 1:29, 2:15).

- What God forms and makes functional, he wants fruitful and filled.
- Because man cared about God, man was to care for what belonged to God (Ps . 24:1).
- Care always reveals the object of one's affection.
- Care is a Kingdom priority.
- Through man's care for God's garden, God's vision was to fill the whole earth with his glory.

1. The caregivers of God's garden decided to become takers and owners (Gen. 3:6).

Rather than obeying the prime directive to care for what belonged to God, Eve and Adam decided to care more for themselves. *The crucial moment in any and every care scenario is the moment you decide to care about yourself more than you care about God—as soon as your care for God is traded for self, care for the things that matter to God no longer matter to you.* Care for God and the things God cares about always become casualties to intellectual property rights and personal ownership.

Instead of being thrilled to be stewards of God's garden and continue to believe what God told them Eve and Adam wanted to be owner's like God and independently allowed to make up their own minds about right and wrong.

- Got them expelled from the grand stewardship and blessings of God's glorious garden (3:23)
- The choice to know evil cost them their lives (Rom. 6:23)
- Disconnected from "the way" to the tree of life (3:24)

Why caring is such a struggle and can only be ignited by the supernatural intervention of the Redeemer re - commissioning us as caregivers of God's garden once again.

1. The preference is to make coverings for ourselves rather than returning to be caregiver-stewards of God's garden (Gen. 3:7).

- The covering of the defective , intellectual power to reason away the plain truth—the idolatry of the "right" to think for oneself . The pathway of thinking that pleases God is very narrow and few find it. *If I can change what I think about reality, I free myself to act according to a different script.* The authority rests in my self-declared status as a Christian independently knowing good and evil. Truth is we don't care and we find novel ways to excuse our lack of care for the things God cares about.

- The covering of paying God a commission to overlook our lack of genuine care by multiplying the gift of our religious commitment (Amos 4:4 ,5 ; 5:21-24; 6:4-6) . In order to cover our addiction to the comforts of the culture, we try to make it look like our head is in the game even while our heart is attached elsewhere—God knows (not fooled).

We don't really care, we pretend to care and soon our real heart shows through by how our head acts (Amos 2:6-9; 4:1; 5:12; 8:4-6).

There is only one way to care : Change (Amos 5:6 ,14,15).

Hearts always find something to attach to — God or things.
Care about God—and you will automatically care about what God cares about (Matt. 6:23).

1. The Redeemed are now the Garden of God (Matt. 6:33).

Now believers are the “sacred space” because a way to the tree of life has been made possible. Now believers are called to focus on “serving and preserving” the church of Christ and his temple—our bodies.

We are the care givers of the sacred space and spiritual ecologists spreading God's garden everywhere by caring for what Christ has died.

Caring is an act of worship, an act of connecting, and an act of reaching.

- As worship care is first sourced from care for God as first priority of the heart. We care because we care about God and the expansion of his glory.

- Care is about protecting and preserving the spiritual Eden each of us are. We are called to be gatekeepers of purity because of and through our connecting to Christ.

- We are each called to extend Eden by living the implications of God in and to our world. Care extends the reach of Eden in obedience to the original design.

1. All creation, ruined by man's sin, awaits the final hope of our glorious redemption at Christ's appearing (Rom. 8:19-22).

Since the earth and creation matter then, they need to matter now. The mandate to keep God's creation “good,” organized and productive (“work and take care of”) has not been rescinded.

Since the order of things material and living devolves into disorder (and ultimately passing away, Rev. 21:1 ,4) man is to bring it under control, utilize the resources (subdue), and domesticate the creatures (rule over) for the benefit of man and glory to God.

Here's our ecotheology (how I connect Scripture with environmental decisions):

- Creation is “ The Theatre of God's glory” (Ps . 19:1-4, Calvin) and the first apologetic evidence for God's existence and nature (Rom. 1:18f) .

- Noah's ark demonstrates God's care for bio-diversity (Gen. 6:20-7:3)

- Men's assignment was steward-caregiver of God's handiwork (in the best possible scenario) .

- Jesus is the Creator, holding all things together—we need to represent the magnificence of that well as gospel witnesses of the nature of Christ (Col 1:15f) .

- Creation is the property of a nother, not ours to exploit (Ps . 24:1) .

- The gospel is about a total redemption of the cosmos— inaugurated by the

Easter event (Rom. 8; Rev. 21) .

- People are “worth more than many sparrows” (Matt. 10:31) .
- Eating the creation is what was supposed to happen (Gen. 2:9)—first green plants/fruit and then animals (Gen. 9:3) as a gift by God’s permission .

1. God’s garden is expanded by God’s people for God’s glory when ... (Ja s. 5:1-5).

- We no longer steal from people but work for the purpose of having something left over for those in need (Eph. 4:28) .
- We stop hoarding and start helping those who try so hard but can’t make it work (Ja s. 5:3)
- We stop deceiving people by the hypocrisy of having our head in the game but our heart far from God .
- We stop acquiring more because of our addiction to our own comfort at the expense of expanding Eden—people are missing out on the message (Ja s. 5:5) .
- We no longer lack dedication to the productivity of Eden by deceiving people through the fine print, who aren’t getting what they paid for because of our bad workmanship .
- We finally stop walking by the Lazarus’ on our way to our third house because what we do pays ten times more than what he gets paid even though he works very hard (Ja s. 5: 4) .

You and I will never care until we really care about God. Do not be deceived, any lack of care for what God cares about is a low level alarm measuring a dangerous spiritual deficiency.

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8).

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world (James 1:27).