

SERMON GUIDE

THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S AND EVERYTHING IN IT!

KEY BIBLICAL PASSAGES

Psalm 24:1-2; Genesis 1-2; Colossians 1:15-20; Romans 8:18-21

OVERVIEW AND GOAL

When we talk about conservation or creation care, the first thing we have to emphasize is, "Whose earth is this?" If we do not start with this, everything we say falls into the danger of becoming a human-centric initiative to save the world. Without this basis, we simply cannot talk about stewardship in a proper fashion. We also cannot address why Christ would reconcile all things unto himself, nor what the New Heaven and New Creation are as promised. This is, therefore, our starting point.

The Earth is indeed the Lord's, but we live as if it is ours, and we have exploited it to the point that the whole creation, as described by Paul in Romans 8:18-21, is in deep groaning. We Christians are the people formed and shaped by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but what does this Gospel have to say about our current degraded ecosystems that result in widespread injustice and harm? We need to hear the Gospel again in a new way that declares that God is in charge now, through the resurrected Christ Jesus, and out of this Gospel, we are to be reminded of who we are and what we ought to do in response.

KEY PREACHING POINTS

- The Earth truly is the Lord's, for He created and loves it (Ps. 24:1-2; Genesis 1-2).
- The Lord commands us human beings, created in His image, to take care of, work, and guard it (Genesis 1-2).
- Although humans rebelled, denying, twisting and distorting their role as the True King's representatives, the whole creation is still the Lord's. He had a plan of restoration from the beginning, by selecting a nation, Israel, who would be a light to the world in the way they lived and related to others. This includes both communities and the non-human created order. Brief references to Abraham's covenant may be helpful – Genesis 12: being blessed so that they could be blessings to the nations; and the Laws with its reconciliatory implications between God-human, human-human, and human-land.

- Despite the failure of Israel in its assumed role, namely, being the blessings to the nations by living as a kingly-priestly nation, Jesus embodied all the hopes of Israel through His life, death and resurrection. He is the one by whom and for whom everything is created, and upon whom everything depends. Through His blood ALL THINGS are reconciled unto Him, and He is now the True King who is in charge (Colossians 1:15-20; cf, John 1:1-14).

- In Christ the True King, we are to reclaim our original callings as the King's representatives and His priests, declaring and bringing the long-awaited shalom to the whole creation, and we are to invite others to join us in this restoration effort (Romans 8:18ff).

- **Our response to our redeemed identity.** We do our best to LIVE OUT the gospel of Jesus Christ by practicing conservation, restoration of places and people, hospitality, sharing, prayer, worship, and community living. In other words, we are showing the world around us that "God is now in charge through Jesus" as described by N.T. Wright's brilliant exposition of Jesus' work and identity. Or, using McKnight's words, to declare the "King Jesus Gospel" by nurturing kingly-priestly disciples of Christ, to reclaim our original callings in God's world.

SUGGESTED FURTHER READING AND REFERENCE

McKnight, Scot. The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited (Zondervan, 2011)

Watts, Rikk. It's About Life: A Biblical Journey. Regent College Audio (Regent College, 2011) - http://www.regentaudio.com/RGDL4105S?category_id=633

Wright, Christopher J.H. The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission (Zondervan, 2010)

Wright, N.T. Simply Jesus: A New Vision of Who He Was, What He Did, and Why He Matters (HarperOne, 2011)